CONFLUENCES

LITERARY DEBATES IN THE ROMANIA'S NINETIES CONSEQUENCES AND ASSESSMENTS

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Abstract:

Social systems undergo inevitable turning points in their evolution. These changes may be caused by either progressive accumulation or a major crisis. The latter applies to Romania, who - after being a communist country - grew into a democracy as a result of a popular uprising. The dictatorship and its effects became the favourite topic of discussion in many debates - political, economic, social, or cultural - whose protagonists asserted their various opinions in the name of democracy or general usefulness. The participation in these debates was also exceptional – from well-meaning but resentful people, lucid and/or visionaries, to crypto-communists, apocalyptic and even alienated people. That explains the absence of consensus. The respective period of time was coined as "an endless transition", a term which covered all the masked avatars of Romanian society (and of the literary phenomenon, too). Confrontations were particularly illustrative within the printed media in the field of culture, which beside tackling the general problems also focused on specific guild issues: the repercussions of the dictatorship on literary life, the writer's status, the effects of censorship and the freedom of expression, the ethical and moral criteria, the literary canon, the future of publishing houses and literary publications, the very existence of the Writers' Union of Romania, the literary exile and the 'inner exile' (of writers from the Republic of Moldova). The topics above polarized differently, in opposite directions, which could be summarized as follows: in our country, culture was as a form of resistance during communism when Romania was 'a Siberia of the spirit'.

The passing of a quarter of a century from the 1989 popular uprising now facilitates a retrospective overview of those particular times.

Keywords:
Communism, transition, democracy, literature, globalization.

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Rezumat:

În evoluția sistemelor sociale apar, inevitabil, momente ale schimbării. Ele sunt fie rezultat al acumulărilor în progres, fie cauza unui impas major. Situația din urmă caracterizează România comunistă, care a trecut, prin revoluție, la democrație. Dictatura și efectele ei au generat aprinse dezbateri în toate sferele de activitate: politică, economică, socială, culturală, aspect sub care numeroșii protagoniști și-au exprimat aserțiunile lor în numele democrației și utilității generale. Participarea a fost excepțională - de la resentimentari, bine intenționați, lucizi și/sau vizionari, la cripto-comuniști, apocaliptici și chiar alienați -, fapt care explică absența unei consensualități. Perioadei i s-a pus sigiliul „interminabila tranziție", sub care apar, disimulate, avatarurile societății românești (și ale fenomenului literar). Confruntările au fost ilustrative mai ales în rândul discuțiilor din presa culturală, care au vizat, pe lângă problematica generală, chestiuni specifice breslei: repercusiunile dictaturii asupra vieții literare, statutul scriitorului, efectele cenzurii și libertatea de exprimare, criteriile etice și morale, canonul literar, soarta editurilor și revistelor culturale, existența Uniunii Scriitorilor, exilul literar și „exilul intern" (scriitorii din Republica Moldova). Subiectele de mai sus au polarizat diferențiat, în direcții opuse, ce ar putea fi rezumate ideatic astfel: în țara noastră, cultura s-a manifestat ca o formă de rezistență or România a fost, în tot acel răstimp, o „Siberie a spiritului".

Trecerea unui sfert de secol de la Revoluție, facilitează retrospecția cu privire la intervalul parcurs.

Cuvinte-cheie:

Comunism, tranziție, democrație, literatură, globalizare.

In December 1989 Romania moved from a communist system to a democratic one. As it is well known, socio-economic and political systems undergo changes as a result of either their evolution or a major crisis, the situation in Romania being illustrative in the negative way. While both aspects imply the effects of accumulation in time, they differ in the sense that the first one represents a progressive evolution of the existent 'data' and of its standards, whereas the second one involves failure. In this case, the course of transformations is inert and includes the 'resetting' of the system, the reconsideration of the causes, and new projections for the social architecture. They act simultaneously and are brought together with the aim

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of eliminating the consequences of the past and of finding viable solutions for the future.

