LITERARY TREND, A STYLISTIC MOSAIC OF INTER-WAR CULTURAL PRESS

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Abstract

The age of Pamfil Șeicaru is a landmark in the Romanian publishing, literature and politics; a wrought up era, with illustrious multipurpose personalities involved totally in developing a Romanian model in the various fields. Journalist, author of letters, politician, intellectual with literary ambitions, Seicaru was one of the explosive characters of the time, an acid opinion trainer and an intransigent analyst of the tumultuous political phenomenon. Founder of newspapers, philanthropist, close to the most important political circles, Seicaru tried to be more than a journalist and political writer and to get accredited as a literate. Inspired by the inter-war literary context, his literary, dramatic attempts are tributary to the journalistic style. He himself realizes that the daily journalism is wasteful and deforms the style specific to the literary work, but he perseveres also and in the period of exile after August 10th, 1944. About Pamfil Șeicaru was talked disproportionately little in recent decades, towards the essential contributions which he had in various fields of society.

Keywords: *literary trend, Pamfil Şeicaru, style, debate, cultural press*

Literary Trend, supplement of the newspaper *Curentul*

In one of the most prolific periods of Romanian literature and journalism, of high cultural and literary effervescence, Seicaru provides a platform to support talents already established or which are in an early stage of their expression – *Curentul literar*, supplement of the daily newspaper *Curentul*. About 160 poets and prosemen, dramatists, critics, translator found themselves in the pages of this publication, in the 18 months of operation. It is a period

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of remarkable development of the prose, the Romanian novel that knows the lyrical orientation, the aestheticized and symbolic, respectively the fantastic orientation. The novels of rural inspiration of Mihail Sadoveanu and Liviu Rebreanu are complementary to the novels of Camil Petrescu, Cezar Petrescu, George Calinescu, Hortensia Papadat-Bengescu. The novel develops, the literary reportage also, and the pamphlet is the favourite tool for journalists who flirt with literature.

Before the outbreak of World War II, clustered around major cultural figures, have founded several major magazines. For example, *Romania literara*, where Liviu Rebreanu coagulated a kernel of 30-40 young writers, or *Gandirea*, which has become under Cezar Petrescu and later Nichifor Crainic, one of the most important cultural publications of Romanian inter-war period. The ambition of Pamfil Șeicaru was to equal the performance and influence of these groups and his legitimation as generator factor of high culture, by launching *Curentul Literar.* Outside the inherent start-up of cultural creative act, in the intention of the journalist we also feel an intellectual competition with his generation peers, especially with those positioned in terms of culture policy of right. Therefore we consider necessary to develop the relationship between Pamfil Șeicaru and Nichifor Crainic.

They both come from the „trenches generation", animated by the national ideals of achieving the state unity. They claimed themselves from the same ideological-political vein, in the area of French right, monarchist, ultra-religious and Italian fascism. From a cultural standpoint, they are some of the most important representatives of inter-war traditionalism, of semanatorist stemming (see chapter two). Their collaboration began as a friendship on the eve of the war, then continued to magazines and newspaper of the 1920s (*Hiena*, *Gândirea*, *Cuvântul* and so on). Through Oscar Han and Cezar Petrescu, Crainic joined the newspaper *Curentul* since 1928. In the volume of memoirs *Zile albe, zile negre*, Crainic suggests that the disagreements between the two arose because of his success, for his appointment as general secretary and his career as university professor. In the same time, he states other tense moments, such as

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the d debate around the mediated lynching that would have been staged by Cezar Petrescu and Seicaru, in 1925, on the grounds of pornography of *Chira Chiralina* (Crainic, 1991: 225); F. Mistral's birth centenary, when Seicaru was dissatisfied with Crainic's success in French Provence (because of Crainic's oratorical success on returning home, *Curentul* did not publish anything about the festivities, believed Nichifor Crainic (Ibid.: 219). In 1929, when Crainic became a deputy, he left the newspaper *Curentul* definitively, where he has already been replaced in the theological-religious column by the philosopher Nae Ionescu (Ibid.: 207). Indeed Crainic's career entered a favourable turntable. He legitimated in terms of academic, cultural[1] and political and from 1930s also as journalist, as director of *Calendarul* newspaper. We also inventorize another malicious output from the newspaper drafted later by Crainic, a meeting which took place after the restoration of King Charles the II[nd], when Seicaru attempted reconciliation with Crainic, in a visit to Brasov: „I wound up with him in Brasov, with a car full of caviar and champagne, and his heart of infinite tenderness" (Crainic, 1991: 216). The competition has taken violent forms in the pages of Crainic's newspapers, through media campaigns and caricatures against the one who was baptized „Ziarilă"[2]. Seicaru answered in the House of Representatives, through attacks triggered by a close friend, attorney Hurmuz Aznavorian, against Crainic (Ibid.: 267). Sometimes these confrontations occur openly, publicly, not through intermediaries, as happened in April 1936, when Seicaru, Crainic and Dem. Theodorescu were the protagonists of a distasteful scene about the negative influence of the director of *Curentul* in the Romanian press (Sulutiu, 1975: 370).

