# *HISTORICAL AND ARTISTIC IDENTITY IN ROMANIAN PAMPHLETS*

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***Abstract:*** *Having its origin in Antiquity (Aristophanes, ancient orators), the pamphlet is a border- genre. Paradoxically, it is not acknowledged even by the authors of journalism textbooks as belonging to their specific field. The pamphlet pictures the meddling of literature, social context and individual thinking. The present contribution focuses on different kinds of definitions in the world literature and Romanian literature as well, trying to outline this specific manner of writing. The principal aims of this paper is to highlight the means used to render also the identity of the epoch from a historical, social and political point of view. The journalistic pamphlets have definitely literary bonds especially when Tudor Arghezi or N. D. Cocea are representatives. Their authors act for the new literary and political Romanian consciousness at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century. One of the main intents is to discuss upon text and pre-text (several empiric events re-designed in the discourse). The authors' personalities and visions are reflected in vocabulary, figures of speech and the syntactic topics. Due to these two already mentioned writers, the pamphlet is devoted to a literary genre, winning the right of being a constant presence in the Romanian literature. It has also preserved its artistic actuality re-*emerging with new valences and it has an irrefutable documentary value.

***Keywords:*** *pamphlet, identity, epoch, style, feature.*

## Difficulties to define the literary genre of the pamphlet

The first pamphlet-savour appeared in diverse historical periods of Romanian literature being considered minor gossips, forms of defamation or misleading accusation (D. Cantemir, Heliade-Rădulescu, N. Bălcescu, Cezar Bolliac, M. Kogălniceanu, C. Negruzzi, N. T. Orăşanu, etc.). We owe the modern pamphlet with moral and social function, revealing the truth, to Paul-Louis Courier (1824). The first Romanian pamphlet as a whole text came out in journalist writings (Munteanu, 1999: 12). Each critic and each writer offered different definitions. However, etymology is clear – as Voltaire stated first, the others also agree with the Greek root phégo, meaning "to burn". It reflects upon the warlike and polemic human nature.

In Romanian literature, the pamphlet remains a hybrid form combining features of two functional styles: literature and journalism or even philosophy. The constancy of this literary specie does not help to determine its autonomy. It observes the principle of trans-textuality (Genette, 1982). Even Romanian literature may offer meaningful examples of poem-pamphlet, novel-pamphlet, literary tablets and essay-pamphlet like all the other foreign literatures. The critics' point of view is quite different as they notice a theatrical implication and ludic attitude (Ghitoi, 2005, 57). From the point of view of pragmatic semantics, pamphlet aims at one of the fundamental functions of language: debate and an encounter of subjectiveness (Ducrot, *apud* Munteanu, *op. cit.*: 117). The pamphlet rejects lies covered by euphemisms, general

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terms or „cuvinte care servesc ca văl pentru aparenţe mai ageabile" (Dumistrăcel, 2011: 45). The pamphleteers are militants for various causes.

**Theatrical implication in Romanian pamphlet**

Tudor Arghezi is one of the most important Romanian writer approaching all kinds of literary genres. He also exceled in pamphlets involving a theatrical aspect, which is not a common feature. Many times he uses interesting and subtle linguistic tools of the stagecraft. Probably one of the best examples is a pamphlet dedicated to Ion Kalinderu, member of the Romanian Academy: „Sunt figuri care joacă, în viu, rolul statuilor sau al palatelor – şi pentru care simţi o suferinţă când, în timpul unei absenţe, au dispărut. Golul acesta este, fără pricină studenţească" (Arghezi, 2003: 1344). Satire exists in similes, but mostly in gesture-suggestions. They expose the mediocrity of the character. The false pretentions are also criticized due to motions and signs which are obviously covered by masks: „Pretenţiile şi ifosul, la cei care nu au statutul să le poarte, trebuie lovite peste nas. Sunt măşti pe care e milostiv să le laşi să zacă pe unii ochi..."(*Ibidem*).