The Romanian society was the subject of a thorough process of restructuring which began violently, as many other social uprisings, and which seemed to have had the effect of a guillotine. Comparing the communist system to a seven-headed dragon metaphorically explains why the result was not the expected one. In a very short time, the social scene was occupied by wide social debates in all its fields. In politics the transition to a multi-party system and to democracy emerged. The justice system and the property rights benefited from a profound redefinition. The same applied in economics, industry, or agriculture. Every social aspect became visible thanks to their coverimg by mass-media, who recovered its mission of providing fast and useful information. The Parliament - at first an ad-hoc forum, later a freely elected body of government - elaborated laws and a new Constitution, which had to be implemented by the new governmental structures. The social order was reconsidered and various forms of liberty - previously suppressed by the old system - became now opperative. All these briefly presented facts stand as the consequences of the fact „*that 23 million people have lived for a few decades in a madman's unconsciousness ...* in a system without a safety valve which allowed for reckless impulses of a unique leader to become catastrophic."[1]. The debating within the Romanian society continued as transition was made from a centralized economy to liberalization and competitive exposure on the market, which were severely affected by the phenomenon pr procrestinating the changes, this being coined with a term widely used by all media: the endless transition.

The multitude of existent opinions of the time focused on the idea that the evil should be radically exterminated and that a new beginning - as a re-birth - was absolutely necessary. On the other hand, there very few those who adopted a lucid view on the situation, by recuperating what was

[1] Virgil Tănase, 1983, *C'est mon affaire:sotie,* (translated by author)Paris: Flammarion Publishing House, p. 2.

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still useful and exploitable, with the intent of recovering from losses and improving the state of facts. A third 'option', which circulated rather anecdotically - the allusion to the Dalmatian dog breed as a social representation: white with black spots - is based on Serge Moscovici's theory[2] according to whom "a citizen who thinks is the product of the "citizen who is thought", he depends on the power and on the context that conceived him"[3]. Yet, the enormous gravity of some of the 'culpabilities', in comparison to what could be defined as a 'collective guilt' (the latter being instilled within the system), implied serious disproportionalities, since the terms are barely comparable, thus illegitimate.

Therefore, the relationship of forces within the public sphere was represented by the confrontations between the two attitudes, which, again, are only mentioned as a common denominator of the multitude of opinions spanning the social context of the post-revolutionary Romania. It should be here mentioned that the radical opinions were triggered by the accumulated sufferings and humiliations endured by the people on one hand, and on the other that, in such radical moments of history, the people's expectations for

[2] Adrian Neculau, 2004, *Viaţa cotidiană în comunism,* Iasi: Polirom Publishing House, p. 36.

[3] We here present the entire quotation: „The representations, the ideologies are the products of certain groups, social classes, or cultures. It's trivial to only define the agent that produced the representation; much more productive is to identify its motivation. It is easy to learn «who» invented it, but it is more instructive to learn «why» they did it, because the representation exclusively contributes to «the formation processes for orientation behaviour of social communication». How can this be understood? If an individual has in certain circumstances a certain representation of the world in general, and of his environment, then he will act, when opportunity arises, in accordance with this representation. The representations contribute to the forming of social practices that generate values and rules which get to be the basis of specific collective relations. In the preface of his treaty on social psychology, published in 1984, Moscovici noted that social psychology is the science of ideological phenomena which includes systems of representations and attitudes, conditioning the contents of social representations, of habits, and of states. Representations are not generated by isolated individuals or groups, but by actors-citizens who are institutionally integrated and ethically positioned, actively engaged in a collective project, and delivering a discourse that defines them. Definitely, a citizen who thinks is the product of the «citizen who is thought», he depends on the power and on the context that had conceived him".

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a better social future were natural and easily understandable when compared to what they had during the five decades of communism. In such contexts, whenever there is a major change - as, for instance, the one at the end of the Second World War - history manifests itself psychotically through cyclothymic episodes. Good intentions have simultaneously been accompanied by all the 'gifts' from Pandora's Box , which profited by the weaknesses of transition and stretched over the social life like an invisible net, thus having a devastating effect through all its illicit benefits and better organization in many of the existent circumstances of the time. Corruption on higher levels cohabitated with progress as truth lived along mystification. In the meantime, the debating participants advanced their arguments as though they were immutable truths, while the counter-argumentation always had a tendency to being resized as 'debatable'. Against this background, we witnessed a 'general scuffle' in the first years of the post-December era, as a famous critic once said.

