THE LYRICAL LANGUAGE OF POST-COMMUNIST ROMANIAN WRITERS

Irina GRIGORE

Abstract: This paper aims to emphasize on the style of writing Post-Communist poets had in their literary works, the escape of traditionalism and the adaptations to postmodernism, the freedom of expression the self and rebuilding identity.

Keywords: Communism, Nationalism, Post- Communism, Postmodernism, freedom of expression

Characterized by a dependence on narrative techniques such as fragmentation, paradox, hyper-reality, pastiche, the uncertain narrator, intertextuality, the contradictory voice of the lyrical eye, postmodernism in literature represents a symbol of multiple meanings, or the complete lack of meaning, representing the world's absurdities and flaws.

First of all, Postmodernism is a term used in the Romanian literature to describe a paradigm which was foreshadowed by writers outside of the mainstream belonging to the late 1960's and late 1970's. In other words, English or American Postmodernism tends to be a bit different from the East European one. In Romania it appeared later and the writing style had other connotations, it was meant to express a new rebirth of individuality. The Romanian postmodernists have proposed a canon that contains writers belonging to the postwar period, such as Nichita Stănescu (the promotor of neomodernism), Mircea Cărtărescu, Leonid Dimov, Mircea Ivănescu, Mircea Horia Simionescu and other writers that were considered more or less marginal and who used a lot of irony and intertextuality in their literary works.

Secondly, Postmodernism appeared rather late in Romania, due to the political oppression and censorship, which limited the freedom to create works of art. The communist European and American ideas of postmodernism were depicted as some acts of barbarism, or even a threat to the principles of statehood, which is why the communist party had control over cultural acts and manifestations, secret services that were intended to censure or promote certain values.

From a historical point of view, the National Communism in Romania was the state ideology of Communist Romania between the early 1960s and 1989. Having its origins in Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej's political emancipation from the Soviet Union, it was developed by Nicolae Ceaușescu, whose cult of personality and the idealization of Romania's main historical figures lead to the rise of Protochronism. Nationalism became so ubiquitous, that Romanians were depicted as being united throughout their history around the Leader, the mighty God- like figure, the President.

Nationalism used to inflict its philosophy and propaganda by manipulating the young masses. It happened so that school poetry was turned into a propaganda tool, in order to achieve ideological goals. The poetry predominant in the Romanian textbooks reflected the intention of the Communist regime to replace reality according to its ideological claims and false utopian world ruled by the mighty leader- the President. Some of the propaganda objectives pursued through poems were that of strengthening the class consciousness, as it happened in Dan Deşliu's "Lazăr from Rusca" in the Romanian textbook for 6th grade, edited in 1959, as well as the promotion of nationalism in Ioan Neniţescu's "My Country", 5th grade textbook, edited in 1975.

In order to promote such mischievous manners of manipulation the masses in Romania, the Communist period formed a culture of resistance the real and true culture, that was the free manifestation of art young students and scholars were adopting, while trying to

BDD-A22034 © 2015 Arhipelag XXI Press
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-15 02:03:51 UTC)

preserve and develop. Students wanted to speak after years of oppression and obeying in silence under censorship.

Due to the political pressure, the upcoming change under Revolution was a need to be expressed in folk songs, in poetry, art in general. The Revolution was not only a coup d'etat for writers and intellectuals. It was the opportunity to speak to the world the truth.

According to Romanian Communist studies, the cultural resistance amplified the collapse of the libraries, subtracted the symbol of reading and limited the participation of cultural events. In response to such exploitation, literary clubs were formed, especially by students who revealed their art in the underground, since they were not allowed to speak in public. Also, the Romanian intellectuals who were imprisoned under communist rules, poetry became a form of personal resistance against the system. In such circumstances, literature from communist prisons developed steadily. In other words, one might suggest that the Romanian communist ideology imposed the refusal of reliable history, of the main figures throughout Romanian history in order to adopt the Soviet philosophy and history.

After the revolution in December 1989, creating a new culture did not only mean one's own individual original discoveries. It also meant the diffusion of truths already discovered, truths that needed to be shown and revealed in public, to a whole nation to understand the vital need for freedom. In such circumstances, a new era of postmodernist and post- communist poets arose.

