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Publication indexed and abstracted in the Thomson Reuters Social Sciences Citation Index® and in Arts & Humanities Citation Index®, and included in EBSCO’s and ELSEVIER’s products.

ISSN 1221-1249
Our study relies, on the one hand, on the identification of a continuity phenomenon in European culture—the perpetuation, under various forms, over several centuries, of a paradigm of dualistic-gnostic imaginary—and, on the other hand, on the insufficient, rather sporadic representation of its Romanian component in the reference literature in the field. Dualistic mythology, once widespread across all continents, subsisted in European folklore until the 20th century only in Eastern and Southeastern Europe, particularly in the Romanian space (Eliade 1995; see also Pamfile 2006; Cartojan 1974). Dualism has stood the test of time over the centuries, until today, being often assimilated by other philosophical and religious trends, including the different versions of Gnosticism (Bianchi 1976, 1978; Ivanov 1976; Marrou 1983; Jonas 2001; Culianu 2002). We believe that it is precisely this reminiscent and diffuse background of the autochtho-
nous mythical mentality that constituted, in the 19th–20th centuries, one of the premises—not necessarily the most relevant one—for the reiteration of dualistic imaginary in the Romanian classic literature, in specific forms (Bogomilism, Gnosticism), contaminated by the Western bookish tradition.

Dualistic cosmogonies are the only relict of pre-Christian folk cosmogony in Europe (Eliade 1995). With ancient, yet unsolved origins, spreading over an extremely vast area in cultural geography and history, dualist myths have been traced back to Finno-Ugric, Ural-Altaic, Iranian, Slavic, Amerindian peoples and even later, in the Christian era, to European heretics such as the Bogomils (who contaminated the medieval Romanian spirituality) or the Provencal Cathars and their Italian successors, until the 15th century (Bianchi 1976, 1978; Ivanov 1976; Culianu 2002; Culianu 2005; Eliade 1995). In the form that they assumed within the “Western dualistic gnoses,” dualistic myths resurfaced in the 18th century with Goethe, Hegel, *Sturm und Drang* and the Romantics—themselves “creators of apparently gnostic myths” —, and in the literature of the 20th century (Culianu 2002, 2005; Bloom 1996). Ugo Bianchi was the first to highlight this “enigma of the history of religions,” consisting of the “repeated reactivation,” after the 1st century A.D., of ancient pre-Christian dualistic myths within those mythical-religious systems that Ioan Petru Culianu designated by the term “dualisms of the West” or “dualistic gnoses of the West” (Culianu 2002; also Bianchi 1976, 1978). Finding the continuity of these mythical-imagistic structures, from ancient Gnosticism to the Romantics and later, Harold Bloom diagnoses a “purified Gnosticism” that almost turned, over time, into “a literary religion,” “an aesthetic and, at the same time, spiritual discipline” (Bloom 1996, 33). Like the other Western dualistic trends, Gnosticism is a “phenomenon of counterculture” (12). We should mention the fact that our interest lies not (necessarily) in the religious dimension of Gnosticism, but—as more appropriate to our corpus of analysis—in its functioning as an intellectual and existential paradigm.

Our intention is to identify and analyze, in the wider context of the history of ideas and mentalities in Europe, the persistence of these ancient dualist(oid) structures of the imaginary in the work of representative authors of Romanian classic and interwar literature, as well as of the postwar diaspora. We have already explained part of our conclusions and arguments in previous contributions, hence we shall not repeat them in detail, but we shall rather attempt to complete and nuance them (Popa Blanariu 2008, 2015a, 2015b, 2015c).

Such a mythical-imagistic paradigm, of a dualistic-gnostic type, may be identified in the work of Goethe, Blake, Byron, Shelley, Leopardi, Baudelaire, with the Russian symbolists, Dostoyevsky, Kafka and existentialists, with Beckett, Thomas Mann, and Mikhail Bulgakov. Thus, it has been confirmed that “the
modern intellect resorts to old ways of thinking” which “confirm its laceration” (Friedrich 1969, 44; Pagels 2013, 204–206; Culianu 2002, 41–56; Culianu 2006; Bloom 1996, 2007). In Romanian literature, reminiscences and allusions to the dualistic-gnostic imaginary or even explicit references may be found with Mihai Eminescu, Alexandru Macedonski, Lucian Blaga, Mircea Eliade, Emil Cioran, Eugène Ionesco and, to a certain extent, with Ion Barbu or Mihail Sadoveanu (see Blaga 1969; Balotă 1976; Culianu 2006; del Conte 1990; Cifor 2000; L. Petrescu 1992; Petreu 1991; Borbély 2003; I. Em. Petrescu 1993; Paleologu 2006; Laurent 2015). It is interesting to note that—as a symptom of the interwar intellectual context in Romania—in his lectures on metaphysics delivered at the University of Bucharest, Nae Ionescu, the mentor of the generation of intellectuals that emerged between the two wars (with everything, good and bad, that this quality contributed to Romanian culture and history), analyses Faust by Goethe from a dualistic perspective (N. Ionescu 1996). In our opinion, the works of Eminescu, Macedonski, Blaga, Eliade, Cioran, and Ionesco illustrate, in various ways and to different degrees, the actuality in literature of a dualistic Weltanschauung, especially Bogomilic or gnostic, that is one of the “paths of utopic imagination” (see Wunenburger 2001, 227–228).

Without dualistic motifs having a relevant presence in his work, Tudor Arghezi nevertheless unmasks the “jester,” the “juggler,” the “crazy” God (One Hundred Poems), who displays a family similarity with the trickster, the “evil,” “charlatan,” “rogue” Demiurge from dualistic mythology. Published during the rise of proletcultism and “marked by the fingerprint of time: war, draught, confrontation with forms of hostility against culture” (Academia Română 2004, 234), the volume One Hundred Poems is a confession of despair, within a troubled and hostile historical context that Good God has abandoned or, in an image inspired by Nietzsche, in which the Good God has already “died”: “One single tyke, a small sphere/Like a hedgehog, like a fish,/Rolls stealthily./And a coffin hangs in the air:/Of the Father, the Son and Holy Spirit” (“Deserted Fallow”). The figure of the divine “buffoon,” of a rogue God is the opposite of the one awaited in the Psalms—another symptom of the poet’s dual nature, which critics had already highlighted and which he himself admitted: “I am an angel, and also a devil, and a beast, and others of such kind...” (“Portrait”).

With Ion Barbu, there returns, under different forms, a fundamental orphic-gnostic motif, sīma-sīma: the body, the creaturely condition—historical and material—as a “prison” of the soul, as a spiritual enclosure. “There’s the gaol in burnt, worthless earth,” and “our heads, if they exist,/Stand as chalk ovals, like a mistake”—Ion Barbu summarizes, in “Group,” the anthropological basis of our gnostic ontology. A eulogy to the uncreated, to the not yet manifested virtuality is recurrent in Ion Barbu’s poetry—also a possible reminiscence from
a dualistic Weltanschauung, which contaminates his poetic imaginary: “Guilty is all the created…” Other orphic-gnostic motifs, especially characteristic of the Valentinian gnostis, have been identified by Ioana Em. Petrescu in “Uveden-rode,” “The Dogmatic Egg,” “Rhythms for necessary weddings,” “King Crypto and Enigel the Lapp” (1993, 97–111). Ioana Em. Petrescu “deduces” (to re-contextualize an emblematic word for the initiatory poetics of Second Game) Barbu’s orphic-gnostic vein from a possible influence upon the poet—as the poet himself confesses—of a “Hellenism of decadence,” “an incursion into the holy ray of Alexandria.” (The toponym, by no means an accident, evokes an extremely receptive and creative intellectual environment, where late Antiquity, along with other schools of thought, was syncretically defined—with relevant consequences for the Western history of ideas and beliefs—the philosophical, religious and mythological synthesis of Gnosticism. Its origins, its constitutive elements seem to be found, nevertheless, further back in time and space, with reverberations from the Middle East at the beginning of our era and even before.)

The opposition between the saving “golden bough” and the infernal drama of the world—a vulgar and cruel circus like the arenas of Byzantium at the twilight of the Roman power—is the basis for Sadoveanu’s orphic-gnostic interpretation of a motif from Virgil’s Aeneid. There, more specifically in the epic’s “Book the Sixth,” the Sybil explains the Latin meaning of the golden bough: only the one who was meant to achieve it may return from the world of the dead. In his novel, Sadoveanu adds a gnostic soteriological meaning to Virgil’s “golden bough”: associated with “Light”—a saving, acosmic principle to which initiatory knowledge leads (gnosis)—the “golden bough” allusively designates with Sadoveanu a means to resist the death—the humiliation, the perversion—of the soul and of feelings in the worldly inferno. At least this is the sense made by Kesarion Breb, upon separation from Maria, former Empress of Byzantium: “—So, is it true, that you stayed at the Egyptians’ temples?—Indeed, there I met light. . . Here, we shall part. The delusion that is called body will also be broken. But what is now between us, tried by fire, is a golden bough that will shine in itself, beyond time” (Sadoveanu 1969, 145, 27). We shall not rush to the conclusion—nor have we found enough undebatable arguments in this respect—that Sadoveanu makes, in The Golden Bough, a profession of faith for some dualistic doctrine. We can only highlight the fact that at the purely literary level, the imaginary of this novel is impregnated with a fundamental gnostic theme: the “adventure of the soul is an exile or a dramatic odyssey” (Ribes 2000, 34).

In Master Manole, Blaga transforms the plot of the popular ballad, in an expressionist sense, by resorting to the dualistic-Bogomilic imaginary. Proof is the name of a central character in the play, the monk Bogomil. Similar influences may also be found in Blaga’s essays—for example, in the interpretation to Eminescu’s
The Evening Star—and in his Poems of Light: “From where does Heaven have its light?—I know: Hell illuminates it/With its flames!” (‘The Light of Heaven’); “to dance/flushed upon by amazing effusions/to let God breathe freely inside me,/ without murmuring:/I am a slave in prison!” (“I want to dance!”).