Most of the doctrinal issues concerning the problems of the post-communist society focused sharply on the everyday life, whereas literary and artistic circles concentrated on the area of abstract theory, as though finding a solution for the endless ideatic debates had become a duty of national honour that fell under the responsibility of the writers. Yet, instead of extinguishing the fire of the polemic debates, they seemed to inflame it with every intervention, some of the protagonists getting pleasure in throwing oil on the flames. A very interesting aspect of the debate is the fact that some of the writers who were the most unmerciful toward the late communist system or their collaborationist - therefore, guilty - colleagues adjusted their discourse in certain circumstances, accepting that the Writers' Union had represented the intellectual resistance at the time. Yet, this kind of concessions were made in contexts which can be considered almost hidden when compared with the negative intensity which characterized their dozens, maybe even hundreds of written articles. In addition, these writers even admitted some merits of those incriminated, but they did it in an equivocal

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manner and not because they accepted them, but rather because they wanted to appear as objective as possible while anathematizing their colleagues.

The high frequency of the confrontations, which always added new accents and nuances to the advanced ideas, turned the debate into a kind of a dialogue of the deaf, and the passing of two and a half decades did not bring the expected ideatic clarifications, they only strengthened the paricipants' beliefs. The first years after December 1989 witnessed an exponential growth in number of both the confrontations and the literary publications, as institutional or private initiatives, not to mention the publishing houses which sprang up in thousands like 'mushrooms after rain', which were seen as profitable busineses, though extremely harmful for the local literature and writers[4].

In the short period of two years, the first three volumes of "*The Chronology of literary life in postcommunism" [Cronologia vieții literare în postcomunism]* (1990 - 1992) were published. The volumes were edited by Bianca Burţa-Cernat as a team-work result of a group of young researchers coordinated by Eugen Simion. Without being exhaustive, yet intended as such, the *Chronology* succeeded in listing over 80 literary publications, from which excerpts were objectively selected (*i.e.* without any comments from the authors) in order reveal how some specific events were reflected in the literary printed media of the time. The work soon became referential, and Mircea Anghelescu, a literary historian, commented on it as follows: "One can not emphasize enough the great service this «chronology» made to literary historians who can here find - illustrated in very short excerpts - all the ideas and attitudes vehiculated in those years of both chaos and passion,

[4] Over 3,500 publishing houses appeared, most of them were private, the so-called 'apartment-publishing houses' set up by writers, but especially by enterprising typographers who flooded the market with consumist literature, having no literary value, with new editions of old and forgotten authors and with poorly translated works. Therefore, the emergence of a so-called 'substitute-based culture' was inevitable. Within this culture, authors like Octav Minar and V. Baboeanu - to give just a few examples which were famous 100 years ago - wrote about Eminescu's love stories or reproduced fragments from the correspondence of the poet with Veronica Micle. Against this background of bad taste, academic editions and the real artistic literature were disfavoured.

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which inevitably reflects their heterogeneous and contradictory character: those times were exactly the same. In fact, this work is an illustrated bibliography (illustrated through texts) of those times and not only literary historians but also novel writers may profit from it by re-living those moments of confusion during the months, and then years, of the 'transition'. As a raw - psychological - material, as a layout of the experience of various authors or groups of forces, as a testimony of great illusions asserted with frankness, in good faith, and also imprudently, those volumes and texts proposed by authors are most valuable and will be the study object of many researchers. They would constitute - anonymously, of course - the basis for many research works of the years to come, as they were intended by the authors. Many of the materials selected and published here have an informational value given not so much by their character of indisputable truths, but, on the contrary, by their character of only being a facet of a truth which remains to be later recomposed from many other similar testimonies."[5]. On the other hand, it should be here mentioned that many other studies, articles and books on the same topic, written by both Romanian and foreign authors, have been published during the period of almost a quarter of a century that has since passed (see the *Bibliography*).

The *Chronology* entirely confirms the Brownian effect produced by the extremely numerous opinions and attitudes which impregnated like spores the pages of the cultural printed media. Even if in this text they seem to have a common denominator, they exhibit highly personal accents, as far as their nuances, approach or intended goal are concerned. The *Chronology* did plan neither to find ideatic solutions nor to present a general assessment of the period. Yet it did succeed in creating a (sort of) synopsis of the wide range and density of topics, of the relationship between forces, of the deontology of discourse, of issues related to the role of specific generations, of the intrusion of media in literature and many many other. Due to its high

[5] Mircea Anghelescu, 2015, „Bibliografice", *Romania Literară*, No. 22, p. 14. (http://romanianstampnews.blogspot.com/).

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concentration on sources, the *Chronology* allows - as previously mentioned - for the most revealing aspects which captivated the attention of the whole profession to be indentified, and along with them the polemic debates in which many notorious writers, and not only they, participated. In the near future, seven subsequent volumes covering the post-communist period 1993-2000 are expected to be published.

