THE STUDY OF ROMANIAN LITERATURE IN THE 1960S – BETWEEN IDEOLOGY AND METHODOLOGY[1]

***Abstract**: In this paper, the author proposes a rigorous analysis in Roman literature about how writers have been studied in school in the 60s. The study emphasizes the criteria that are accepted the works of writers in school textbooks and also how literary models promoted in that period.*

***Keywords**:* literary analysis, *patriotic education, communist period.*

In the 1960s, the study of Romanian literature in schools aimed at training and educating the young generation in a patriotic spirit, meant to continue and complete the socialist construction. The literature that was allowed in the textbooks of the time, complied with the same subtle ways of selection and interpretation. "The moment of 1960 is, as expected, the most critical: there is still a need to legitimize the new regime."[2] Consequently, literature becomes an insidious propaganda instrument, none the less superfluous, through which a cultural, ideological and ethical-moral model is imposed according to the political doctrine of the time. The imposed literature or the corruption of the meaning of some literary texts triggered at the psychological level injurious phenomena to the shaping of the personality of several generations. Curricula, methodological courses and textbooks, through the themes and contents that were heavily promoted, merged with the political models imposed in those days. Here is the educational - propaganda perspective that the school of the 1960s follows:

"Literature, being one of the most powerful means of knowledge and transformation of life, society, through its rich content in moral and aesthetic values, may exercise its great educational, renewing action upon the students, cultivating and instilling them feelings of passionate love and devotion for their homeland and working class, love and respect for the P.M.R. – the leader of the most glorious traditions of class struggle, the leader of a new socialist life. Our new literature, related to people - artistic image of huge political, economic and social transformations, has an overwhelming role in educating the youth in the spirit of socialist patriotism and proletarian internationalism."[3]

In the 1960s, Romanian literature served as a means of communist education. The literary messages actually contributed to *the formation of pupils' high patriotic consciousness*, because they were meant to become active militants after finishing school, on big sites, in factories, in state and collective farms, as true builders of socialism.

Through the masterpieces of great writers such as N. Bălcescu, Al. Russo, V. Alecsandri, I. Creangă, Mihai Eminescu, I.L. Caragiale, Al. Sahia, A. Toma, D. Th. Neculuță, there were studied topics of general interest such as: the major historical events, the ideological struggle between antagonistic social classes, the main aspects of

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[2] Iulia Popovici, *Literatura contemporană în manualele anilor '60-'80*, *România Literară* nr. 26, 2002.

[3] Programa de literatura romînă**,** Clasele a IX-a, a X-a şi a Xl-a, aprobată de Ministerul Invaţamintului şi Culturii, nr. 36.600/1960

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cultural life, so that students, captivated by the artistry and strength reflected in the impressive image of the past creations, could understand the historical conditions in which the representative literary writings of the time appeared.

The literature curriculum in 1960s mentions that the writings of Sadoveanu Arghezi, Beniuc, Jebeleanu, Camil Petrescu or Marin Preda studied in the eleventh grade render the realities of these glorious years of struggle, of revolutions, the historical achievements gained by our laborious people under the leadership of the political party for the establishment of a new socialist order, the enthusiasm of diligent builders of a new life; images of communist life and fight, as examples for the younger generation to follow. The heroes of the writers mentioned above are permanently engaged in a class struggle with an enemy who tries to make a stand against building a new life, against socialism; in the fight with their peers that were left behind, with the complex issues of agriculture, industry. *Thus, Mitrea Crane is a positive hero, as opposed to his step brother, the boyar Cristea-Three-Noses*.

Through their literature lessons, the teachers have the duty to cultivate in the youth's awareness the highest qualities of the new man - admiration and respect for the working class, enthusiasm and determination in carrying out duties, love for efficient work, enthusiasm for great patriotic deeds, love for their homeland and devotion to the cause of the party, giving strength and energy to achieve grand ideals.