The hypothesis of a vein of dualistic-gnostic imaginary in Macedonski’s work may be verified from a dual perspective: that of the Romanticism from which his work emerges and, respectively, the Symbolism which he prefigures in the Romanian context. As long as Symbolism is, up to a point, Neo-Romanticism, there is a predictable and explainable area of dualistic-gnostic interference in the imaginary characteristic of the two trends. Quite known is the relevance of a gnostic element in Russian Symbolism, by means of which Blok, Bely, Vyacheslav Ivanov, are affiliated with the mystical, messianic philosophy of Soloviov, inspired by gnostic thought. In fact, despite its aestheticizing excesses, in the direction of “art for art’s sake,” even French Symbolism, denied as a model by the Russian symbolists from the second generation, has, through Baudelaire and his “correspondences” influenced by Swedenborg, a relevant connection to the mystic and dualistic (gnostic-alchemic) tradition of the previous centuries (Popa Blanariu 2015b). Thus, there are highlighted, from another perspective, Macedonski’s filiations and homologies with the French and European Symbolism. “The Poem of Rondeaux” or “December Night” are illustrative in this respect.

The recurrence of the dualistic-gnostic imaginary with Eliade—a paradigm to which he explicitly refers in his so-called ‘fantastic’ short stories—has already been remarked or systematically analyzed, without being, nevertheless, exhausted (Borbély 2003; see also Petreu 1991; L. Petrescu 1992). The critics of Eliade have approached, almost exclusively, Eliade’s prose (one exception being Ghițulescu 2008); however, we have been rather interested in the writer’s drama poetics, as it is particularly outlined in the metadramatic considerations from his short stories (Popa Blanariu 2010a, 2015c).

An intellectual and at the same time existential experience, a historical phenomenon and ontological symbol—of the condition of being “cast” into history, into a hostile biography—exile is displayed by Eliade, Cioran, Ionesco like a “personal myth” or, at least, a sum of “obsessive images” (Mauron 2001). There may be identified, with Eliade, a “substratum orphism, corrected through gnosis” (Borbély 2003, 60), dominated by the gnostic myth of Sophia and the “Saved Saviour.” Our hypothesis, which we shall immediately support with arguments, is that during his time in Paris, Cioran reconsidered his models, the philosophers of the decline (Nietzsche, Schopenhauer, Spengler), from a dualistic perspective upon history—that of the Gnostics and Bogomils, to which he often refers. In the imaginary of the postwar Romanian diaspora, the representations of history and exile, the figures of identity (as alterity—alienation, self-
aberration—and “double alienation,” from the world and from transcendence, as Jonas argues—are, more than once, gnostic (Popa Blanariu 2010b). Motifs such as “the fall into time,” the “fault of having been born,” the “Evil Demiurge,” the “temptation of being”—present in the very titles of well-known essays by Cioran—are also of gnostic inspiration. Elements of gnostic imaginary frequently occur in Eliade’s prose: “agnostos theos,” the soul captive into matter, the “alien” God (a “camouflaged” Spirit, “unrecognizable”). Sometimes, the gnostic myth is associated with the orphic one (Eliade), the myth of the Grail (Eliade) or the alchemical imaginary.

Dualistic, explicit or allusive references may be found with Cioran in his essays written in Paris—La Tentation d’exister (1956), Histoire et utopie (1960), La Chute dans le temps (1964), Le Mauvais démiurge (1969)—constantly marked by the consequences of his ideological affiliation from the fourth decade of the century and the need to make his past forgotten or tolerated. From The Transfiguration of Romania (1936) to the postwar essays, the change of tone and message is obvious. The first one claims the “transfiguration’ of the country through totalitarian political methods” (Petrue 2011, 394). Hence, the Nietzschean vitalism, the eulogy of “revolution” and of the affirmative power of vast, exemplary cultures (Cioran 1990, 120–121), the messianic enthusiasm, the prophetic urge to “put on a new face” by means of “fanatical” trust, able to propel Romania into History, through “an eruption,” the more belated the more powerful. After the war, in the years of philosophizing in the attic, all these became an “abandonment,” a devitalization, a refuge in—and consent to—historical inertia, to the “eternal activity without action” (as Wordsworth argues, citing Cioran about Coleridge). Briefly, blaming history and the demiurgic initiative, as long as the small Demiurge of this world is only—as Cioran asserts, explicitly referring to the gnostic and Bogomilic dualism—an “evil,” “ignorant,” “arrogant” and irresponsible one. The eulogy of heroic action, of violent political intervention, which Cioran makes in the Transfiguration and his articles from the Romanian press of the ’30s, is replaced, in his French essays, by an apology of capitulation, the picture of a tired withdrawal from an absurd, incomprehensible history. After the war, although abhorring the system—as he himself declares—, Cioran seems to turn his dualistic (gnostic and sometimes Bogomilic) ideas into a metaphysical explanation of his option for the denial of interfering with history. Nevertheless, it was a belated option, as long as he had openly sympathized with the far right of the ’30s. Given the political context of this conversion, we may suspect Cioran of a certain ideological opportunism.

Cioran’s “putting on a new face,” immediately after the war, is partially authentic—a late clarification and honest repentance—, to some extent calculation and posturing as part of a strategy meant to avoid his extradition to Romania.
and ensure his acceptance into French intellectual circles. In the autumn of ‘33, Cioran began his fellowship in Germany and was seduced by the image of the Nazi youth marching, like a ghost of change—already a prefiguration of Ionesco’s Rhinoceros—on the streets of Berlin (Cioran 1995a). The exalted affiliation to the doctrine of the far right (as shown by the articles and messages sent to the country, during his scholarship, between November 1933 and July 1935) was also partially a juvenile, speculative choice of an individual carried away by the wave of an ideology with perversely messianic accents and, on the other hand, (yet) another opportunistic act of Cioran, of ideological enrolment into a camp that seemed to gain ground in Europe. The context of the epoch may eventually provide certain mitigating circumstances for the young Cioran, given his fervent, passionate attachment to Romania’s cause, for which he hoped—not fully convinced, but highly motivated—to find a solution to its coming out of anonymity, out of its historical sleep of a “thousand years,” that had caused him anxiety and insomnia. In his view, only in this way, the country’s (re)entrance into the history that matters, the condition of Romanian intellectual could avoid failure, whose specter terrifies Cioran as much as Ionesco. In his twenties and thirties, while writing the manuscript of the Transfiguration (which he would publish at twenty-five) and the articles for which he would have to explain himself for the rest of his life, the manifestation of his ego, modelled by his Transylvanian education in the spirit of national values (received in the house of his father, archpriest archimandrite), is closely connected to Cioran’s reflection on how Romania may rehabilitate and reassert itself in Europe. With his leaving the country and his programmatic detachment from the Romanian issues, while in Paris, the Messianic accents disappear and Cioran reinvents himself in terms of themes, attitude and type of discourse. (Regarding the differences between Cioran’s convictions and the doctrine of the Legion, see Petreu 2011, 322–325).

It seems, nevertheless, that Cioran’s vast intelligence was not so practical and political, but rather speculative and rhetorical, or “aesthetic,” as he himself admitted. Cioran’s view on politics, his way of engaging in public matters manifests a Neronian extravagance, the perspective of the aesthete that has the voluptuousness of projecting his performance—of staging his action—at the scale of history, one on one, in order to admire a burning Rome (hence the manifesto from the Transfiguration). It is not by accident that Cioran evokes Nero in his essays: “Quand on fréquente les vérités extrêmes des gnostiques, on aimerait aller, si possible, encore plus loin, dire quelque chose de jamais dit, qui pétrifie ou pulvérise l’histoire, quelque chose qui relève d’un néronisme cosmique, d’une démence à l’échelle de la matière” (Cioran 1973, 144).

In this respect, the circumstances of the emergence of Cioran’s extremist inclinations are well known; besides the Romanian ‘27 generation, many of the intel-
lectuals of inter- (and post)war Europe were faced with them, as a result of having allowed themselves to be seduced—some reluctantly, others less so—by the wave of left or right-wing extremisms that had agitated the continent in the first decades of the 20th century. Ionesco himself recorded, in 1945, the “change” of Cioran, of “Sock” the philosopher (the English word sock means “ciorap” in Romanian, “Ciorap” is a pun on the writer’s name, “Cioran”), as he had designated him with antipathy: “Cioran is here exiled. He admits to having erred, in his youth. It is hard for me to forgive him” (apud Petreu 2011, 491). His twinges of conscience (aggravated by the vain attempt of saving, together with Jean Paulhan, Benjamín Fondane from his death into the concentration camp at Auschwitz, where he had been taken, together with his sister, in the last convoy) would haunt Cioran until the end of his life: “I... am... not... anti-... Se-... mite...” (Mirodan 1977, 247–248; Petreu 2011), he denies with his last breath, on his hospital bed, when his memory eroded by Alzheimer is revisited by the specter of the past and of his exalted choice, a card on which he had betted—as seen after the war—all his life.

Cioran’s affinity with gnostic and Bogomilic dualism—strongly claimed in his postwar essays—has, therefore, a pragmatic foundation on the one hand (that of signaling indirectly his delimitation from his political engagements and sympathies of yore) and, on the other hand, an intellectually unbiased one. Highly Cioranian through the contradiction it hides, namely that escape from time by mentally taking refuge in a mythical, archetypal, timeless situation—an acosmic condition, prior to Creation and the “fall into time”—this is but one of Cioran’s ways of adapting to the new times, the new geographical and political environment, where he struggles to find his place, his legitimacy and a new (editorial) tribune for his ideas. A lover of aphorisms and paradoxes, Cioran has succeeded in creating yet another one—this time, not on paper, but in life.