The most present topics for debate became almost obsessive for the cultural media and also reverbarative on the Romanian literary scene. They are as follows (the hierarchization here is rather arbitrary): (A) Dictatorship *versus* democracy; (B) Collaborationism as a pact with the communist power; (C) The abolition of censorship and liberalization of opinions; (D) 'The writer's status' and their involvement/non-involvement in politics; 'the literature in the drawer' (which was non-publishable for reasons of censorship during the communist period); (E) Revaluation of literary works according to the canon of the past political regime; (F) Reclaiming the exile; "the inner exile" literature from Basarabia (Republic of Moldova); (G) Restoring the work of Romanian and foreign writers who had been indexed us undesirable; (H) Revaluating the new biograpfical genres (diaries, memorialistic literature from prison, religious literature) (I) The future of the Writers' Union and the evolution of its business structures (publishing houses, journals, real estate); (J) The various generations of writers and their forms of expression (writers of the 60s, the 80s, the 90s, and of the year 2000); (K) Literary criticism and its role in the literary metabolism of the post-communist era.

Each of those 'topics' has been restored on the basis of hundreds of pages being read, and about as many authors/articles, until a certain degree of informational saturation was reached. Their detailed interpretation, 'item by item' is inoperable within the present article, due to the length dimensions imposed by the strictness of the editorial production, but it is certain that each item of the listing above provides the frame for further development accompanied by various examples and commentaries. It is also necessary to mention that a thematic individualization is difficult to

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meet in the exact order or under the exact names that have been here listed, since they are not 'pure', but mixed, as they interfered with each other because of their 'miscible' character closely connected to the problems and interests of the profession.

Therefore, our intervention here is limited to only highlighting some of the aspects that are responsible for the current situation twenty-five years after the moment of 1989. A first question is why writers would assume to 'contribute' to these national debates, even when the topics did not belong to their field of expertise[6]. An explanation for this attitude is the fact that, during the communist dictatorship, writers succeeded in consolidating an image of authentic leaders of opinion, even to the detriment of some of their fellow professionals, such as journalists who had become servants of the totalitarian ideology, instead of being in the service of the public. Newspapers din not at all matter to the educated citizens of the communist society who knew that the press is ideological, propagandist, false. They looked instead for indirect allusions within the written texts (the so-called 'lizards' - and there were plenty of them!) and this textual metaphoric style was considered as a form of liberty and of system disapproving, whether it came from notorious writers or from simple debutants. This fact explains why the status of the writer came quite often very close to that of a prophet. The written press did not evolve into a topic for debate, because it was obedient to the dictatorial regime and promoted ideas and attitudes that nobody believed in any longer. The changeover within the printed press was rather instantaneous[7]. Yet in literature the resistance against communism

[6] It is now the time to acknowledge the fact that many prominent witers and intellectuals (especially academics) are members of the Romanian Parliament; this, however, had no effect on the expectations of fellow professionals and on the profession in general. The only exception was the one of the most 'cursed' writers, the poet Adrian Paunescu, whose legislative initiatives restored some of the professional dignity for writers, theater actors, or visual artists. In reverse, many Romanian members of the Parliament wanted and succeded - in a very short time - in becoming university professors, while even more became writers.

[7] Through their representatives, old or new, newspapers adapted quickly to the market economy and they proved to be the most dynamic social category in the way they accepted the 'values' of the capitalism. The most famous representatives did not necessarily act in