By studying the history of Romanian literature students should observe and analyze the ideological content of the literary works, the realistic character of literature and also to identify the artistic means of expression used by writers for this content. Young children must have real knowledge about the emergence of literary phenomena, about the social and political conditioning of the literary process, about the battle in the literary realm with the ideology of the exploiting classes, about the decadent literary trends. Teaching literature in schools lies under the sign of the aesthetics. When deciphering literary texts, students get an insight into the privacy of the writing and at the same time comprehend the features of shape and style as an artistic expression of the writer's idea. The curriculum for the eighth and ninth grade includes two types of themes: a monographic one, devoted to the study of certain writers' work and a general theme that aims at reviewing the main stages in the history of Romanian literature.

However, there are two ways for the political factor to interfere in the educational canon: the selection of canonical authors which consequently imposes the automatic comprisal of some writers according to performances otherwise than literary, and the critical interpretation of the texts accordingly to the political propriety. The policy of the communist ideology can be identified in literature textbooks by considering two specific dimensions: discursive and conceptual – the reading of texts will follow the socialist principle:

"It is imperative for the teachers to teach students to take notes during reading sessions, to write out the essential ideas and the excerpts with ideological and artistic features. Teachers need to monitor and control every lesson, to check whether students have read the works that they were supposed to, cultivating and encouraging their taste for reading and literature.

It is of utmost importance that teachers should pay attention to the literary analysis of texts, as this method facilitates students' understanding of the ideological content of a literary work. The analysis of the characters and the grasp of their ideological implication can only be based on thorough knowledge of literary texts."[1]

[1] Programa de literatura romînă, Clasele a IX-a, a X-a şi a Xl-a, 1960.

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Moreover, studies of literary criticism and reviews from various magazines and publications contribute to understanding literature as a reflection of reality, as well as its social importance. Therefore, students are highly advised to read as many studies and articles published in literary journals as possible, for they portray aspects of the Romanian People's Republic cultural revolution, which exploit the creations of our greatest writers in the spirit of socialist culture. The detachment from the ideological canon will take place after 1964, when the Romanian writers are no longer bound by the rules and schematism of the socialist realism.

However, the group submitted to the communist policy has carried on writing a literature approved by the authorities while still preserving its propagandist character.

Secondary school textbooks and literary magazines[1] preached for Marin Preda's novelle in the volume *The Meeting between the Lands*, where the image of country life is represented by the small peasant Ilie Barbu who struggles to regain its human dignity engaging for success in politics. Another character in Marin Preda's human gallery, Ilie Moromete, is forced by the capitalist regime to hamper its actions and think over his relationship with the community to such an extent that the bourgeois regime becomes for Moromete more of a rigid dictatorship.

Geo Bogza and Marin Preda are the only prose writers consistent in all the textbooks before and after 1989. If for Preda the explanation lies at the core of a thoughtful combination between his exquisite achievement of the artistic novel and the preference to topics that bear weight for the regime, in Bogza's case, the reason for having remained in textbooks is justified by the very fact that he is the only creator of truly valuable Romanian literary reports.

At the end of the 1960's there are various writers, poets, valuable literary critics coming out in secondary school textbooks: Camil Petrescu, Lucian Blaga, Ion Barbu, George Călinescu (Ciopraga, Micu, Simion, 1968: 3). Endowed with great artistic valences, the new writers included in the literary curricula will change the entire literary universe. Thus, they will give rise to new species of prose overreaching the literary world through the aesthetic turn on the literary text, providing a new perspective on community life. After 1964, literature is driven by the desire to get away, this tendency being interpreted as a form of revenge on the past (Negrici, 2003: 159).

Nowadays, literary criticism and history discuss two literary canons - the official one, which is politically imposed, and the one built on the criteria of value, which functions until the fall of the communist regime, having textbooks to bear witness throughout this period of time.

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[1] *Limbă-Literatură*, vol. IV, Bucureşti, 1960, p.5.

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