In fact, Cioran’s settling, in his postwar essays, into a perspective of timeless judgments, formulated in mythical-archetypal terms, is the sign of his returning to the apolitical creed of the ‘27 generation, which Eliade had formulated and which most of its followers would recant in the fourth decade: “We want the rise of the values that spring neither from political economy, nor from technology, nor from parliamentarism. Pure, spiritual, absurdly spiritual values” (Eliade 1927). Similarly, in a letter from July 1933 to his friend Bucur Țîncu, therefore only a few months before his adherence to the far right, which will happen in the autumn of the same year, Cioran declares his lack of political calling: “I am such a vain man, with such a full-grown sense of eternity, that it would be absolutely impossible for me to do politics” (Cioran 1995b, 62). A conviction stemming from an a priori disappointment: “Democracy is not the only wrong system, all political and social systems are equally wrong” (ibid.). In a way, Cioran’s path and his postwar transformation may be identified in Zevedei’s adventure, Eli-
ade’s character from his short story “The Cape”—a generic character, in whose “cape” there is probably “camouflaged” (with an emblematic word for Eliade’s reflection upon the relation between “sacred and profane,” between history and un- or transhistorical structures) an element shared by the destinies of some members of the group gathered around the *Criterion* magazine. After a biographic path marked by the consequences of certain political sympathies and ideological affiliations, Zevedei eventually becomes engrossed in the “problem of Time.” The political phenomenon (related to the “fall into time” which Cioran deplores) is no longer of interest to him. He is finally interested only in what transcends the conjectural, the essence, not the accident; not history as such, where he had rather played the part of an additional and collateral victim, but its *telos*. Thus, Zevedei seems to be putting into practice an imperative that Pantazi, another character of the short story, summarizes in “the lesson of von Braun,” with an allusion to Romanian history: “The winner is only the one who can see far away,” “beyond time.”

During his stay in Paris, Cioran’s affiliation to dualism is a more or less conscious symptom of his need to unburden his conscience, be it even through self-mystification, his consolatory identification with a mythical—explanatory and legitimate—situation. It is an attempt to be somehow exonerated of responsibility, eventually through a symbolical refuge into a mythical ontology. Thus, the personal mistake would be forgiven—as Cioran seems to be insinuating—by its resorption into a fatal mechanism of the universal mistake, which is, in Western dualistic gnoses, Creation itself. According to the Gnostics, Creation is only the emanation of an absurd, failed demiurgic will. Cioran’s biography, with its ideologically attributable mistake, thus implicitly becomes a small avatar of the original Mistake, which the “Evil Demiurge” commits, at the explanatory level of the dualistic cosmogony. This first mistake inaugurates the creature’s ordeal. No less, as Cioran regrets, than the ordeal of memory and conscience, of individuation as trauma of the detachment from the indiscernibility of beginning: “L’inconscience est une patrie; la conscience, un exil” (Cioran 1973, 145). Only the beginning—acosmic, unhistorical—is inactive and hence exonerated of all responsibility; hence, the eulogy of “inaction” (224, 153). Legitimated by the acosmic transcendence of the gnostic supreme divinity, unaccomplishing in duration—which the Evil Demiurge has betrayed through his Creation—“inaction” is, as Cioran proclaims, “divine.” Thus, a certain type of “laziness,” to which he bluntly admitted, neither more nor less than a pious *imitatio Dei*, the devotee of which Cioran presents himself to be.

In the proper gnostic sense, Cioran is a perpetual exile, with the nostalgia of preconscious innocence and a lost unhistorical homeland. Wherever he may be geographically, he perceives his belonging to the world and history like an i-
reparable alienation: “Pas un instant où je ne suis extérieur à l’univers” (Cioran 1973). “Au plus intime de lui-même, l’homme aspire à rejoindre la condition qu’il avait avant la conscience. L’histoire n’est que le détour qu’il emprunte pour y parvenir” (146). In the most obviously gnostic spirit, the Creation is, for Cioran, the product of a continuous deterioration, regression, incurable “devolution” (Bianchi 1976, 1978; Culianu 2005): “Tout phénomène est une version dégradée d’un autre phénomène plus vaste: le temps est une tare de l’éternité; l’histoire, une tare du temps; la vie encore, tare encore, de la matière” (Cioran 1973, 144). What remains then for the creature to do? Almost nothing, “tâchons donc d’inventer quelque chose de mieux que l’être” (Cioran 1973, 138).

An absolute error, committed out of vanity and ignorance by the “Evil Demiurge,” history is, for Cioran, only the “product and symptom of a divine pathology” (Cioran 1973, 146). Unlike the Gnostics who, detaching themselves from the world and its uninspired Creator, take refuge in the idea of an acosmic God (“Father”) of Pleroma, Cioran refuses consolation. For him, the “Evil Demiurge” remains “evil,” and the infinitely good, “unknown Father” of the Gnostics is no longer of interest, as long as he cannot interfere efficiently and justly in Creation. A similar dilemma torments Ivan Karamazov, eventually driving him mad. “Qu’est-ce qui est alors normal, qu’est-ce qui est saint?”—Cioran asks himself, with words that could also belong to Ivan. The answer comes, as usual, without illusions: “L’éternité? Elle même n’est qu’une infirmité de Dieu” (Cioran 1973, 146). Like in Ionesco (as we shall shortly see), in Cioran there occurs, during his Paris stay, a motif which he himself places among those able to define him, at the point of contact between dualism and the eulogy of the non-manifestation from Vedanta and, especially from Buddhism (Chenet 2015). By contemplation and meditative retreat, the conscience of individuality, the feeling of presence within a purely conjectural, accidental reality is diminished—a fugitive domain of the historical phenomenon, of the immediate present, inconsistent in duration.

Cioran explicitly speaks of the dualistic gnoses as a founding discourse—an underlying mythical and metaphysical pattern—of his thinking: from the “Gnostics’ extreme truths” (Cioran 1973, 142, 144, 193), from “popular dualism,” Thracian and Bogomilic (30), from “Russian Byronism, from Pechorin to Stavrogin” (132), as long as the gnostic “Evil Demiurge,” the “Prince of Darkness” and of the historical world, is present, especially as Lucifer, as well as in the apology made by Byronians for him. “Thraces et bogomiles—je ne puis oublier que j’ai hanté les mêmes parages qu’eux, ni que les uns pleuraient sur les nouveau-nés et que les autres, pour innocenter Dieu, rendaient Satan responsable de l’infamie de la Création” (30). From the revolution vehemently clamored in the Transfiguration and his Romanian articles from the ’30s, Cioran has
declares himself the follower of a status-quo and against political action, in his postwar Parisian essays. The old impulse of (and instigation to) violent action is sublimated in metaphysically justified contemplativeness, from the perspective of a dualistic philosophy of history. The agent of change, the Evil Demiurge, nests subversively in the heart of every meliorist utopia or illusion, eventually compromising it, as Cioran suggests in his French essays. Essentially, this is the equation of Cioran’s intellectual and political biography: the utopic desideratum of the violent, even “permanent” revolution—as Cioran borrows (also) from the jargon of the Marxist left—leads him to a deadlock in history and in his own existence:

_Fallen angel, turned into a Demiurge, a Satan serving Creation, turning its back on the Father and showing himself to be on earth stronger than Him and more at ease; far from being a usurper, he is our lord, legitimate sovereign who, if the universe were reduced to man, would conquer the Exalted. Therefore, let us have the courage to recognize our true shepherd._ (Cioran 1992, 104–105)

The great religions were not wrong: what Maya gives to Buddha, Ahriman to Zoroaster, the Evil to Jesus is the earth and worldly power, realities that actually depend on the Prince of Darkness. So that, if we played his game, we would be his accomplices . . . if we wanted to establish a new order, a generalized utopia or a universal empire. (105)

So, many emblematic motifs of the gnostic imaginary are resumed, in one form or another, in Cioran’s postwar essays: the progressive devolution, the exile in a “failed universe” (Cioran 1973, 149), the “certainty of being just an accident” (128), alienation, the feeling of estrangement and the nostalgia of the uncreated—of the acosmic, unhistorical, “slumbering” stage of conscience (a term which Ioana Em. Petrescu uses to describe Ion Barbu’s poetic universe) —, the search for salvation, the unknown “Father,” the God alienated from his Creation and the history for which he is not responsible (as long as they are exclusively the product of the Evil Demiurge). On the other hand, Cioran’s Parisian essays—of a “mystic without God”—are an unusual mixture of nihilist attitude and gnostic language. Therefore, above Cioran’s inner universe, described in gnostic terms and images, there lies a sky abandoned by gods: “Tout est rempli de dieux, disait Thales, à l’aube de la philosophie; à l’autre bout, à ce crépuscule où nous sommes parvenus, . . . tout est vide de dieux” (Cioran 1973, 177). Or, at the antipode of nihilism, pure and tough Gnosticism hopes unconditionally, until the end, for the saving hand of transcendence. Cioran metaphysically enjoys the Apocalypse, like a reparation that is due to the creature that—like in the gnostic
myth—unjustly bears the guilt of Genesis. With Cioran, the apology for the end of civilization, the thesis of the absurdity of history experiences not only neo- and post-Romantic philosophical influences (Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, Spengler) (Petreu 2011) but, to an equal measure, also a dualistic-gnostic vein of thought.

Dualistic motifs, similar to those of Cioran, occur under different forms in the work of Eugène Ionesco, within the same mixture of nihilism and gnostic imaginary: the exile, the Evil Demiurge, the fall into time, the journey into the inferno, the light of knowledge that reveals and saves, leaving this light behind. With a complex of the lost paradise, with a (quasi)gnostic nostalgia of sharing from an obscured truth, on the numinous-luminous essence of the being, Ionesco evokes, under various forms (direct confession and allusions in plays) the “obsessive image” (Mauron 2001) of the supernatural light that bursts out, one day, somewhere, suddenly transforming them completely into “something else” (Van der Leeuw 1948, 9), with the fascinating and disturbing nature of the numinous; something that reminds of an “irruption” of the sacred into the profane, in Eliade’s terms (Otto 1929). This episode from Ionesco’s biography is directly connected to a trauma on which his work is built to a large extent and that corresponds to an archetypal situation which Jonas (2001) finds with Gnostics and Existentialists alike: the original trauma of “being cast into the world,” of the break from the Gnostics’ original luminous paradise or from the Existentialists’ first and last “nothingness.” In fact, Eliade (1986) interprets Ionesco’s imaginary in a mystic-initiatory note, as we shall shortly see, somehow joining, in this respect, Marguerite Jean-Blain (2010).