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manifested openly, at first through an allusive metaphorical style which became more evident during the last years of Romanian communist era. Typical examples for the anti-communist resistance were novels such as those signed by Marin Preda ("*Delirul [The Delirium]"*, 1975, "*Cel mai iubit dintre pământeni [The Most Beloved of Earthling]"*, 1980), Augustin Buzura ("*Feţele tăcerii [Faces of Silence]",* 1974; *"Orgolii [Egos]",* 1977; *"Vocile nopţii [The Voices of the Night]"*, 1980), Viorel Cacoveanu ("*Aprobare pentru un tango [Approval for a Tango]"*, "*Schite [Short Stories]",* 1982), Fănuş Neagu ("*Scaunul singurătăţii [The Seat of Solitude]",* 1988), Ion Băieşu (*"Balanţa [The Scales]",* 1985), Peter Săcudeanu ("*Biblioteca din Alexandria [The Library of Alexandria]",* 1980; "*Cina cea de taină [The Last Supper]",* 1984), volumes of poetry or various articles published in cultural journals and magazines (such as those signed by Ana Blandiana), or even the attitudes of some writers attending the meetings at the Writers' Union or their attitude within the cultural printed media (Geo Bogza, Stefan Aug. Doinaş). All of the above should be accompanied by the names of disident writers (Paul Goma, Virgil Tanase, Dumitru Ţepeneag, Nicholas Breban), as they all opposed the political regime of the time. All of these covered, so to say, for the absence of the media reaction. Cultural magazines were the only ones where truths which could not penetrate newspapers could be read between the lines. It was only a continuation that the writers engaged themselves in the general debate as being their own and belonging to their field of literature, whereas a group of writers permanently contested all the credit literature had obtained from its readers. By focusing on the problems of the profession, they changed literature readers into a sort of spectators witnessing such debates that were extremely heated, even inflammatory, yet entirely unproductive.

As far as collaborationism and the pact with the communist power were concerned, the sanctions have been applied in December 1989 exactly

accordance with their conscience, but they profited from the opportunities given, so that in a period of a few years, the number of publications and their circulations grew exponentially, exposing thus the newly rich of the free and … democratic mass-media.

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as those applied after 1944, though trials targeted against those responsible for the disaster (in this case, the people on the top of the Communist Party), against the ideologic partisans, and the notorious collaborators of the regime. The degree of 'guilt' initially had a national character, and later impregnated the literary life. The fact that an institution such as CNSAS [National Council for Studying the Archives of 'The Securitate'] exposed mainly the writers' 'files' - as compared to other fields of activity - represents a reflex which can have a binary explanation: on one hand, a definite interest in what your fellows did in the past, on the other hand, "pointing the finger" at them in what seems to be a punishing manner[8]. Collaborationism has been a widely debated topic and some of the participants in the debates used every opportunity to draw the attention upon the 'sins' that fellow professionals made during the communist years and upon some great writers who behaved as 'the cheerful widows' (toward the regime). Those, very few, who did not agree with the above mentioned attitude found the justification and the explanation in the fact that the times in which these great authors lived were to be blamed: the age did not match their talent. The literary atmosphere of the 90s closely resembles the literary life after 1944. Dishonoured collaborators like Liviu Rebreanu, Ion Barbu, Nichifor Crainic, Vasile Voiculescu, Dumitru Caracostea, or self-exiled writers like Aron Cotruş, Mircea Eliade, Eugen Ionesco, Emil Cioran - only to mention the most famous ones - were replaced after 1990 by Mihail Sadoveanu, G. Calinescu, Tudor Vianu, Marin Preda, Nichita Stanescu. Tudor Arghezi 'made it' in both periods. The topic is still an open wound since some of the most influent Romanian writers still have a rather resentful than objective attitude. Their revaluation in accordance with the criteria of the 'new reading' led to the relaxation of literary canon and even to its changeover. While European models did not benefit very much from a

[8] Many corrupted political leaders (and not only), while being detained in the Police basement, decided to write informational notes reporting other people and trying to reduce their punishment. Mass-media called them 'writers', probably unconsciously, but this fact was considered an reputational injury by the professional writers.

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revaluation, certain western 'fashions' permeated the intellectual discussions about the literary (canonic) value, some of the critics overtly rejected the Romanian literature of the communist years as being an illusion. Consequently, important writers have been removed from the literature handbooks in schools and universities and the applied criteria for establishing the canon did not any more required consistency for artistic, human, or philosophical values. Experimenting with contemporary literature went considerably far enough in the sense that mass culture was promoted to the detriment of the educated one. The elitist culture, although is the only one able to establish the rules and the literary canon, experienced a worrying decline in all forms of education. It is well known that the real opinion formers are philosophy (by providing universal judgments) and literature (which, by its specific means, disseminated noble ideas such as virtue, ideal, good, truth, aesthetics, and beauty). But almost none of these luminous ideas are wanted any longer today. The love for wisdom and literature, which is absolutely necessary when establishing the literary canon, has become futile because the notion of utility became a measurable economic one. The new sources of culture in literary textbooks are those that have generated a new motto for society by promoting the myth of happiness (hedonism), of the cheap amusement, so that while we advocate for the eternal values of literature, contemporary readers are educated to admire the profit, the physical strength, the performance and the success at any cost.

