TIMES OF LITERATURE AND POLITICAL IDEOLOGY IN THE POST-WAR ROMANIAN EDUCATION SYSTEM[1]

Abstract*: The politico-ideological control over literary creation and over the way in which literature was reflected in the education system was not established in the immediate aftermath of 23rd August 1944. This process evolved through several stages. By 1948, Romanian journalism recorded a number of attacks against some of the great inter-war creators (Tudor Arghezi, Liviu Rebreanu etc.), initiated and supported by second-value writers. A new law on education was promulgated in 1948, formalizing the politicization of the education system. The first document that stated the existing regime of literature in the Romanian school appeared in 1950 under the name of* Provisory Theses on the History of Romanian Literature*. It was not until 1950 that the first specialized curriculum for high school was developed, and, along with it, there appeared schoolbooks that would represent the educational existence support of this subject for more than a decade.*

Keywords*: education system, curriculum, political ideology, Romanian literature.*

The existence of Romanian literature after the Second World War has been determined, with various measures and in rather different ways, by the political ideology imposed in our country and in other countries of Eastern Europe, following the division of the post-war world into circles of influence. The political and ideological conditions affected literary creation in itself, as well as the institutional regime of this spiritual field: cultural publications, the cultural pages of the information press, public discourse, the writers' fellowship organization (The Writers' Society became, starting from 1949, the Writers' Union), the entire education system, from the pre-school cycle to university studies.

The subordination of all such literary subsistence ways towards political doctrine, which would severely mark Romanian society until 1989, has not taken place immediately after the 23rd August 1944, as stated by some post-communist studies or comments which address this phenomenon. Romanian literature, as it has been written, disseminated or educationally institutionalized during the period marked by the communist ideology, cannot be described by using general statements or through hasty words focused more on their incriminatory function than on their role to clarify facts.

Leaving aside all accusing comments (rather numerous in Romanian public sphere, especially during the first years after the regime shift from December 1989), no matter how justified in their attempt to put the communist system on trial, documents (press, laws, decrees, speeches, congresses, conferences etc.) constitute the first source which should be taken into account and used while trying to understand and present these phenomena with full objectivity.

The quantity of texts focused on presenting and „analyzing" the communist regime in post-war Romania is spectacular, starting with those scattered over the cultural or information press, continuing with Eugen Negrici's books[2], for example, and ending with the "Tismăneanu Report". Displaying an arguable selection of materials and often presenting phenomena with a rather emotional than scientific approach,

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*This work was supported by CNCSIS –UEFISCSU, project number PNII – IDEI code 949/2008

[2] Eugen Negrici, *Iluziile literaturii române (The Illusions of Romanian Literature)*, Cartea Românească Publishing House, Bucharest, 2008.

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employing in most cases a tendentious tone, many such texts build an image which is either partial, or serving a certain thesis. The serious works which analyze this period are few and have a more confined circulation.

The pioneering merit for such attempts to present the stage of Romanian literature based upon a large number of documents belongs to Ana Selejan, with a PhD thesis elaborated under Eugen Simion's scientific coordination, in 1992.[1]

An impressive paper (of approximately 2500 pages) of this kind, which uses in several occasions an ironic discourse, is "Istoria literaturii române de azi pe mâine"[2], by Marian Popa. Notwithstanding the objections which could be formulated, this study has a remarkable documentary basis and succeeds in creating a realistic „picture" of Romanian cultural phenomena during the period under analysis. Nevertheless, the fatally limited number of copies makes it difficult for this paper to be distributed and for information to be disseminated in the media interested in acquiring deeper knowledge on this literary age.

Finally, it is important to mention a remarkable work[3] elaborated under Academician Eugen Simion's coordination by a research collective from The "G. Călinescu" Institute of History and Literary Theory under the Romanian Academy and by a team of university professors from the Faculty of Letters Galati, which exclusively and exhaustively refers to Romanian press starting from 23 August 1944 to the end of 1944. The credibility of this works resides in its rendering of raw facts (articles, literary chronicles, conference documents, congresses, colloquies, decisions and legal document published by Romanian gazettes from that period), with limited comments on the „cold" presentation of the texts.