Ionesco repeatedly confesses to the feeling of “strangeness” and “unreality” experienced by him as a result of belonging to this world. This determines his “only authentic problem” worth considering, namely “the meaning of our existence”: “why is there something rather than nothing” (Ionesco 2007). His drama is the expression of the consternation caused by the fact that he accidentally participates to the world, but not, essentially, to its meaning, which he does not find. His “absurd” drama is but the mirror of the world’s absurdity, its ontological vacuity. “By means of language, gestures, games, accessories,” Ionesco intends “to express emptiness” (Ionesco 2007), as the old people in The Chairs express it, by crowding the stage with pieces of furniture, filling in the emptiness of their lives with a staging of their own disappearance. Thus, it seems that they are attempting to give a shape—that of a final ceremony—to an existence without purpose or whose meaning refuses, in any case, to reveal itself. Lacking ontological consistency, the world is “too easy,” “too empty,” as Ionesco finds, yet “suffocated” by the pressure of the accidental, by time, matter and by what takes the form of spatial-temporal conditioning, by the “objects” “endlessly pro-
liferating, invading everything,” replacing real life and authentic being, like the chairs from the play.

Although treated in an ambiguous register, there transpires, in The Chairs, the old motif of Light, interpreted from a gnostic view. Awaited like an alternative to the cloistered universe where a pair of old people lead their lives and get ready for a spectacular death, (like) on a stage, Light arrives along with the mysterious Emperor—a kind of God(ot) falsified à la Ionesco. The space of the last performance of the two is “overcrowded” by a “bunch of absent presences” (Ionescu 1970, 169) installed in their seats. From this space, the protagonists, the two old people, can escape only in one way, through a double suicide—which eventually happens. The mad teacher from The Lesson seems, in his turn, a variation on the theme of the Evil Demiurge, an ignorant, oppressive, absurd authority. In many ways, an “Evil consubstantial to the world” (Ionesco 2010, 242) creeps in almost all of Ionesco’s plays and corrodes the ludic dimension of the dramatic universe. More often than not sarcastic and sometimes with resignation, in a register of disorientation, despair or contained anger, the playwright or some alter ego character watches this invasion of evil into everyday life. Alien(ated) par excellence, the “man with bags” from the eponymous play is “a character who no longer recognizes his country,” who “feels endangered everywhere and does not meet love” (Ionesco 2010). Frequent in folk mythology (Popa Blanariu 2008), analyzed by Eliade in one of his essays (Eliade 1995), the motif of the dualistic partnership between the rival divinities is taken and re-contextualized by Ionesco in Journeys among the Dead:

*Arlette:* Who would have an interest to hide something like this from us?
*Mrs Simpson:* Perhaps the Devil!
*Arlette:* Or, maybe, good God!
*Mrs Simpson:* They may have made a deal, or a pact...
*Mrs Simpson:* I believe that the sky is, in fact, another world. Completely somewhere else. (Ionesco 2010, 153)

In a way, Ionesco’s work “may be read” like “a journey through the Inferno” (Ungureanu 1995, 111). Moreover, according to Ionesco, who had read Cioran, the “Evil Demiurge would be one of the happy formulations helping us understand what happens with us” (109). In his late years, after he was able to overlook the juvenile ideological slippage of his countryman, Ionesco ventures to make a prophecy: “none of the writers of our era, including me, represents a spiritual value, except the negativistic ones like Emil Cioran” (apud Ungureanu 1995, 106). Similarly forgiving and prophetic is Ionesco with regard to Eliade: “The 21st century, as Malraux argued, would either be
religious or not be at all: it will be, thanks to Eliade and his teaching” (apud Ungureanu 1995, 107).

In a perhaps less predictable manner, Eliade (1986, 31) identifies, in Ionesco’s dramatic imaginary, a “large number” of essential mythical-religious structures: “labyrinth, center, shadows, paradise, infinity, going out of time, light, bliss,” meaning “almost” “half of the themes from the history of mysticism and the history of religion” (31). For example, in Exit the King, there transpires the “influence of two major spiritual references: The Tibetan Book of the Dead and one of the most important Upanishads.” The playwright had read them—Eliade assures us from his double position, as Ionesco’s intimate and specialist in the history of religions—as he had also read the Holy Fathers of the Eastern Church (31). The structure of the labyrinth returns obsessively in Ionesco’s plays, which leads to a possible interpretation of them in an initiatory note, as long as “one of the most dramatic initiation tests is this very entrance into the labyrinth, at the risk of getting lost, namely of dying” for himself, the neophyte (32). In his conversations with Claude Bonnefoy, Ionesco attempts, on his own, a hermeneutics of the labyrinth, which he assimilates with “time, space and the infinite, whereas paradise is, on the contrary, a round, full world that already contains everything, neither finiteness nor infinity,” where the “problem finite-infinite” is “not even raised” as a matter of fact (Ionesco, apud Eliade 1986, 40).

Jonas has found, as already mentioned, a certain parallelism between Existentialism and the old Gnosticism (Jonas 2001). One example which Eliade indirectly offers to him in support of this closeness is Ionesco himself: he “is one hundred percent a modern man, ‘cast into the world’” and, at the same time, “always renewed or inspired by this world of traditional values,” which he rediscovers “either in dreams or imaginary experiences” (Eliade 1986, 40). Among these “traditional values,” we may include the dualistic imaginary with the underlying dualistic speculation.

In A Hell of a Mess...!, the character precipitates anxiously in search of the breakfast that nobody brings to him any longer, to surprisingly find himself completely alone. Starving, unrestrained, his voice is but the indication of a physical discomfort, a panic-stricken outburst of elemental nature. Gradually, as he calls out vainly, his voice falls silent and the character, with his sonorous halo, moves away from the great “nonsense,” detaches himself from the imperative of the physiological and loses himself in the “light that pours in from everywhere,” towards the “very strange” “nothingness”—that also envelops, in the end, the dying person from Exit King.

—Portress! Where’s my breakfast?! Portress! Portress! Breakfast! He runs on the stage, in all directions. Where’s my breakfast?! I want my breakfast! . . . Obviously, he receives no answer. The character looks around, utterly stunned.
What’s going on? Is there nobody here! Hey! Hey!...

He rushes, he grabs the bottle of brandy, he throws the bottle of brandy.
—I will die of hunger! I will die of thirst!

He looks around one more time; the space is empty. There is nothing else but the light pouring in from all sides.
—What does this mean! There’s no use, there’s nobody left. I understood nothing, I don’t understand anything. Nobody would understand. And yet, I am not surprised. It is a wonder that I am not surprised. Very strange.

(İonesco 2008, 224–225)

The tree from the background of the play (possibly the mark of an intertextual dialogue between İonesco and Beckett) and the light that finally invades everything seem to be two opposing symbols of transcendence. They signal, at the same time, two distinct attitudes towards it: on the one hand, the transcendence of mystics (a living God, God-Light) and, on the other hand, the absent or already “dead” God of the (post)Nietzscheans, whom Beckett calls Godot. In Waiting for Godot, the tree on the stage is the substitute of a Deus absconditus, to which there yet cling, self-deluding in their long wait, as long as their existence, the two avant-garde grand-grandchildren of the picaro, Vladimir and Estragon.

In this investigation we have provided evidence of the continuity of the phenomenon that constitutes the object of our analysis (the dualistic imaginary in popular culture and modern Romanian literature), highlighting its long-term manifestation, at the crossroads of the history of literature and that of mentalities. Becoming aware of ancient dualistic mentality structures makes possible the understanding of certain (sub and counter) contemporary cultural phenomena. Also, it makes possible the understanding of certain Romanian cultural phenomena (linguistic, mythological, literary etc.) by placing them within a universal context. Such an approach goes beyond the relation between the literary phenomenon and the “short,” “event-like” duration of the immediate context, drawing attention to slow social phenomena, highly inert (such as mentality changes) that, in their turn, influence the history of literature.

References


Unde Malum?
Dualist(oid) and Gnostic Imaginary,
from Folk Mythology to Modern Romanian Literature

Our contribution attempts to respond to a gap in the investigation of the reminiscences of dualistic imaginary in modern literature and also in the Romanian reflection on the phenomenon. By approaching more thoroughly a theme that we have already discussed, from other perspectives, in our previous contributions, this article aims at identifying and analyzing, in the context of the history of mentality and the history of the imaginary, the persistence of certain dualist(oid) structures in the work of authors who are representative for Romanian classic and interwar literature, as well as for the postwar diaspora.

Keywords
myth, Dualism, Gnosticism, Bogomilism, Eminescu, Macedonski, Arghezi, Blaga, Sadoveanu, Ion Barbu, Eliade, Cioran, Ionesco
“In a word, we must be in that mood which, as nearly as possible, is the exact converse of the poetical.”