The way of blaming (almost in corpore) our literary life also influenced the priorities of analyzing and evaluating art. The debates regarding the morality and character in art - two themes equally approved by the communist propaganda, but seen from a different point of view, appear as basically intertwined with the ones previously mentioned and became the stage of a real theatre of operatiions, especially in the early post-December years. As already shown, pragmatism eliminated these 'obstacles' in other areas of activity. The pact with the communist power (the so-called collaborationism) was an appropriate topic for clarification,

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which however led to disproportional manifestations[9]. The most saddening aspect of the debates was the rejection in corpore of all literary and cultural values of the communism. One of phrases most used in this regard belongs to Ioan Petru Culianu, who wrote it in one of his recuperated articles in the volume "*Păcatul împotriva spiritului [Sin Against the Spirit]",* a volume edited from his political writings. Associated with the traumatic experience of Russian dissidents, Culianu said that during all the years of proletarian dictatorship Romania was a "Siberia of Spirit"[10]. As a continuation of this phrase, Monica Lovinescu launched the concept of 'East-Aethics', a term that had been coined by Pierre Hasnner, a French (but of Romanian origin) specialist in international relations and which has been rapidly appropriated by some indigenous writers who actually put it into practice through their analyses. Another suggestion came from Virgil Ierunca and can be approximated as follows: *it does not matter what you have done before, what matters is what you will do from now on.* This has led to changes in the balance of power generated by the fact that old opportunists were very quick to adopt and endorse this saying. Wishing to demonstrate how well they did learn their lesson, instead of dedicating themselves to writing literature 'from now on', they engaged with all the vigor we knew they were capable of since before 1989 in those interminable debates that permeated the whole cultural printed press.

The very few who did not agree also appealed to Lovinescu, yet, this time it was Eugen Lovinescu's quotation: "*Maiorescu's finger pointed*

[9] The existence of 'court poets', of novelists and critics who saluted the faked socialist progress is undeniable. Nevertheless, the great representative of Romanian literature did not belong to those groups; in addition, cultural journals 'paid' their tribute on the first page of the publication, saving thus the rest of the pages. The 'guilt' - as it emerged from the cultural debates within … the press - turned out to be much bigger than any other problems existent in economy, industry, agriculture, in the social life, or even in sport, not to mention the culture, contained in thousands of pages published daily by zealous journalists.

[10] Ioan Petru Culianu uses the phrase in his article: *Cultura română?,* written in 1982, but published much later in "Agora" IV, no. 3 (July-September) 1991. The literary journal„Vatra" republished this controversial text under the title *Invitație la un examen: cultura română postbelică,* no. 5 (May), 1993, p. 4.

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toward the light indicates once again, in these hard times [the text was written in 1943, in the time of the Second World War], *the way forward*"[11]. The dispute between the two attitudes, unbalanced as it was, was major and it involved the new 'moral prosecutors' and the 'apoliticals", if we adopt the names used by the participants in the debates themselves. Both sides threw harsh words at each other, while the allusion, the offence, the lies and even the insult were almost normal within those debates.

Many pages have been written on the issue of the new 'Novicovs who use Romenglish in their discourse', on the 'red rectangle', on the new elites wich were established 'on the paper, by listing names', but also on older generations who are now 'expired'.

The opponents did not spare each other, they denigrated or visibly reduced in size and meaning any personal accomplishment the adversary may have had obtained, by implying that they were merely bonuses, of academical, ministerial, or some other institutional kind. The divergent aspect can be summarized as follows: morality and aethics in literature *versus* literary value. Adepts of East-Aethics were interested in the ethical code of the Romanian writer, while the others in the genetic code of the Romanian literature.

Issues like the abolition of censorship or the financial situation of the lucrative structures of the Writers' Union (publishing houses, journals and magazines) were rather neglected than neglijible aspects. The circulation of the cultural printed press dramatically decreased and no financial solution was found for the delicate question of the autonomy of creation. Reality has shown that after only a few years, literary journals ceased to represent a priority of the government as far as the allocated funds for their proper functioning were concerned. The lack of financial resources, which also included the salaries for people working in the field of culture, generated

[11] **** Cronologia vieții literare românești. Perioada postcomunistă [*The *Chronology of Romanian literary life. The communist period],* Vol. I (1990), Preface by Acad. Eugen Simion; edited by Bianca Burţa-Cernat, Buureşti: Editura Muzeului Naţional al Literaturii Române, 2014, p. VI.