The notation of a neutral persona, like Nicolae Carandino, journalist with leftist political orientations, deserves to be noted in

[1]In 1930, Crainic was awarded with the National Prize for Poetry.

[2]See also the articles signed by N. Crainic, *O paranteză*, in „Calendarul", no. 143/1932; A. Gregorian, *Banda Şeicaru-Zăgănescu operează în Buzău*, in „Sfarmă-Piatră, no. 101/1937; A. Gregorian, *Un şperț şeicăresc*, in „Sfarmă-Piatră", nr. 103/1937.

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this context. Dramatic columnist appreciated at that time, Carandino considers that the followers of nationalist right ad maurrasiste „were respectable as long as they were a team". Then between the rightist publications (*Cuvantul, Curentul, Calendarul* and magazines annexes) occurred rivalries and attacks „filled with invectives and threats". „The polemics Nae against Pamfil, Nichifor against Pamfil, Dem. against Nichifor, and that to cite only the most persistent and of sad echo, gave the press battles a structure that's hard to shake off" (Carandino, 1992: 193-194), believes Carandino who, during the war, was an employee of *Curentul familiei*. Given the competition triggered between Pamfil Șeicaru and Nichifor Crainic, at all levels of social prestige, the cultural legitimation to which the director of *Curentul* aimed appears in a different light. It is possible that Seicaru have tried in *Curentul literar* the creation of a new ... current of thinking. His strong personality could not accept the notoriety of this platform where he didn't belong and, therefore, he tried with a personal creation (*Curentul literar)* to counterbalance it, in order to assert himself as an animation vector of literary and intellectual life.

A conceptual imbalance

It is this strong desire that determines his searches, giving the custody of his editorial to some consecrated writers, in the idea that these would gather around their values. In the effervescence of inter-war period, *Curentul Literar* is a stylistic patchwork which seeks to restore the alert transformations of the era, but ends up in a fatal conceptual imbalance.

Initially, Pamfil Șeicaru's concept, according to which the authenticity, history, faith, peasant soul and folklore are essential elements of the structure of Romanian people, is found in the pages of the publication. With the first restructuring of the management team, *Curentul Literar* acquiesces towards modernism antagonistic direction of inter-war Romanian literature, by synchronizing the national and European literature, promoting young writers and closing the gap in culture. In the second year of publication we also identify elements of Romanian constructivism, especially after hiring

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the poet Ion Vinea among close collaborators. Vinea, supported among others by Arghezi, also a collaborator of *Curentul*, pleaded for the imperative of a correspondence between art and contemporary spirit of modern technique, which invents new forms. This search has damaged the publication personality, who instead of finding itself at the confluence of trends, it came eventually to be placed in a deconstructed identity confusion.

Curentul Literar, conducted by the publishing house *„Curentul"*, appeared between the 9th of April 1939 and October 1941. The first issue appeared on Easter, under the name of *Curentul Magazin*, in outstanding technical conditions for the time. At the top of the newspaper were mentioned the fields of interest: Literature – Art – Theatre – Critical – Can Can – Fashion.

In *Bilet*, the program of the magazine published on page 1, was published the following motivation: „We thought about weaving a magazine. A magazine that has only friends, a ring for their ideas, a concert hall for their art, a courier of information and guidance. A magazine for all writers and artists, of all ages and creative and positive trends, in the national framework we represent. A magazine for all readers who wish not only a fictional bulletin, but also a spiritual map of the country, relentlessly annotated as a weather indicator. Finally, a magazine necessary as a clock rewound for eight days."