Such works show that the instauration of ideological authority on Romanian literature has been achieved in stages which are rather different through their content, with stresses or relaxations which differently configure literary creation in its own, as well as the existence of literature in the educational area.

Between 1944 and 1948, for example, Romanian literary creation does not face official ideological constraints which would make it deviate from the direction taken during the period between the two World Wars. There are attempts to compromise some of the inter-war authors, but these are set off by two more important causes.

First of all, this is related to the European context which justifies the sanctioning of those writers (and, obviously, not only of writers) who had collaborated or sided in one way or the other with the Fascist regimes or parties and had contributed in various manners to the propagation of an ideology which turned out to be flawed. Italy, Germany, France and other European countries went through this process. Romania makes no exception and obeys the rule enforced by the allied powers. Given these circumstances, the "cleaning" process taking place immediately after the conclusion of the truce originates in and resembles from this point of view other actions undertaken in the European space and it is more in debt to this context than to

[1] Ana Selejan, *Trădarea intelectualilor (Betrayal of the Intellectuals)*, Transpres Publishing House, Sibiu, 1992, 214 p.

[2] Marian Popa, *Istoria literaturii române de azi pe mâine (History of Romanian Literature pro tempore)*, Fundația Luceafărul Publishing House, Bucharest, 2001, 2 volumes, 2504 p.

[3] *** *Cronologia vieţii literare româneşti*, Perioada postbelică (*A Chronology of Romanian Literary Life,* Post-war Period), 1944-1948, coordinator Acad. Eugen Simion, Muzeul Literaturii Române Publishing House, Bucharest, 2010, 3 volumes.

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communism, about the instauration of which we cannot discuss yet when referring to the beginning of this time frame.

An undisputable proof on the validity of this finding is the fact that the first attacks against Romanian writers which took place in the second half of 1944 are reported by a newspaper which cannot be suspected of communist orientation: we are referring to the newspaper "Dreptatea" („Justice"), journalistic voice of the National Peasants' Party, which initiates under a column called "Perna cu ace" („The Cushion with Needles") inaugurated in the issue from 2nd September 1944 under the signature of Oscar Lemnaru a campaign aimed to expose writers and cultural personalities who had in one way or the other connections with the Fascist doctrine or movement. The programme of this column is formulated clearly and with strong journalistic tempestuousness starting with this first article: "Prin faţa acestui reflector vor trece, ca la poliţie, răufăcătorii, toţi acei care, sprijiniţi pe confuzia de odinioară, au răspândit, prin fluviul negru al cernelii, ura, minciuna, impostura. Vor veni să dea socoteală unei opinii publice dezmeticite, la toate câte le-au spus, câte le-au insinuat şi câte le-au făcut [...]. Vom scotoci toate ascunzişurile presei şi tiparului, vom cotrobăi prin toate hrubele întunecate în care zac uneltele de lucru ale unei generaţii de imbecili şi le vom aşeza la locul de onoare în muzeul acuzator al momentului de astăzi."[1]

This column or other pages of the newspaper "Dreptatea" ("Justice") denounced during several months the direct or only ideological collaboration of Constantin Noica, Mircea Eliade, Nichifor Crainic, Emil Cioran, Liviu Rebreanu[2] and others.

The second element generating the attack directions against some important writers of the inter-war modernism has to be searched for in the very specificity of literary life here or in any other cultural space, where the competition of values is not always fair, and the occasions for reordering hierarchies are fully exploited, especially during periods of political and cultural confusion determined by regime shifts. In this context, envy, frustrations, resentfulness and complexes are regularly factors which determine the tendency to eliminate or compromise real values. This is how we can explain as a case in point the articles denunciating the poet Tudor Arghezi, published by Miron Radu Paraschivescu, the first one dating from the beginning of 1945[3], Aurel Baranga's article against Ion Barbu, whom he considers to in his "fourth" period of creation a "legionary poet"[4].

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[1] *** *Cronologia vieţii literare româneşti*, Perioada postbelică (*A Chronology of Romanian Literary Life,* Post-war Period), 1944-1948, coordinator Acad. Eugen Simion, Muzeul Literaturii Române Publishing House, Bucharest, 2010, vol. I; „Villains will pass in front of this mirror as if they were in front of an executioner, all those who spread through the black river of ink hatred, lie and imposture, supported by the former confusion. They will come to account for all said, insinuated and done in front of a public opinion that had its consciousness regained [...]. We will comb all press and print hidings, we will ferret about all dark caves where the working tools of a generation of imbeciles lay up and we will put them in their seat of honour, in the accusing museum of today's time."