Edgar Allan Poe

Poe’s literary expression is recognizable in American and world literature, and the legacy he left to us, the new generations, has been huge—ever since his first critical views on creativity were observed in terms of their effect and affective power (Cassuto 1999, vii). This is particularly evident in “The Philosophy of Composition” which rejects the established Romantic notion of the process of creation as an act arising solely under the influence of imagination and inspiration. Poe’s theory of imagination was based on Coleridge’s Literary Biography and later underwent certain changes. For Poe, poetry represents “the rhythmical creation of beauty,” and as such should comply exclusively with the logic of its own principles. Beauty is the only real area of a poem, and the most wonderful and the most sublime pleasure comes from watching the beautiful. Our research shows that we can only talk about a poem in a Poesque sense if it excites us, by elevating the soul; that is to say, its true value is proportionate to the sublime excitement. This view is elaborated on in detail in “The Poetic Principle.” Pointing to the fact that up until halfway through the nineteenth
century, in his native Appalachia, nothing significant was published about poetry and versification, Poe decided to respond to this in “The Rationale of Verse.” Although many critics pointed out a number of shortcomings in Poe’s understanding of versification and prosody, it can be concluded that this essay is the first valid American attempt to lay the foundations of a modern study on English-language poetry. In this most explicitly elaborated essay, Poe presents his mathematical principle, that is, the notion of creation as a particular type of scientific, algebraic process that necessarily involves the use of reason and imagination in order to achieve a harmonious unity.

How vast a dissimilarity always exists between the germ and the fruit—between the work and its original conception! Sometimes the original conception is abandoned, or left out of sight altogether. Most authors sit down to write with no fixed design, trusting to the inspiration of the moment; it is not, therefore, to be wondered at, that most are valueless. Pen should never touch paper until at least a well-digested general purpose be established. In fiction, the dénouement—in all other compositions the intended effect, should be definitively considered and arranged, before writing the first word, and no word should be then written which does not tend, or form a part of a sentence which tends, to the development of the dénouement, or to the strengthening of the effect. . . . Plot is very imperfectly understood, and has never been rightly defined. Many persons regard it as mere complexity of incident. . . . It is that from which no component atom can be removed, and in which none of the component atoms can be displaced, without ruin to the whole; and although a sufficiently good plot may be constructed, without attention to the whole rigor of this definition, still it is the definition which the true artist should always keep in view, and always endeavor to consummate in his work. (Poe 1984, 1293–1294)

“The Philosophy of Composition” is a “reaction” to the traditional Romantic notion of the poetic process. In this essay, we also recognize the echo of Poe’s “transcendental” attitude about the nature of inspiration, which is particularly evident in the part of the text where Poe says that, in addition to thought-processes and calculated effects, he was searching around himself but also inside himself for what he needed in order to create the desired impression (Levine and Levine 2009, 57). As Stuart Levine and Susan F. Levine have pointed out, “The Philosophy of Composition” is an essay in which the importance of skills, planning and energy primarily come to the fore. It should be noted that, in his recognizable manner, while directing abuse at transcendentalists, he is actually somewhat “agreeing” with them even though to him they were and remained rhymsters of the lowest order. In “The Philosophy of Composition” Poe is not only saying that a good poem comes into being solely and exclusively due to pre-
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cise, detailed, mechanistic planning. Poe definitely pays most attention to this aspect and it is of essential importance to his vision of poetic creation. However, he does not completely neglect the “touch” of inspiration either (Levine and Levine 2009, 57):

Most writers—poets in especial—prefer having it understood that they compose by a species of fine frenzy—an ecstatic intuition—and would positively shudder at letting the public take a peep behind the scenes, at the elaborate and vacillating crudities of thought—at the true purposes seized only at the last moment—at the innumerable glimpses of idea that arrived not at the maturity of full view—at the fully matured fancies discarded in despair as unmanageable—at the cautious selections and rejections—at the painful erasures and interpolations—in a word, at the wheels and pinions—the tackle for scene-shifting—the step-ladders and demon-traps—the cock’s feathers, the red paint and the black patches, which, in ninety-nine cases out of the hundred, constitute the properties of the literary histrio.

I am aware, on the other hand, that the case is by no means common, in which an author is at all in condition to retrace the steps by which his conclusions have been attained. In general, suggestions, having arisen pell-mell, are pursued and forgotten in a similar manner.

For my own part, I have neither sympathy with the repugnance alluded to, nor, at any time, the least difficulty in recalling to mind the progressive steps of any of my compositions . . . I select ‘The Raven,’ as the most generally known. It is my design to render it manifest that no one point in its composition is referrible either to accident or intuition—that the work proceeded, step by step, to its completion with the precision and rigid consequence of a mathematical problem. (Poe 1984, 14–15)

What he insisted on in “The Philosophy of Composition” he repeated in other places, for example in the “Marginalia” written for the Southern Literary Messenger in July 1849, when he said that sometimes romance writers might be able to benefit by remembering the Chinese, who have sense enough to begin the process of writing a book from the end. Of course, such a project takes a lot of effort and skill, otherwise it usually ends up as pulp fiction. Noting that most writers, especially poets, want to create a picture of creation as a process akin to a noble madness, Poe used the term “fine frenzy” (Levine and Levine 2009, 71), alluding to Shakespeare’s A Midsummer Night’s Dream1 and Theseus’ famous speech about the power of imagination in which he says that a man, when he uses that power, can “change” the appearance of reality, beautify it and enrich it, but the manner in which he “changes” it depends solely on him. Poe also used this term in “The Rationale of Verse.” Speaking about his intention to show that the flow of creation of “The Raven” was worked out in advance in detail and
planned, and that not a single part of the poem can be considered the product of the subconscious or games of chance, Poe explained that the poem actually developed gradually towards its completion with the inevitability and the strict consistency of mathematical problems.

In “The Philosophy of Composition” Poe raised as the first issue the length of a poem and concluded that if a work is too long to read in one breath, then the impression that it achieves through the unity of its performance is inevitably compromised. A long poem, therefore, is only a series of short poetic impressions. Poe touched on the problem of “long poems” in other essays and critical reviews. Thus, for example, in “The Poetic Principle” he wrote that he believed that the long poem does not exist, and in his critique of Hawthorne’s *Twice-Told Tales* (1842) he concluded that, given the fact that all great excitements are transient, a long poem represents a paradox. That same year, 1842, he published a critique of Longfellow’s *Ballads* where, among other things, he commented that in exceptionally long poems, the mind of the reader is unable to engage in a consideration of the proportions and an adjustment of the whole, and that it is inevitably satisfied only in certain parts.

In “The Philosophy of Composition” Poe’s position, whereby he implied that creativity, in terms of poetry, is measured in terms of the impression (effect) and affective power, is dominant or, as Leonard Cassuto implies, this aesthetic of originality, based on emotion, was Poe’s replacement for that which is labelled “the heresy of didactics” and actually served as a guiding principle for his entire creative and critical work (Cassuto 1999, vii). So the very approach to originality depends precisely on the creative process, and this process is always explained in detail, precise, carefully planned and minutely worked out. It is in “The Philosophy of Composition” that we recognize Poe’s vision of the process of creating a poem, although the mentioned essay, according to some critics, is at the same time a unique kind of parody of this ideal. However, this view implies that one of the main qualities of a good writer must necessarily be uniqueness, possessing its own, distinctive creative stamp.

Therefore, “The Philosophy of Composition,” published in *Graham’s Magazine* in April 1846, is definitely Poe’s most famous critical essay. In it Poe attempted to “kill off” the Romantic presumption that the poet creates exclusively in the ecstasy of pure inspiration, and showed that a successful poet can be a successful critic, but he also emphasized the view that the process of criticism can be creative. Here poetry is seen as a mechanical means to produce a certain impression. This impression is actually the starting point of the aforementioned essay. The novelty of the impression is inevitably associated with the originality of poetry, that is, everything that the poet creates is in order to make a certain impression. Even when talking about beauty he says that it is referred to as the
realm of poetry just because it is an obvious law of Art that impressions should follow from direct causes (Poe 1984, 16). There are also opinions according to which “The Philosophy of Composition” may be regarded as Poe’s response to Emerson or his “The Poet” of 1844, in which Emerson attacks and ridicules those poets who rely on the rhymes and meters of music boxes (Cassuto 1999, 100). In this essay Poe points out that it is quite clear that each plot must be thoroughly and properly worked out: “Nothing is more clear than that every plot, worth the name, must be elaborated to its dénouement before any thing be attempted with the pen. It is only with the dénouement constantly in view that we can give a plot its indispensable air of consequence, or causation, by making the incidents, and especially the tone at all points, tend to the development of the intention” (Poe 1984, 13).

It is in “The Philosophy of Composition” that he insists that in “The Raven” there is not a single place that could be attributed to chance or the subconscious, that is, the entire work progressed gradually from beginning to end, with the inevitability and precise consistency of mathematical problems. Addressing the problem of the long poem, Poe says that if the work is too long to read in one breath, then in that case we have to give up the substantial impression that is achieved by the unity of the performance, that is to say, a greater length actually cannot get around the inevitable breaking up of the whole and the loss of unity. Poe considered the long poem to be nothing more than a series of short poems, that is, a series of short poetic impressions. For all literary works there is a certain limit when it comes to the length of the work, and that is precisely the limit that requires that the work can be read in one sitting. When it comes to prose works, they do not require any unity and therefore this limit can be exceeded which, of course, should not happen with poems.

The most suitable length for a poem, claimed Poe, is about a hundred lines. With that in mind, his “Raven” has one hundred and eight lines. Dealing with the impression that should be produced, Poe dealt with beauty because it is beauty that is the only acknowledged realm of poetry, or that satisfaction, which is at the same time most powerful, loftiest and purest, found in the observation of the beautiful. Poe believed that Truth (gratification of the mind) and Passion (the excitement of the heart), although they can to some extent be achieved in poetry, are much easier to achieve in a work of prose. The most appropriate expression, Poe went on to explain, through which that beauty will be exhibited in the best possible way, is sadness, that is, he was stating that melancholy is the most legitimate of all poetic expressions. Then he went on to explain the necessity of finding the main motif before creating a poem, something that would serve as its backbone. He decided on a refrain, which he said
is still at an early stage of development—usually limited to lyrical verse, but the impression that it would produce also depends on the strength of the uniformity of the sound and thought. Poe decided that it would be short, so in the end he opted for a single word. As the refrain should be at the end of each stanza, in this case, Poe thought, it must be both powerful and sonorous. All these reasons directed him to use certain words in which a long o would be used as the most important vowel, as well as r as the richest consonant. The first word that came up that would completely fit the above assumptions was *nevermore*. Then, it would be much more effective if that word were said by a creature that can speak, but which has no ability to reason, and the best choice seemed to be that of a *raven*.³ Thinking about what was the saddest possible subject of all, he came up with the answer—*death*; however, the most poetic subject is actually the *death of a beautiful woman*, and this can be best and most appropriately talked about by the overwhelmed lover in his pain. Analyzing the poetic process realized in “The Raven” with mathematical precision and detail, especially when it came to linking the idea of a despondent lover and an ominous bird that repeated the word *nevermore*, Poe commented that it was precisely in this situation that he found an excellent opportunity to achieve the impression of *diversity in application*.