Ion Veliciu described the supplement as „the first citadel of letters with the gates wide open. The young man repleted with dreams could beat trustingly in the door of the editorial office and so the „revolutionary" who for years could not enter the family of a magazine (...). Today, all these young people, received with understanding by *Curentul Literar* we encounter in most magazines of art and literature" (Veliciu, 1942: 181-182)

The secretary of the magazine was Niky Dumitrescu. In the pages of *Curentul Magazin* signed, in the first nine months of the publication, Tudor Arghezi, Gala Galaction, Pamfil Șeicaru, Ionel Teodoreanu, Ioachim Botez, Mircea Stefanescu, Romulus Dianu, Dem. Teodorescu, I.A. Candrea, Toma Vladescu, D. Iov, G. Tutoveanu, T. Paunescu-Ulmu, Alexandru Marcu, Ion Anestin, Al.

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Philipide, Sarmanul Klapstok, A. Pomescu, Al. Stamatiad, Lucia Demetrius, Al. Iacobescu, Teodor Scarlat, I. U. Soricu, Gh. Cardas, Ion Nisipeanu, Coriolan Barbat, Radu Tudoran, Volbura Poiana-Nasturas, Aurel Tita, Marin Iorda, Constantin Cojan, I. Ghibanescu, Coca Farago, Ilie Daianu. Some of these (seicaru, Tita, Dianu, Dem. Teodorescu, Tudoran) were employees of the *Curentul* publishing house.

From December 23, 1939, the magazine is entrusted to an executive triumvirate consisting of Dragos Vranceanu, Radu Tudoran and Aurel Tita. Also then is changing the format of the magazine and pagination style, enhancing the quality and number of illustrations. The publication is renamed *Curentul, magazin literar*. The new management team has the task to diversify the editorial content and to attract to supplement the young writers seeking affirmation. This formula resists for 11 months along with impetuous owner Pamfil Șeicaru, which aims to achieve a cultural magazine of wide circulation, a pry to validate him as a provider of cultural acct.

In the pages of this magazines are, among others: George Voevidca, Dimitrie Zaharescu, Constantin Sturzu, Dragos Viscol, Traian Lalescu, Coriolan Siclovanu, Constantin Salcia, Anişoara Odeanu, Virgil Carianopol, Mihail Lungeanu, Iulian Vesper, Ion Th. Ilea, Lorin Popescu, Constantin Murgescu, George Fonea, Luca Dumitrescu, Aurel Popovici, N. Dunăreanu, Dimitrie Aubota, Nichita Tomescu, Ion Bădică, Radu Gyr, Ion Vinea, C. Gane, Dinu Moroianu, Sandu Țigara-Samurcaş, Petru Stati, Ştefan Baciu, Adrian Maniu, Victor Ion Popa, Cristian Sârbu, Radu Boureanu, Radu Beligan, Ion Aurel Manolescu, Aristița Gabrielescu, Ion Velicu, Paul Constant, D. Ursulescu, Vlaicu Bârna, Constantin Virgil Gheorghiu, V. Copilu-Cheatră, George Popa, George Şoimu, C. Săndulescu, I. D. Pietrari, Şerban Bascovici, Madeleine Andronescu, N. Davidescu, V. Sămărtinean, Mircea V. Pienescu, Ion Ojog, Ion Țolescu Văleni, Ştefan Stănescu, Ionel Neamtzu, Dimitrie Stelaru, George Ionaşcu, Horia Furtună, P. Robescu, Pericle Martinescu, George Acsinteanu, George Vaida, G. Ursu, Emil Vora, Valentin AL Georgescu, Stoian G. Tudor, Emil Giurgiuca, Mircea Mateescu, Petre Drăgoescu, Eugen Jebeleanu, Ion Bălan, R. Oteteleşanu, Ion Vlasiu, Carol

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Ardeleanu, Aurel Chirescu, Teodor Ciortea, C. Manolache, Dan Petraşincu, Olga Caba, V. Beneş, Mircea Streinul, Vasile Spiridonică, Aurel George Stino.