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gaps in the edition of publication and the extinction of editorial offices. Editorial offices of cultural magazines had to cope with the market economy without having any qualification in the field. The lack of funds for implementing market policies, the absence of literary agents and of any motivations and information on marketing or promoting strategies - since private initiatives already penetrated the editorial world - were decisive in those times.

As far as censorship is concerned, the political restrictions were replaced by the economic ones right after a short period (three years) of relaxation, which was faster than expected. Regarding the devastating effects of this new kind of censorship, it should be here noted that the abolition of the censorship in the first three years of the post-communist era favored the dramatic decline of the literary and artistic value of many literary works. The phenomenon of over-compensation - to describe it in an elegant manner - generated the abandon of any aesthetic censorship, which at its turn gave feau vert to paper wasting and to unnecessary deforestation of homeland forests. "Although fewer and fewer books are being sold, more of them are being published" maliciously noted Maurice Nadeau[12] in an interview taken by Ion Pop. Any alleged writer had the opportunity to publish their 'complete works' for a certain price. Those literary products would not stand up to any criteria of the aesthetic censorship, however very many … authors succeeded in promoting themselves, in a direct and unlimited way. The economic difficulties in which publishing houses found themselves, after a promising start, was temporarily stopped by the emergence of a new class of non-professional, but arrogant, writers (many of whom are now members of the Writers' Union!) who paid for their books to be published. This practice is almost a general one today and affects all writers, including the professional ones. Sometimes, writers who paid for their books organized book launch parties that were remarkably similar to wedding parties; the less talented the author, the brighter and the more

[12] Ion Pop, 1994, *România literară,* no. 8, p. 22.

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cheerful the party as to prove that 'being an author' is a joyful achievement worth celebrating. In the Western and the American world of printing there is a specific term, 'vanity press', used when authors pay for their articles or books to get published, the practice being thus not necessarily sanctioned, but at least mentioned. That term is also very illustrative especially for Romanian writers.

In the absence of any policies for protecting the cultural heritage - which exist in Western European countries - our literary press surrendered and one may say it does not exist anymore, but merely survives. In addition, our cultural printed press had the misfortune to face, totally unprepared, a market competition which equates material values with the spiritual ones. Material values are values of consumption (they are immediate and characteristic of everyday life, some of them being unavoidable and absolutely necessary for survival), while the spiritual values are perennial, immaterial, indestructible, and act as nutrients for mind and soul. Publishing houses, editorial offices, circulation and dissemination of books and magazines were all permeated by the equation and, consequently, they demolished the 'writer's status'.

The spatial limitation of the present article does not allow us to make further considerations on the 'literature of the exile' and on the 'inner exile', though the question of the literary canon (included in the discussion about authors being revaluated through 'a new reading') has been tangentially dealt with. We also have to skip the discussion about the varius generations of writers or the one about revigoration of biographical genres (diaries, memoirs, or books on human suffering in general), but before drawing our conclusions, it is however necessary to add few words about the role literary criticism played during these years, a specific role which is required by the metabolism of a literature and which is other than being involved in the above mentioned debates. During the period of time that we discussed here literary criticism discarded the idea of being in 'public service'. Our great critics decided to retire from their everyday work as they were either attracted by the lure of politics or interested in other important, urgent

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projects (of literary-historical retrospective, for instance). That was the time when important studies on literary history have been published, authored by Ion Rotaru Dumitru Micu, I. Negoiţescu, N. Manolescu, Marian Popa and Alex. Ştefănescu, Petre Anghel, Eugen Negrici and Mihai Zamfir, Ion Simuţ, Sanda Cordoş, as well as the most important dictionaries of Romanian contemporary literature and Florin Mihăilescu's dictionary on the literature of the exile. At the same time, the reknowned critic Eugen Simion had been working on his History of Romanian Literature through its fundamental texts. In addition, the writers of the 80s were very active in establishing their space within the Romanian culture by founding their own association (ASPRO - The Association of Professional Writers in Romania).