[2] Nicolae Carandino, *La mormântul lui Liviu Rebreanu (Before Liviu Rebreanu's Grave)*, „Dreptatea" („Justice"), 4th September 1944.

[3] Miron Radu Paraschivescu, *Un impostor: d. Tudor Arghezi (An Impostor: Mr. Tudor Arghezi)*, „România liberă" („Free Romania), 21st February 1945.

[4] Aurel Baranga, *Cele patru năpârliri ale lui Ion Barbu (The four skin throwings of Ion Barbu)*, „România liberă" "(„Free Romania), 2nd March 1945

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Paralleling these phenomena, writers with left political and ideological orientation claim, out of conviction or opportunism, the need of a new literature, which would serve times under unequivocal change and promote the model of the Soviet literature in the Romanian space.

The examples presented could be multiplied, the above mentioned "Cronologie a vieții literare românești" offers them in a high number, but it should be noted in this regard that none of the tendencies they reflect is generated by political power. The phenomenon triggered by this factor starts to happen right after the King's abdication and after the enouncement of the Popular Republic, with a higher intensity in 1948 and 1949. The sad memory article published against Arghezi by Sorin Toma in 1948[1], following a political command, could be considered to be the start of an explicit policy of the new regime, which aims to erase inter-war values, to silence esthetical criteria when assessing literary works and to reinterpret Romanian literature history based upon the Marxist – Leninist – Stalinist doctrine.

Starting with 1948, Romanian literature actually passes under the subordination and direct control of the Romanian Workers' Party, and its existence with regard to creation, as well as at the level of its institutions, is placed under the authority of the Soviet model.

The Education Reform, legislated through Decree no. 175 of 3rd August 1948, makes political control on the Romanian education system official and declares as explicit purpose the development of young generations under the communist spirit.

The consequences of this document are extremely severe and affect the vital structural elements of the institutional existence of literature. Some personalities from the philological and philosophic higher education system are removed from the universities: George Călinescu, Lucian Blaga, Alexandru Piru etc. The same approach also affects the pre-university education system, which excludes numerous teachers with extensive philological knowledge on the grounds they are not appropriate from a political and ideological point of view.

Curriculum documents also undergo most severe transformations. In 1950 several consecutive leaflets publish "Tezele provizorii de Istorie a literaturii române" ("Provisory Theses on the History of Romanian Literature), which are in fact a first school curriculum elaborated according to "scientific principles"[2], reconfiguring the Romanian literature scenery according to the "class struggle" criterion. „Literatura reflectă viața materială a oamenilor. Şi, cum istoria omenirii este istoria luptei de clasă, fără îndoială că şi literatura (orală şi scrisă) neînfățişează imaginile acestui lucru. […] Dar în societatea împărțită în clase antagonice nu poate fi vorba de existența unei literaturi unitare. În cadrul aceleiaşi culturi naționale apar două literaturi, două culturi: una care reprezintă şi apără interesele clasei reacționare, duşmane mersului înainte al societății, cealaltă care reprezintă şi apără interesele clasei revoluționare, progresiste, ce impinge dezvoltarea societății pe o treaptă superioară".[3]

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[1] Sorin Toma, *Poezia putrefacției şi putrefacția poeziei. Răsfoind volumele lui Tudor Arghezi (The Poetry of Rottenness and Rotting Poetry. Browsing through Tudor Arghezi's volumes),* „Scânteia", 5th, 7th, 9th and 10th January 1948.