If “The Philosophy of Composition” can be considered Poe’s most famous critical essay, “The Rationale of Verse” certainly represents his most complex essay, and is essentially an understanding of the poem as a whole. This whole consists of parts that function together and in this way contribute to a unique and efficient achievement of a single, ideal impression. Arthur Ransome, and many after him, observed that “throughout all Poe’s writings on poetry blows a refreshing wind of sense” (Ransome 1910, 128–129). In his conception of poetry all aspects are essential. It is evident from this essay that he never falls back on generalization but illustrates every one of his points. It is even more obvious that Poe’s vision had significant shortcomings. At the beginning of “The Rationale of Verse” Poe expressed his regret that nothing useful had been published on poetry and versification. In December 1845, in his criticism of the poems of Elizabeth Oakes Smith, Poe also said that the poet seemed to be not at all familiar with the principles of versification. In December 1845, in his criticism of the poems of Elizabeth Oakes Smith, Poe also said that the poet seemed to be not at all familiar with the principles of versification.

In “The Rationale of Verse,” the longest and most thoroughly elaborated critical discussion published in the months of October and November 1848 in the *Southern Literary Messenger*, Poe elaborated on his “mathematical approach” to poetic work in which he gave primacy to the problem of prosody. It was through this meticulous interest in prosody that Poe’s vision of creation as “intertwined application of reason and imagination to create harmonious unity” (125) came to the forefront. At the very beginning of this essay Poe defined the term “verse” as the one that seems most appropriate to cover, without split-
ting hairs, all that is implied by rhythm, rhyme, meter and versification. This problem was constantly being debated with so many inaccuracies, confusion and misunderstanding and even ignorance, said Poe, that it can hardly be said to exist at all. In fact, this subject of discussion is very simple, “one tenth of it, possibly, may be called ethical; nine-tenths, however, appertain to the mathematics; and the whole is included within the limits of the commonest common sense” (Poe 1984, 26). Although much has been written about rhythm in ancient, and even Hebrew poetry, the same cannot be said of poetry written in English. Poe argued that there is actually no valid discussion about English verse, because although in some grammar books and works devoted to rhetoric or prosody there are chapters entitled “Versification” the truly curious reader will not find there any analysis, nor will he find anything that would function as a unified system because everything depends on “authority.” Poe emphasized that it all boils down to a mere citation of examples of alleged different types of English meter and verse.

Although many attacked this essay of Poe’s and pointed their finger at some genuine shortcomings, “The Rationale of Verse” essentially represents the first significant attempt to develop a “science of English verse” (Cody 1924, 325). Poe insisted that verse is based on time, as it is in music, not on accent. In his view, it is on accented syllables that the voice actually rests for a long time when the verse requires it. The natural rhythmic expression of verse should correspond to scansion (327). On the other hand, Poe ignored certain important thrusts in his theory. What prosodists most resent is the fact that he did not sufficiently take into account pauses in calculating the time of scansion, that is to say, he neglected to mark the culmination of a rhythmic “wave” movement in each foot (ibid.).

When he comments on the length of a poem in “The Poetic Principle,” that is, when he claims that the long poem does not exist, Poe restates a position that he had presented in his earlier essays and critical reviews. This primarily refers to the famous critique of Hawthorne’s *Twice-Told Tales* where he said that the unity of impression cannot be fully preserved in works that cannot be read in one breath, that is, all great excitements are transient and therefore a long poem is a paradox.

In “The Poetic Principle” Poe said that the value of a poem is reflected in the extent to which it arouses excitement. This excitement cannot be sustained through a poetic composition of great length because after only half an hour it weakens. This was a shorter breath now than in 1842. In the aforementioned critical review of the *Twice-Told Tales* he expressed the opinion that a poem, as a work which should be dealt with by a genius, should not exceed the length of what can be read in an hour. It is not difficult to notice that Poe had mentioned or explained many of the views that he expressed in “The Poetic Principle” in ear-
lier writings, especially in his critique of Longfellow’s *Ballads*. For instance, the heresy of didactics from “The Poetic Principle” is one of Poe’s most frequently repeated views. In calling poetry a rhythmic creation of the beautiful, Poe actually repeated what he had already stated in his theory, especially in his critique of Longfellow’s *Ballads*. Poe also repeatedly stated what he had emphasized in “The Poetic Principle,” that the poem can “deal with” truth, duty and passion, of course, only and exclusively if excitation of poetic feeling is achieved and if it is achieved as a contribution subordinate to the expression of beauty, which is the real essence of the poem. This idea of Poe’s has its origin in his critique of the works of Joseph R. Drake and Fitz-Greene Halleck from 1836, but also in his critique of Longfellow’s *Ballads*. Poe started “The Poetic Principle” by commenting on the term “minor poems” which includes only poems that are not long, arguing that: “a long poem does not exist. I maintain that the phrase, ‘a long poem’ is simply a flat contradiction in terms” (Poe 1984, 71). A poem in the true sense of the word can only be told if it excites us by elevating the soul. Its value lies in the very extent of this elevated excitement. “But all excitements are, through a psychal necessity, transient. That degree of excitement which would entitle a poem to be so called at all, cannot be sustained throughout a composition of any great length. After the lapse of half an hour, at the very utmost it flags—fails—a revulsion ensues—and then the poem is, in fact, no longer such” (ibid.).

Therefore, his attitude that *Paradise Lost* can be considered a poetic work only when it is understood as a series of shorter poems should not be surprising. If this work were to be read in one sitting, said Poe, then it would inevitably replace excitement with despair, and in the end he concluded that the full effect and everything that even the best epic represents is actually futility, that is to say, if long poems had once been popular, it is now more than obvious that no long poem ever will be so again. On the other hand, argued Poe, it is clear that a poem may be inappropriately short and its excessive shortness very easily degenerates into mere epigrammatism. Moreover, “[a] very short poem, while now and then producing a brilliant or vivid, never produces a profound or enduring effect” (Poe 1984, 73). He emphasized the view that there is no work that is loftier or more noble than a poem, a poem *per se*, that is, one which is a poem and nothing more than that, written just for its own sake.

*The demands of Truth are severe. She has no sympathy with the myrtles. All that which is so indispensable in Song, is precisely all that with which she has nothing whatever to do. It is but making her a flaunting paradox, to wreathe her in gems and flowers. In enforcing a truth, we need severity rather than efflorescence of language. We must be simple, precise, terse. We must be cool, calm, unimpassioned. In a word, we must be in that mood which, as nearly as possible, is the exact converse*
of the poetical. **He must be blind, indeed, who does not perceive the radical and chasmal differences between the truthful and the poetical modes of inculcation. He must be theory-mad beyond redemption who, in spite of these differences, shall still persist in attempting to reconcile the obstinate oils and waters of Poetry and Truth.** (Poe 1984, 76)

The poetic sense can develop in different ways in painting, sculpture, architecture, dance, and especially in music. Music, with all its forms of meter, rhythm and rhyme, is a very important segment in poetry. By combining poetry and music we will find the widest field of poetic development, said Poe. “The Poetic Principle,” although published posthumously in 1850, was actually presented as a lecture in 1848. Here Poe emphasized that what is aesthetic can be determined not in terms of a “truth” which includes simplicity, linguistic precision and sharpness, but rather through the development and “blossoming” of language. In this essay he continued to make use of mathematical principles and hence said that the true value of a poem is reflected in the “quantity” of excitement that it arouses.

If we want to emphasize some of Poe’s most relevant ideas concerning poetic creation, “scattered” across his numerous essays and reviews, as well as the development of his critical thought, we come to the following terms which represent his distinctive “theory of poetry”.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Poe’s Interpretations of the Term</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Versification</td>
<td>Versification is not the art of arranging [words into lines of correspondent length], but the actual arranging—a distinction too obvious to need comment. (Poe 1984, 28)</td>
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<td>The principle of equality, in verse, admits, it is true, of variation at certain points, for the relief of monotone, . . . but the point of time is that point which, being the rudimental one, must never be tampered with at all. (43)</td>
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<td>. . . all words, at all events, should be written and pronounced in full, and as nearly as possible as nature intended them. (44)</td>
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<td>Good versifiers who happen to be, also, good poets, contrive to relieve the monotone of a series of feet, by the use of equivalent feet only at rare intervals, and at such points of their subject as seem in accordance with the startling character of the variation. (45)</td>
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<td>If by the written scansion of a line we are not enabled to perceive any rhythm or music in the line, then either the line is unrhymetical or the scansion false. (61)</td>
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<td>Admitting . . . that the spondee was the first approach to verse, we should expect to find, first, natural spondees, . . . most abundant in</td>
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the most ancient languages, and, secondly, we should expect to find spondees forming the basis of the most ancient rhythms. These expectations are in both cases confirmed. (67)

The poem

A poem, in my opinion is opposed to a work of science by having, for its immediate object, pleasure, not truth; to romance, by having for its object an indefinite instead of a definite pleasure. (11)

Now I designate Beauty as the province of the poem, merely because it is an obvious rule of Art that effects should be made to spring from direct causes. (16)

But all excitements are, through a psychal necessity, transient. That degree of excitement which would entitle a poem to be so called at all, cannot be sustained throughout a composition of any great length. (71)