As A. Gramsci suggest, Postmodernism in the Post-Communist period represented a current of seduction. Each poet seduces everyone, in his/her attempt to speak to people. Reality can also be seduced, so that "it is written on itself, not described"[1]. Artists were the first ones to react to political oppression and to vocalize a protest. For instance, recent Romanian contemporary art questions the way Communism is remembered or forgotten in the public's eye and the way in which the Post-Communist society was organized.

The Romanian intellectuals created an autobiographic discourse in which memory and personal history are intertwined so as to project the traces of a prominent identity. The Post-Communist poets, such as Mircea Cărtărescu, Ana Blandiana, Mircea Dinescu, Adrian Păunescu, so as the ones after 2000 era- Dumitru Delcă, George Budoi, Iurie Osoianu, Girel Barbu expressed the need to reveal their communist experience as victims and partisans of a new democracy.

As the poet Ana Blandiana sustains, the one who is able to understand what happened during the communist period becomes a victim of what he or she experienced, "Because I am able to understand, I am guilty for all that I understand"[2]. In 1985 Ana Blandiana became known, not only in the entire Romania but also outside her country for her controversial anti-communist poetry. At the insistence of the student editors of the Bucharest magazine "Amfiteatru" ("Amphitheater"), Blandiana conceded a group of four anti-communist poems. One of them was "Eu Cred" ("I Believe"), in which she reinvents her nature theme:

I believe that we are a botanic nation
Oth-er-wise, where do we get this calmness
In which we await the shed-ding of our leaves?[3]

[1] http://www.erstestiftung.org/publication/romanian-revolution-televised-contributions-to-the-cultural-history-of-media/
[2] http://www.iwm.at/publications/5-junior-visiting-fellows-conferences/andreea-maierean/
[3] http://www.romanianvoice.com/poezii/poezii/eucred.php

BDD-A22034 © 2015 Arhipelag XXI Press
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-15 02:03:51 UTC)

As expected in a Communist state, Ana Blandiana was banned from publishing her literary works after Ceaușescu became aware of the poems' anarchistic content. In 1985 she sent the poem "Totul" ("All"), which was a reflection on everyday Romanian life, abroad to be published in different western newspapers and later, it was broadcasted on Radio Free Europe.

Among the most predominant lyrical voices eager to speak about sacrifice as an aftermath of communism is also Mircea Dinescu. Among pshilosophers, including Gabriel Liiceanu, Alexandru Paleologu and Andrei Pleșu, he wrote a protest against Ceaușescu's policies that were destroying the Romanian culture. His works of art either depict the images of a distressing world after the revolution in December 1898, or mock the Communist system under the rule of the Romanian Communist president at that time, Nicolae Ceaușescu. His poem „Door with a dead" („Ușă cu mort"), for instance, might be viewed as a sacrificial testimony of the Romanian commnism:

Between God and Genesis
The bones,
My bones hurt.
In trams, on roofs- a sudden illogical pain
Gets hold of my bones,
That sort of pain the pithecanthrope,
Which is hidden in the genealogical jungle,
Is responsible for[4].

In terms of creating a new identity after chaos, post- communist poetry reshaped the lyrical "I" and empowered it to express grief, torment, limitation, the loss of identity and uniqueness, the right to be written and read, the denial of censorship and political repression. The lyrics from "Door with a dead" portray a decayed society, as a result of communist inquisition, the inability to reborn from a wasteland.

One might reach the conclusion that spontaneity in arts was a natural consequences of major social changes after 1989. The freedom regained in those years allowed artists and writers to deliberate a sort of an overflow and stream of consciousness over all the will of expression - an expression of the self, the release from dictatorship, from "collectivism"[5], from the programmatic restrictions imposed in literary discourse.

After the Romanian Revolution, artists had a more flexible access to public and were free to speak or sing freely about the previous communist repression. As an example, folk writer and singer, Ada Milea signals the partnership between the nationalist and Socialist oratory by recalling the style of the heroic epic ballads, she later on intensifies it by having the lyrics of her song "Ceaușescu hasn't died" reproducing the diction of patriotic Communist poetry with which most Romanians are familiar, especially those from the '80s generation. The opening lines of the song, "Ceaușescu hasn't died/ he watches over us relentless", invokes the celebration of the president's paternal attitude towards the people, librating between paternal protection and general surveillance and manipulation the masses.