Being aware of the use of the second person as an antique legacy of rhetoric, we highlight another consequence. It involves a direct approach and the reader becomes a spectator. This is the case of N. D. Cocea's pamphlets. He was a writer of the beginning of the 20$^{th}$ century, deeply engaged in leftist political actions. An artistic sample is the text pointing to the most respected person in that epoch, Titu Maiorescu. The cultural and political personality, a national symbol of progress and balance, is depicted in a burlesque manner. Maiorescu became a character in Cocea's stage-act. He is slow, over ritualistic, and even the deafness, understandable at his age, turns to irony. Cocea wishes to point out his individualism, but his grounds are mainly political ones. This picture of a mechanical reason speaking like a barrel organ is fortunately dimmed by the presence of Mrs. Maiorescu, always next to her husband.

Tudor Arghezi impresses deeply with his histrionism being able to change his language any time. He appeals for phonetic comic connotations, a proof that his text must be better heard, not read. One good example is the portrait of a dramatic author in that epoch, I. Locusteanu. First of all, he mocked at his name replacing letters and imposing Lăcusteanu, a patronymic very closed to the Romanian noun for *hopper* – a waster insect affecting crops. The victim is depicted with a streak of irony discovered in embarrassing alliteration and cacophonies: „Iată un om cam cumsecade, negustor cu parale, cu cavou construit din vreme, cu case în Bucureşti" (Arghezi, 2003: 771). The sentence seems to be a phonetic whip with a clear dysphoric effect upon the public.

Next to others, of course, both mentioned authors seem to be familiar with few concepts related to modern times: "total theatre", "pure theatre" (Ubersfeld, 1999: 89).

**Fabulous in pamphlets**

Under the influence of folklore and fairy stories, Romanian pamphleteers uses standard beginning-formulae like "Once upon a time" in order to overpass time and space. Another solid explanation is linked to ethos. There is also an anthropological explanation as the essence and artistry of human being prevail in "fabulation man" (Eco, 2002).

The pamphlet „Povestea prinţilor saşi/ The fairy tale of the Saxon princes", written by Arghezi, ironizes a reality by narrating the story of a king with 22 spoiled,



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invalid children. The main function of fabulous dimension is the ancient desire to change the world into a better one. The realm of "Cultural Lice", omnipresent in Romanian society, especially at the political level, must disappear according to the wish of the author and of the people (Arhezi, 1979, 144). At the same time, the readers can realize the act of creation and a kind of mise en abyme of the author. The biography is sublimed and reality is transcended (Sasu, 1976, 246).

Traditionally, the mentality of Romanian people do not perceive a very clear difference between good and evil, preferring an intermediate area – the fabulous and traditional realm of "not so bad". Rhetoric questions, simile and hyperbola emphasize the criticized aspects – *The Man with Black Eyes* (*Ibidem*: 132). The onomatology resembles the one in fairy stories – each character receives long, pertinent names frequently including alliteration "Konon Arămescul Donici Băcăoanul". The stiff name connotes an archaic creature which is depicted by fairy-hyperbola of an ogre – "Kanon, the Bishop": „…uriaş cărnos al cărui nume sună atât de gros" (*Ibidem*: 34). Other names are provided with onomatopoeic sonority: *Grigore Trancu Iaşi* (Arghezi, 2005: 1416).

The force of imagination diminishes the vulgar, too strong expressions or the cliché. Tudor Arghezi and N. D. Cocea use irony and satire mainly in order to bring out new stylistic bonds in which the novelty of ideas, themes and rules of the society is highlighted. They borrow from the traditional fairy stories the verbal magic and enchantments: „Pe planul întâi nori de aur, la dreapta pilaf cu zahăr, la stânga un pârâu cu lapte, şi, paralel, un altul cu cafea. Banane atârnă din azur pînă în gură..." (*Ibidem*: 101). This succulent landscape proves to be only a theatrical façade for mediocrity and stupidity. The world is reinterpreted according to personal parameters.