Excellence, in a poem especially, may be considered in the light of an axiom, which need only be properly put, to become self-evident. (84)

A passionate poem is a contradiction in terms. (1354)

In speaking of song-writing, I mean, of course, the composition of brief poems with an eye to their adaptation for music in the vulgar sense. In this ultimate destination of the song proper, lies its essence—its genius. It is the strict reference to music . . . which gives to this branch of letters a character altogether unique, and separates it, in great measure and in a manner not sufficiently considered, from ordinary literature. (1434)

But in pieces of less extent—like the poems of Mrs. Sigourney—the pleasure is unique, in the proper acceptation of that term—the understanding is employed, without difficulty, in the contemplation of the picture as a whole—and thus its effects will depend, in a very great degree, upon the perfection of its finish, upon the nice adaptation of its constituent parts, and especially upon what is rightly termed by Schlegel, the unity or totality of interest. (877)

All high excitements are necessarily transient. Thus a long poem is a paradox. (571)

Extreme brevity will degenerate into epigrammatism; but the sin of extreme length is even more unpardonable. (572; compare with 73)

If any literary work is too long to be read at one sitting, we must be content to dispense with the immensely important effect derivable from unity of impression—for, if two sittings be required, the affairs of the world interfere, and every thing like totality is at once destroyed. (15)

What we term a long poem is, in fact, merely a succession of brief ones—that is to say, of brief poetical effects. (15)

Within this limit, the extent of a poem may be made to bear mathematical relation to its merit—in other words, to the excitement or elevation—. . . to the degree of the true poetical effect which it is capable of inducing; for it is clear that the brevity must be in direct ratio of the intensity of the intended effect:—this, with one proviso—that a
certain degree of duration is absolutely requisite for the production of any effect at all. (15)

I hold that long poem does not exist. I maintain that the phrase, ‘a long poem,’ is simply a flat contradiction in terms. (71)

_Eureka, a Prose Poem_

Poetry is the sentiment of Intellectual Happiness here, and the Hope of a higher Intellectual Happiness hereafter. (510)

And now it appears evident, that since Poetry, in this new sense, is the practical result, expressed in language, of this Poetic Sentiment in certain individuals, the only proper method of testing the merits of a poem is by measuring its capabilities of exciting the Poetic Sentiment in others. (511)

Of merely humorous pieces we have little to say. Such things are not poetry. (410)

Its first element is the thirst for supernal _beauty_ . . . Its second element is the attempt to satisfy this thirst by _novel_ combinations among those forms of beauty which already exist—or by novel combinations of those combinations which our predecessors, toiling in chase of the same phantom, have already set in order. We thus clearly deduce the novelty, the _originality_, the _invention_, the _imagination_, or lastly the _creation_ of _beauty_ . . . as the essence of all Poesy. (687)

And these . . . will decide that the origin of Poetry lies in a thirst for a wilder Beauty than Earth supplies. (293)

I would define, in brief, the Poetry of words as _The Rhythmical Creation of Beauty_. Its sole arbiter is Taste. With the Intellect or with the Conscience, it has only collateral relations. Unless incidentally, it has no concern whatever either with Duty or with Truth. (78)

And Poesy is the handmaiden but of Taste. This handmaiden is not forbidden to moralise—in her own fashion. She is not forbidden to depict—but to reason and preach, of virtue. (685)

. . . the poetic sentiment . . . implies a peculiarly, perhaps an abnormally keen appreciation of the beautiful, with a longing for its assimilation, or absorption, into the poetic identity. (758)

_Ideal_ . . . the Faculty of Ideality—which is the sentiment of Poesy. (510)

_Truth_ The demands of truth are severe. She has no sympathy with the myrtles. All that is indispensible in song is all with which she has nothing to do. To deck her in gay robes is to render her a harlot. It is but making her a flaunting paradox to wreath her in gems and flowers. . . .

He must be blind indeed who cannot perceive the radical and chasmal difference between the truthful and the poetical modes of inculcation. He must be grossly wedded to conventionalism who, in spite of this difference, shall still attempt to reconcile the obstinate oils and waters of Poetry and Truth. (684–685; compare with 76)
Now the object, Truth, or the satisfaction of the intellect, and the object Passion, or the excitement of the heart, are, although attainable, to a certain extent, in poetry, far more readily attainable in prose. Truth . . . demands a precision, and Passion, a homeliness . . . which are absolutely antagonistic to that Beauty which . . . is the excitement, or pleasurable elevation, of the soul. (16)

Now symmetry and consistency are convertible terms:—thus Poetry and Truth are one.


Equality

Verse originates in the human enjoyment of equality, fitness. To this enjoyment, also, all the moods of verse—rhythm, metre, stanza, rhyme, alliteration, the refrain [...] are to be referred. (Poe 1984, 33)

[The] man derives enjoyment from his perception of equality. (33)

Heresy

. . . the most singular heresy in its modern history—the heresy of what is called very foolishly, the Lake School. (6–7)

The heresy of The Didactic (75)

Beautiful

An important condition of man’s immortal nature is thus, plainly, the sense of the Beautiful. (685)

The range of imagination is thus unlimited. Its materials extend throughout the universe. Even out of deformities it fabricates that beauty which is at once its sole object and its inevitable test. (1126–1127)

Now I designate Beauty as the province of the poem, merely because it is an obvious rule of Art that effects should be made to spring from direct causes. (16)

An immortal instinct, deep within the spirit of man, is thus, plainly, a sense of the beautiful. (Poe 1984, 76)

In lauding Beauty, Genius merely evinces a filial affection. To Genius Beauty gives life—reaping often a reward in Immortality. (1306)

. . . a species of melancholy is inseparably connected with the higher manifestations of the beautiful. (521)

Mystic

The term mystic . . . is applied . . . to that class of composition in which there lies beneath the transparent upper current of meaning, an under or suggestive one. (337)

Music

Music, when combined with a pleasurable idea, is poetry; music without the idea is simply music; the idea without the music is prose from its very definitiveness. (11)

It is in Music, perhaps, that the soul most nearly attains the great end for which, when inspired with the Poetic Sentiment, it struggles—the creation of supernal Beauty. (78; compare with the review of Longfellow’s Ballads)
I know that indefinitiveness is an element of the true music—I mean of the true musical expression. Give to it any undue decision—in-bue it with any very determinate tone—and you deprive it, at once of its ethereal, its ideal, its intrinsic and essential character. You dispel its luxury of dream. You dissolve the atmosphere of the mystic upon which it floats. (1331; compare with 1435–1436)

Effect

By the initial motto—often a very long one—we are either put in possession of the subject of the poem; or some hint, historic fact, or suggestion is thereby afforded, not included in the body of the article, which, without the suggestion, would be utterly incomprehensible. . . . In either instance the totality of effect is annihilated. (877)

. . . in almost all classes of composition, the unity of effect or impression is a point of the greatest importance. It is clear, moreover, that this unity cannot be thoroughly preserved in productions whose perusal cannot be completed at one sitting. (771)

The ultimate, aggregate, or absolute effect of even the best epic under the sun, is a nullity;—and this is precisely the fact. (72)

The extent to which Poe’s theoretical views have found fertile ground in practice and the extent to which there were conflicting attitudes in criticism about the validity of Poe’s principle are best understood from the following facts. Poe’s name is inevitably associated with the aestheticism that would blossom a few decades after his death, especially the idea of “art for art’s sake.” However, the term aesthetic is not mentioned at all in any of Poe’s works (Polonsky 2002, 43). Unlike the classical postulates and ancient rhetoric, works such as Aristotle’s Poetics and Horace’s Ars Poetica which above all emphasized the task of teaching but also offered to the audience “pleasure,” at the beginning of the nineteenth century English Romanticism simply reversed the mimetic model of production and put the focus of attention on the poetic creative process instead of on the work of art (ibid.). It is obvious that in “The Poetic Principle” Poe also used the rhetoric of aestheticism as his vocabulary, that is to say, in this particular essay, written towards the end of his life, he collected and expressed the most obvious “aesthetic” postulates. In “The Philosophy of Composition” Poe rejected the widespread romanticized vision of artistic creation as a completely spontaneous process and highlighted the experience of a work as a product controlled by the artist, for whom it is a “mathematical problem.” It is this moment that distances Poe from the generally accepted and established Romantic attitude that a work is first and foremost a product of the poet’s imagination and inspiration. Some critics believe that Poe, in “The Poetic Principle,” by emphasizing phrases such as “the heresy of didactics” and “a poem for itself [...] written for its own sake,” actually placed himself among those who fit into the Kantian conception of a
work of art which is characterized by a purpose without a purpose (45). Thanks to Poe a special experience of lyrical poetry was created, or at least reinforced, while on the other hand, he anathematized other literary forms of verse. His vision of poetic creation as a kind of scientific, algebraic process is particularly reflected in “The Rationale of Verse.” Here it becomes clear that Poe considered that the development of verse was moving away from its original simplicity to extreme complexity according to the very nature of things. However, this essay attracted a lot of criticism. Hence Arthur Hobson Quinn pointed out that Poe had simply “wandered off” into the natures and patterns of English verse, claiming that he had failed to recognize its accentual basis (Quinn and O’Neill 1946, 1087). Floyd Stovall pointed out the weakness of Poe’s theories, especially those which look into introducing poetry into the framework of Procrustean time constraints borrowed from music, while he referred to Poe’s treatment of the caesura as a monosyllabic element as the only important contribution that he made in that essay (Stovall 1969, 194). According to Sherwin Cody, the good side of Poe’s theory is that verse is based on time, not on accents, and that according to the nature of things, the reading of verse should comply with scansion. However, Cody resents Poe’s inadequate treatment of the pause, as well as the fact that he did not take into account the importance of stress in marking the climax of rhythmic waves (Cody 1924, 324–327).