International cultural mosaic

Fixed headings are entrusted to old collaborators of Pamfil Şeicaru. The literary chronicle is signed by Dragos Vranceanu; the plastic chronicle belongs to Alexandru Basarab, Marin Nicolau and Constantin Stelian; the musical chronicle was the appanage of Tudor Ciortea; the French book was reviewed by Aurel Tita. A permanent presence in the pages of the magazine is the caricaturist Neagu and the painter Nicolae Soimu. Neagu illustrated the pages in a humorous note, with caricatures of writers and actors in vogue, and Soimu had to illustrate the poems and short stories, with reproductions of the classics. The rich illustration of texts was claimed by Pamfil Şeicaru in the virtue of providing a visual balance. Other of his close collaborators, caricaturist Ion Vlad was considered a revelation by the director of the newspaper and Alexandru Istrati „a true master". Seicaru was convinced about the impact of the illustration, consecrating it a comprehensive review in the history of Romanian press: „Because drawing preceded the vocabulary, it disobeyed the fragmentations of understanding, did not limit to the confines of a spoken language and did not drown in the thick fog of incomprehensible, with the death of a speech. The line has an eloquence whose duration depends on the material where it is fixed, and its understanding is universal. Therefore the force to impress of a drawing is much stronger, it addresses to the most sensitive way of understanding, the eye. A great cartoonist can become the grandiloquent interpreter of a society, he can sum up an era, he can fix the image of a moment from the continuous flow of life. I do not know what will remain of all the excitement of writing of our times so tumultuous, crossed by a tragic insecurity, shared in all suffering, but history of tomorrow of the era between 1919 and 1944 will use, of course, the political drawing as documentary material" (Şeicaru, 2007).

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The third fundamental change occurs to a magazine after a year and a half after its first number. Pamfil Şeicaru is dissatisfied with the lack of grip from the public and urges the broadening the number of collaborators, by engaging the youngest writers, some of them being at the early stage of literary experiments. On November 24th, 1940, from the management team Tudorand and Vranceanu are leaving, but remains Tita, seconded by Ion Velicu. In the publication is included the review of German book, signed by Alexandru Roman. The literary chronicle goes to L. Voita, and the dramatic to Mihail Apostolescu. George Sbarcea will review the Italian book. Al. Popescu-Telega is entrusted with the reflection of representative figures of Spanish literature. We note the magazine's orientation to the cultures of national states admired by Pamfil Şeicaru (Germany, Italy, Spain) and the desire of mediation of authors of some spaces to which the political preferences of Seicaru are headed.

For the diversification of the content it is recourse to translations from French, English and Spanish, with the obvious aim to increase the quality of publication and its placement in a European context. A point of attraction is intended to be the poems and „exotic" sketches, signed by Egyptian, Greek, Finnish writers. Seicaru admits as an exception the publication of some poems belonging to Russian socialist poets, rather to illustrate his theory on the harmfulness of Russian imperialist propaganda on culture.

From January 5, the magazine is renamed (for the third time!) *Curentul Literar* and allocates ample spaces to poetry and translations. To the list of collaborators are joining Basil Munteanu, Tudor Vianu, Adriana Kiseleff, C. N. Negoiță, George A. Petre, I. Valerian.

To give weight to the publication, Pamfil Şeicaru sets up *Premiile Curentului Literar.* In the judging committee are co-opted Liviu Rebreanu, Ion Sân-Giorgiu, Şerban Cioculescu, Pompiliu Constantinescu, Victor Ion Popa. *Premiul Curentul Literar* for poetry was won by George Popa. In the Transylvanian cultural landscape of inter-war period, the magazine *Lauri*, led by George Popa, contributes to the support of the renewal of Romanian culture. Ars

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poetica is moving forward to assimilating the folklore pylon, with mythological overtones, in the direction of symbolic suggestion. There are obvious approaches to the poetry of Lucian Blaga (in fact, in 1940, Blaga is presiding over a poetry contest where Popa wins a prize, with the poem *Horea)*.

The prize for drama was won by Leontin Brudascu. TR sergeant, Brudascu was a war reporter in the Second World War and he was contributing in *Victoria* newspaper with documented materials in the Soviet prison camps.

From July 1941, Serban Cioculescu becomes a permanent collaborator of the magazine. Since then appear in the pages of the publication Ion Biberi, Nutri Iupceanu, D. Karnabatt, Ana Luca, Tudor Măinescu, Tudor Arghezi, Ionel Teodoreanu, Eugen Lovinescu and P. P. In the last three months of appearance, at *Curentul Literar* we find the young poets Lucian Dumitrescu, Florin Lucescu, Nicolae Jianu, Vasile Culică, Constantin Mitea, Vlad Marincu, Ion Caraion, Simion Anderco, Gheorghe Druțu, Nanu Măinescu, Geo Dumitrescu, Gabriel Oriță, Octav Sargețiu, Anunia Orbul, Ion Oană, Ştefan Crăciun, Demostene Nolla, Aurel Dumitrescu, George Păun, Ştefan Augustin Doinaş and Alexandru Lungu.