Criticism within literary journals and magazines followed other criteria which mirrored our literary life being divided into literary groups of affiliation: the evaluation of literary works depended in a great measure on the affiliation of the authors to the respective groups. It sometimes felt like the critic had already formed his opinion even before he read the book. Although the principle *sine ira et studio* continued to be in use, literary criticism was not able to play any longer the role of the unbiased judge or of the expert in establishing the scale of values, since many young critics (especially the young ones who were 'teammates' of a certain publication or publishing house) did not act in accordance with their convictions, but with their affiliation (to the respective publishing house, publication, or coterie). In other words, it emerged a kind of literature which was based on contractual terms and paid in accordance to its performance, exactly as in the world of sports, with the difference that the gaming rules in sports were based on fair play. Therefore, it is not certain that the great literary works of those times have really been 'discovered'. From those already signalled, there may be some of them (great poetry volumes or novels) which are still waiting, patiently and imperishable, for their most appropriate reader: the literary critic. Forcing a metaphor, many of the valuable books could be considered as bottles carrying a message and floating in this commerciall *golfstream* of the mediatic ocean. Despite these shortcomings, various

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rankings have been worked out with the help of the private editorial market system, which is able to manipulate the scale of values judging it in favour of their own production by applying criteria, priciples and concepts that look almost scientific. Therefore, many of the valuable literary works published during the last quarter of a century may still be waiting for their critics to establish their real value.

Conclusions

Two and a half decades have passed and now the winner is obvious, although irrelevant in this case. Yet, we can not disregard the fact that the stake of this game of vanities was exactly this. However, after reading over 1,800 pages of literary ‚chronology', one can definitely say that we do have a representation of the period. It is though to be considered the fact that these three volumes can be considered as a proximal genre in comparison to the contemporary moment, which illustrates a specific difference.

Looking retrospectively upon the events, a first conclusion reinforces our feeling that the literary disputes on the topics presented here have not exhausted their resources. The truth itself - as an ideal theoretical consensus - does not seem to be 'touched' by reason. The situation during the period of time we discussed here resembled a war within the profession, where Romanians were fighting other Romanians.

In the frustrating absence of common, unanimous views, in other words in the absence of the professional solidarity, there was a question which was raised by those involved in the controversies: who is to blame? Huge and unhealthy energies were spent and the messages sent were not sustained by facts, but rather by 'codes': they were symbolic, despicable, Manichean, or intolerant. Whenever a writer was not accepted, the democracy of discourse manifested itself through intolerance, an aspect which is not very worthy of the literary language. The role of literary criticism, which had to ensure the metabolism of literature, was reduced at the beginning by the very will of the critics and, later, by the way criticism and its role were removed from literary life. Although various generations

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of critics are working together, the critical writing within literary publications, otherwise very active, does not exhibit the same interest in the canon or in seeking and establishing literary affiliations and configurations for the analysed authors and their literary works. The canon practically no longer exists, and neither does the identity, which had a decisive role in older contexts. And that happened because concepts like 'parents', 'homeland', 'tradition', 'geography', 'history'also disintegrated. In addition, it seems that everyone is afraid to admit that our society is not the best one, hence the embarrassment to criticize it. Although undoubtedly superior to a communist system, the capitalist democracy is nevertheless perfective. In the wish to clearly delimitate the two eras, some of the literary commentators of everyday life tended to cover what was previously called 'the exploitation of human by human' with a modesty veil, as if the painful truths of the past ar far more important than the reality of our everyday life, including here the diminishing of the writer's status, thus endangering writers to become the paria of the society. Nevertheless, there still are writers who make efforts to remain exponents of ideas, instead of fighting for their rights, which nobody had any interest in protecting and thus were lost. It is true, though, that the wealth of a prophet consists in their ideas.

Other transformations, as inevitable as they were, did not become topics for debatings although their relevance was as considerable. The entire Romanian society has been subject for a revaluation in the light of the past; at the time when Romania was dominated by heated debates about its past, Europe and the whole world were preoccupied with the technological revolution which was responsible for the Informational Society of Knowledge and having as result the phenomenon of globalization with its many economic and social consequences. At the same time, absent (though necessary) topics within our literary life are now easily noticeable: (A) The European aspect of Romanian literature; (B) The phenomenon of cultural globalization; (C) The protection of the cultural identity as national heritage; (D) The need to establish a literary canon at a national level; (E) The technological revolution and its impact on the reception of literary

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production; (F) The role of the literary agent, of marketing and advertising in the field of literature; (G) The new relationship (of communication) between writers and their readers. These are topics which do not exist separately as they were here listed, but intertwined and in a relationship of interdependence that can not be ignored.

In relation to everything above, there is a saying of Oscar Wilde which functions as a reminder to us all and is the most appropriate for the current situation: *„No man is rich enough to buy back his past".*

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