Sometimes the authors like to play the part of heroes. This is N. D. Cocea's case who defended the cause of Romanian army before the WWII. Romania was supposed to buy gas-mask made by the business-man Malaxa and the German Emil Ochs. The journalistic campaign lead by Cocea in his magazine *Facla* foiled those plans. The Romanian poet Ion Vinea, using the nickname *the observer*, helped Cocea and wrote most of the pamphlets against the devilish intent. Romania army received good and efficient masks made in Poland.[1] Corruption/evil was defeated.

The usual fairy tales use storms, high winds and other surprising forces of nature in order to attend to Good. The pamphleteers dispose verbal storms, punishing tornadoes of words which demolish infamous persons; naturalism might be noticed in many phrases: „…se caută adânc între fese sau în nas şi scot cu două degete, elegant, fiinţa procreată de insul lor, un vierme lung, melancolic şi moale, pe care ţi-l aruncă ca un fir de fidea puturos" (Arghezi, 2004: 921).

**Taxonomy in pamphlets**

All the pamphleteers demolish idols and personalities. These Romanian authors uses either gigantic images through hyperbola or tinny representations for depicting the gutter-world. The latter, a kind of Lilliput-pamphlet, consists of small, insignificant people, objects, facts. This is a more original and not so common way to approach a satiric broadsheet.

The authors, Tudor Arghezi and N. D. Cocea, see the world as an elvish sight in novels, poems, etc. or as a dwarfish, ugly, evil place in pamphlets. All the characters

[1] http://www.dailycotcodac.ro/2013/10/santajul-de-presa-marii-ziaristi-si-marile-lor-portofele-2/ read on 15.08.2015.



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might be included in a kind of Uriah Heep paradigm: stutters, earless, idiots, softheads, all the infamous persons are present in the political fair-ground. The political world is parallel to the normal one. „…mişună găinarii cu diplomă şi ghiozdane" (Arghezi, *op. cit.*: 1342).

Sometimes, the characters in pamphlets became ancient heroes not with overpowers, but having mocked capacities. For example, this is the case of the great Romanian historian Nicolae Iorga facing a cartooned appearance. He is compared to Noah lacking the biblical wisdom and coming out not on the volcanic land of Mount Ararat, but on the mud of two commercial streets in Bucharest – Calea Griviţei and Matache Măcelaru (Arghezi, 2004: 1054). A giant is turned into a midget aiming at readers' surprise. Other foreign worthy personalities (Louis XVI of France, Nicholas II of Russia) become ridiculous and hammer-heads: „nenorocită făptură omenească, o paiaţă încoronată fără voinţă şi fără cap" (Cocea, 1949: 63); „biet cretin, abrutizat de alcool" (*Ibidem*). In other cases, the charcater falls into another category, ironically more fit for satirical comments. For example, in Arghezi's pamphlets, the nickname of the historian Nicolae Iorga, *the cock/cocoşul*, becomes *the turkey/curcanul*: „Pseudonimul Cocoş nu-i mai era de ajuns marelui curcan, care s-a văzut obligat să cheltuiască şi cântec personal" (Arghezi, 1972: 254).

Arghezi enriched taxonomy by adding a new kind of journalistic publication. In 1928, he issued a tinny satirical magazine called *Bilete de papagal/ Parrot's Cards*. This title referes to an ancient form of fortune-telling. It was first of all a daily leftwing newspaper, and afterwards a literary magazine. The first issues were entirely written by Arghezi, and after that he asked his fellow-writers to do the same thing: Otilia Cazimir, Ionel Teodoreanu, Felix Aderca, George Topârceanu, Urmuz. This small-sized magazine, containing many pamphlets, appeared until 1945.

These are three innovative features of the pamphlet in Romanian literature.

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