[2] Eugen Campus, *Pe marginea tezelor provizorii de istorie a literaturii române (Annotating the ProvisoryTheses on the History of Romanian Literature)*, „Viața românească" („Romanian Life"), no. 11, November 1950

[3] Teze provizorii de Istorie a literaturii române (Provisory Theses on the History of Romanian Literature), Ministerul Învățământului Public (Ministry of Public Education), IXth grade, I, page 7, „Literature reflects people's material life. And, given that the history of mankind is the history of

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From this perspective, the curriculum proposes a severely tarnished image of Romanian literature. Essential moments in its development („Junimea", „Sburătorul" etc.) have been silenced. The same happens with great writers and literary critics, no matter the period of their „reactionary" attitude: Titu Maiorescu, Lucian Blaga, Eugen Lovinescu, Tudor Arghezi, Hortensia Papadat-Bengescu and others are names which will either remain unknown to several scholarly generations developed during this period, or be associated to infamous affirmations ("exponent of the bourgeois-landlord ideology", "against the interests of the working class" etc.). In their place, the curriculum proposes and imposes writers from the „Contemporary current", starting with the critic Constantin Dobrogeanu-Gherea, "who has been barely mentioned by bourgeois manuals"[1], and continuing with Ionescu Raicu-Rion, A. Bacalbaşa, Sofia Nădejde, C. Mille, Paul Bujor, ion Păun-Pincio etc. Moreover, Th. Neculuță and A. Toma are writers excessively promoted by the communist cultural propaganda during the entire sixth decade.

The reassessment of the "literary legacy" generates, on the other hand, a selection compliant to the new ideology. The 1948 Revolution writers, Eminescu, Caragiale, Delavrancea etc. are brought to light with texts susceptible to forced interpretation, of course, viewed from the perspective of „class struggle" and „party spirit". We hereby quote a large fragment referring to the works of George Coşbuc, significant for the agenda of the entire school curriculum represented by this document: „Mulți dintre cei care au avut nenorocul să-i cunoască mai întâi pe marii noştri clasici prin prisma deformată a şcolii burgheze au rămas cu această imagine a unui Coşbuc senin, zugrăvind cu un zâmbet copilăresc pe buze scene uniform luminoase din viața idilică a satului. Poporul nostru a cunoscut şi a iubit pe un alt Coşbuc. Pe un Coşbuc care îi ura cumplit pe ciocoi şi exprima cu putere revolta şi suferința țărănimii exploatate, pe autorul lui Noi vrem pământ şi al Doinei. Bineînțeles că burghezo-moşierimea avea tot interesul să ascundă acest aspect al operei lui Coşbuc. De aceea lacheii ei culturali s-au străduit mereu să treacă cu vederea legătura dintre poet şi popor, să acopere puternicele accente de revoltă socială din versurile sale, să le bagatelizeze, prezentându-le ca neesențiale".[2]

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class struggle, it is without a doubt that literature also (oral and written) displays an images of this aspect. […] Still, in a society split in antagonistic classes, there can be no homogenous literature. Under the same national culture, there are two forms of literature, two separate cultures: one representing and defending the interests of the reactionary class, an enemy of society's progress, the other representing and defending the interests of the revolutionary class, oriented towards progress, pushing forward the development of society."

[1] Eugen Campus, the quoted text.

[2] Teze provizorii de Istorie a literaturii române (Provisory Theses on the History of Romanian Literature), Ministerul Învățământului Public (Ministry of Public Education), XIth grade, II, page 31, „Many of those who had the bad luck to get acquainted with our great classics from the deformed perspective of the bourgeois school remained with the image of a serene Coşbuc, painting with a childish smile on his lips constantly bright scenes of the idyllic village life. Our people knew and loved another Coşbuc. A Coşbuc who intensely hated upstarts and passionately expressed the rebellion and suffering of the exploited peasants, the author of We want land and Doina. It is obvious that the bourgeois-landlords had the interest to hide this aspect of Coşbuc's works. This is why its cultural lackeys always tried to overpass the connection between poet and people, to cover the strong social rebellion aspects from his verses, to diminish their importance by presenting them as unessential."

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These are only some of the comments included in this document which marks the beginning of a decade and a half when the status of literature in the education system document has been entirely built upon the grounds of the communist ideology, having as structuring principle the "class struggle" and the "party spirit". Obviously, this is not the only one. The curriculum from 1952, the school manuals elaborated during this period, the curriculum from 1958 and many other documents represent elements which, once analyzed, can help rebuild, in all its severity, the real picture of the regime with regard to the institutional existence of Romanian literature during the fifties.

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