Poetry written after the 1989 is merely characterized by natural elements and emotion as pure expressions of life itself. Analyzing the predominant theme and style, one might consider that it represents a form of Romanian Neo-romanticism. It depicts the themes of love, self discovery and romanticism in a cultural desert that endured oppression and lack of

[4] http://www.romanianvoice.com/poezii/poezii/usacumort.php (own translation from Romanian)
[5] Maria Todorova, Zsuzsa Gille. *Post-communist Nostalgia*. Berghahn Books, New York, Oxford, 2012, p. 163.

BDD-A22034 © 2015 Arhipelag XXI Press
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-15 02:03:51 UTC)

freedom of speech. "Rain Chant" from Ana Blandiana is a significant example of celebrating youth and sexuality compared with nature:

I am the most beautiful woman because it's raining
And I look good with rain's locks in my hair.
I am the most beautiful woman because it's windy,
And the dress desperately struggles to cover my knees[6]

As well as displaying an intense awareness of life, her poetry has several predominant dominant themes, such as morality, religion and spirituality. Linked to Romanian Orthodox Christianity, Ana Blandiana's poem "Pieta," published in 1969, reflects on the confusion of Jesus Christ's mother at his death. Being written under Communist period, her poem had harsh critics, not only because religion was a sensitive topic to discuss upon, but it didn't respect the Communist style of writing and it questioned some aspects of Christianity:

Clear pain, death returned me,
To your breast subdued, almost a child.
You do not know if you should thank
Or cry
For this happiness,
Mother.

The need of authenticity and spontaneity in writing was later on continued in the 90s and 2000 generations. The uncensored sincerity, with its inevitable hectic outburst, the daily torments of the common people, the sort of realism of the universe, the brutal imaginary of the daily lives and its verbal expression in poetry needed to be accepted and viewed as a repression of the self, belonging to everyone who survived, more or less, the Communist oppression.

From a more or less subjective point of view, one can observe that after the Romanian Revolution, in December 1989, the Romanian literature was no longer a tool for the Communist Party. The literary works of young poets was written under the challenge of changing the system, mentality, style, under the freedom of expression. Their poems testify to a new resurgence of talent in the freer conditions of postmodernism.

Bibliography

Bertens Johannes, Willem, Bertens Hans, Fokkema Douwe. *International Postmodernism: Theory and Literary Practice.* Amsterdm, Philadelphia: Comparative History of Literatures in European Languages, 1997.

Cărtărescu, M. *Postmodernismul românesc* (*The Romanian Postmodernism*). Bucharest: Humanitas, 1999.

Denise, Roman. Fragmented Identities: Popular Culture, Sex, and Everyday Life in Post- Communist Romania. Plymouth: Rowan & Littlefield Publishers, 2007.

Mincu Ștefania. Douăismul Poetic Românesc. Despre starea poeziei II. Constanța: Pontica, 2007.

Negrici, Eugen.Romanian Literature under Communism. Poetry (I), Bucharest: Editura Fundației Pro, 2006.

[6] http://dariaflorea.com.au/darias-poetry/mascara-published-poems/

BDD-A22034 © 2015 Arhipelag XXI Press
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-15 02:03:51 UTC)

Stoica, Ion. *Young Poets of a New Romania: An Anthology*. Translated by Brenda Walker and Michaela Celea-Leach. London, Boston: Forest Books, 1991.

Todorova Maria, Gille Zsuzsa. *Post-communist Nostalgia*. New York, Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2012.

Limba română. Manual pentru clasa a VI-a, Editura de Stat Didactică şi Pedagogică, Bucureşti, 1953.

Limba română. Manual unic pentru clasa a V-a elementară, Editura de Stat, Bucureşti, 1950.

URL- http:// www.romanianvoice.com
www.dariaflorea.com
www.iwm.at
www.erstestiftung.org

BDD-A22034 © 2015 Arhipelag XXI Press
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-15 02:03:51 UTC)