Curentul Literar ceased its appearance in October 1941, for financial reasons, being appreciated too costly, by the pragmatic director Pamfil Șeicaru. He, in fact, does not make any reference to it in *Istoria Presei ...*, nor in the space dedicated to cultural magazines, nor in the zone of *Curentul* newspaper. We understand from here and also from the dynamic of changes the magazine went through in its short existence, that the magazine *Curentul literar* did not come close to the expectations of its founder and failed to create emulation, as *Romania literara* did, for example, which grouped around Liviu Rebreanu a core of 30-40 young writers, or Gandirea, which became under Cezar Petrescu and later Nichifor Crainic, one of the most important cultural magazine of the Romanian inter-war period.

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O TENDINȚĂ LITERARĂ, UN MOZAIC STILISTIC ÎN PRESA CULTURALĂ INTERBELICĂ

(Rezumat)

Cuvinte-cheie: *tendință literară, Pamfil Şeicaru, dezbatere stilistică, presa culturală*

Epoca lui Pamfil Şeicaru este un reper în publicistica, literatura şi politica românească; o epocă frământată, cu ilustre personalități polivalente implicate total în elaborarea unui model românesc în cele mai diferite domenii de activitate. Jurnalist, epistolograf, om politic, intelectual cu ambiții literare, Şeicaru a fost unul dintre personajele explozive ale vremii, formator acid de opinie şi analist intransigent al fenomenului politic tumultuos. Fondator de gazete, filantrop, apropiat al celor mai importante cercuri politice, Şeicaru a încercat să fie mai mult decât ziarist şi scriitor politic şi să se acrediteze ca literat. Inspirate de contextul literar interbelic, încercările sale literare, dramaturgice, sunt tributare stilului gazetăresc. El însuşi realizează că ziaristica practicată zi de zi este cheltuitoare şi deformează stilul specific operei literare, dar persevereză şi în perioada de exil de după 10 august 1944.

Într-una din cele mai prolifice perioade ale literaturii şi publicisticii române, de mare efervescență culturală şi literară, Şeicaru realizează o platformă de susținere a talentelor deja consacrate sau aflate într-o fază incipientă a exprimării lor – *Curentul Literar*, supliment al ziarului cotidian *Curentul*. Aproximativ 160 de poeți şi prozatori, dramaturgi, critici, traducători s-au regăsit în paginile publicației, în cele 18 luni de funcționare. Este o perioadă de remarcabilă dezvoltare a prozei, a romanului românesc care cunoaşte orientarea lirică, cea estetizantă şi simbolică, respectiv orientarea fantastică. Romanele de inspirație rurală ale lui Mihail Sadoveanu şi Liviu Rebreanu sunt complementare romanelor citadine ale lui Camil Petrescu, Cezar Petrescu, George Călinescu, Hortensia Papadat-Bengescu. Se dezvoltă nuvela,

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reportajul literar, iar pamfletul este instrumentul de lucru predilect al gazetarilor care cochetează cu literatura.

Curentul Literar, realizat de editura „*Curentul*" a apărut în perioada 9 aprilie 1939 – octombrie 1941. Primul număr a apărut de Paşti, sub denumirea *Curentul Magazin*, în condiţii tehnice deosebite pentru vremea respectivă. În capul ziarului erau menționate domeniile de interes: Literatură – Artă – Teatru – Critică – Can Can – Modă.

Curentul Literar şi-a încetat apariția în octombrie 1941, din considerente financiare, fiind apreciat prea costisitor de pragmaticul director Pamfil Şeicaru. Acesta, de altfel, nu face nicio referire la ea în *Istoria Presei*…, nici în spațiul dedicate revistelor culturale, nici în zona ziarului *Curentul*. Înțelegem de aici, cât şi din dinamica schimbărilor prin care a trecut în scurta sa existență, că revista *Curentul literar* nu s-a apropiat de aşteptările fondatorului său şi nu a reuşit să creeze emulație, aşa cum o făcuse *România literară*, de exemplu, care grupase în jurul lui Liviu Rebreanu un nucleu de 30-40 de scriitori tineri, sau Gândirea, devenită sub Cezar Petrescu şi mai târziu Nichifor Crainic una dintre cele mai importante reviste culturale ale perioadei interbelice româneşti.

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