Alongside all the shortcomings of Poe’s views expressed in his essays, we can still claim that “The Rationale of Verse” is the first effective attempt to develop “a science of verse” in English. Poe did not only write poetry, he discussed the very process of creation in minute detail. His other writings on literary theory and his attempt to devise his theory of poetry should also be considered from this angle. The readers should always bear in mind that besides being a great poet, a short story writer and a literary critic Poe was also a “magazinist” always “concerned with effect” (Levine and Levine 2009, x), and that in order to achieve appropriate effects he was sometimes inconsistent (e. g. truth, passion). However, one thing is clear: his influence on the generations to come has always been undisputable, no matter whether we discuss his poetry, prose or literary theory.

Notes

1. “The poet’s eye, in a fine frenzy rolling,
   Doth glance from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven;
   And, as imagination bodies forth
The forms of things unknown, the poet’s pen
Turns them to shapes, and gives to airy nothing
A local habitation and a name…” (Shakespeare 1996, 297)

2. Some critics, such as Joseph Chiari, for example, see in the arguments of “The Philosophy of Composition” a kind of mathematical inevitability which is hard to take seriously. In addition, Chiari criticized the vagueness and mannerism of allegorical concepts such as Beauty and Passion or even the precise, surgical separation of the Intellect from the Heart. Chiari is also of the opinion that this method of composition put forward in the aforementioned essay should first be known as the “mathematical principle” and only then should Poe write poems in accordance with his formulated principle, which would of course be applicable to all poems of that kind. Although in “The Raven” he primarily sees a short story successfully told in verse, he does not find much in it that is poetic because the poem is dominated by its theme. Chiari (1956, 105–111) claims that it lacks organic structure and movement.

3. Charles Dickens decided to “introduce” in the novel Barnaby Rudge a raven which Poe, among other things, commented on in his critical review of this work in 1841 and 1842, and maybe even used it as inspiration for his poetic masterpiece.

4. It is in his Longfellow review that he states that the first element of poetry is the thirst for the Supernal Beauty, while as a second element he names the very attempt to satisfy that thirst with novel combinations of those forms of beauty that already exist or were made by our ancestors, claiming that poetry represents a rhythmical creation of Beauty. This statement was obviously repeated in “The Poetic Principle,” the essay in which he expressed the most relevant “aesthetic” postulates of his theory.

Works Cited


Abstract
Edgar Allan Poe: Reflections on Poetry

In his theory of poetry Edgar Allan Poe dealt with several crucial literary and theoretical issues. In his review of Longfellow’s Ballads and Other Poems (1842) Poe reconfirms the significance of the search for beauty that overcomes the limits of the terrestrial, Supernal Beauty, in which he recognizes the grand aim of poetry as well as the perennial essence of human nature. It is in his Longfellow review that he states that the first element of poetry is the thirst for Supernal Beauty, while as a second element he names the very attempt to satisfy that thirst with novel combinations of those forms of beauty that already exist or were made by our ancestors, claiming that poetry represents a rhythmical creation of Beauty. This statement was repeated in “The Poetic Principle,” the essay in which he expressed the most relevant “aesthetic” postulates of his theory. In “The Philosophy of Composition” Poe rejected the conventional Romantic vision of artistic creation as a primarily spontaneous process and pointed out that this is a process of planning and calculation, highly controlled by the artist, while in “The Rationale of Verse” he detailed his “mathematical approach” to poetic work.

Keywords
Edgar Allan Poe, theory of poetry, Supernal Beauty
The Barbarianism of the Civilized Man

Alina Silvana Felea

“<The Barbarians are here.”

The Ancient Greeks, who occupy a bright spot in the history of humanity, and to whom the Western world owes so much in various fields such as philosophy, art, literature, history, ethics, rhetoric, etc., labeled the Others as barbarians. The term barbarian, barbaroi, comes from Ancient Greek and it refers to those who speak unintelligible languages, a multitude of words used together without any logic and sense: bar, bar, bar (“blah, blah, blah”) (Moraru 2011, 28). Ancient Greeks considered themselves to be superior people and, as such, they did not deem it necessary to make “the effort to know” and better understand other “inferior” civilizations.¹ Intolerance, irrational behavior, exclusion or rejection of what is unknown, in spite of what Dominique Walton calls “l’omniprésence de l’Autre comme facteur aggravant d’incompréhension” (Wolton 2003, 10; see also Moraru 2011, 22), all these traits are ever present, no matter how advanced civilization becomes and how many millennia separate us from Ancient Greece. This startling observation permeates various ways the field of art, of

¹ Alina Silvana Felea
literature, which focuses on the experiences of oppression, discrimination and racism that, although having a mutilating effect on the human condition, still remain a lesson to be learned.

**Technical Perfection and the Annihilation of Humanism**

In his third sea voyage, Gulliver, Jonathan Swift’s character, finds out about the existence of a flying island, Laputa, a technical miracle, carefully and scientifically described by the author, in an almost neutral tone. We are given mathematical, mechanical details—an analytical and abstract style is the most appropriate for such a subject. “The flying, or floating island, is exactly circular; its diameter seven thousand eight hundred and thirty seven yards, or about four miles and an half, and consequently contains ten thousand acres” (Swift 1970, 178), etc. It is astonishing to discover that this island is a terrible instrument used for punishment and even destruction. If the people who live below the flying island and under its rule rebel, they are deprived of sunlight and rain, by “keeping the island hovering over such a town.” If the rebellions do not cease, they are “pelted with great stones” and finally, if they obstinately continue with their insurrection, “he proceeds to the last remedy, by letting the island drop directly upon their heads, which makes a universal destruction both of houses and men” (183). And, at this point, the reader comes to the realization that he was presented with an aberrant invention, similar to the thinking machine mentioned to Gulliver by a scientist during the same voyage. This ingenious creation’s purpose is to standardize and serialize thought.

The author of Gulliver’s adventures, who lived in the rationalistic century of Enlightenment, the era of absolute faith in the value of scientific and technical achievements and in progress, created a satire of this blind optimism. Renouncing any term that would denote emotional involvement, adopting the attitude of a cold, emotionless observer, Swift focuses only on quantitative symbols, as figures become the star of his narrative. Everything is expressed using mathematical symbols, thus creating a large discrepancy between the perfection, ingenuity and accuracy of the technical inventions and their lack of humanity. It is of no importance whether the flying island and the thinking machine were created from the very beginning as instruments of control, even for the suppression of some humans and the annihilation of the thinking process, or these properties were discovered later on. What does matter is that they do not serve humanity’s wellbeing and progress, becoming grotesque, monstrous, aberrant, irrational
creations. The intellectual effort, the intelligence involved in their creation are useless as long as they suppress life, thinking, and stifle human freedom.

Scientific discoveries and technical innovations were regarded throughout history as expressions of progress, as victories for civilization and human intelligence. Nevertheless, quite a few times they served destructive intentions, which seriously raised the problem of civilization achievements used for barbarian purposes. Unfortunately, these achievements are not annihilated by the superlative thinking that created them. In these circumstances, rational thinking cohabits with or is subordinate to irrational thinking. The literary style chosen by Swift to present the invention that serves criminal purposes is the non-emotional narrative. The writer does not lament, does not deplore this state, but watches in a detached way, inhibiting any emotional expression, and using the cold, emotionless language of science. The outcome of this attitude is terrifying; humanity is diminished, suppressed to the point where the reader finds it difficult to identify the culprit, the character morally responsible for this barbarous creation packed in the technical perfection of a soulless machine.

Nevertheless, beyond this creation, we find the king, the authority who immediately seized the opportunity to exert his inhumane domination over his subjects by abusively using scientific discoveries for personal gain.

The Disappearance of Motivations and Causal Links in Kafka’s Allegorical World

E very time humanity is threatened or undermined through different avenues, the first question to arise concerns why this is happening, although clarifying answers do not make the horror of the situation more bearable or diminish it. The lack of explanations and justifications makes our existence nonsensical, and this represents one of Kafka’s essential themes. The writer, having noticed our need for explanations, although useless at times, which endeavor to give an apparent meaning to our lives, explores the human reaction to this very lack of motivation, logic and coherence. The uncertain and aberrant world (death being the only certain thing) created by Kafka leads to a deep anxiety, enhanced by the fact that all the “enigmas” are not solved even at the end of the stories. Readers are not given any clues, any help to understand the mechanisms behind actions, the coding is seamless; the characters’ behaviors and reactions are absolutely illogical and unexplainable. Thus we have the blueprint for a meaningless and chaotic existence, always in danger of being crushed by an incomprehensible barbaric force.
In Kafka’s work, the allegory of the meaningless human existence, twisted under the scathing influence of evil without a cause, is essentialized and stylized. We are provided with an abundance of details, with careful, meticulous descriptions that do not shed much light on the story. We find thus the paradox of describing a reality whose meaning escapes us, the following aberration: we are given “everything,” but we do not understand its logic! In *The Castle* for example, the character K. carefully explores a labyrinth of bureaucracy, symbolized by the allegory of the castle. We cannot know the hero’s destination as he incessantly looks for something, we do not know what for and why. The story, the anecdote are sketchy, reduced, simplified in all of Kafka’s works. There isn’t much going on, but there are a few essential allegorical models: the search (*la quête*) in *The Castle*, the waiting in *The Trial*, the experience of the lower stages of evolution in *The Metamorphosis*. One of the motifs that attract the most attention is the rapport between the aggressor and the victim that appears to define the human condition. The castle is a faultless, inexplicable machine, just like the absurd judicial apparatus from *The Trial*. With *In the Penal Colony*, Kafka creates an infernal world of fright and horror. The numerous details and the technical, mechanical descriptions annihilate humanism, replacing it with logical connections. The torture machine is an admirable technical achievement by its ingenuity and a frightening success in suppressing the human being. “When K. looked at the castle he sometimes thought he saw someone sitting quietly there, looking into space” but, in fact, “K. had never seen the slightest sign of life there” (Kafka 2009, 88). This immense discrepancy between excelling through thought, intellect, inventiveness and the destructive purpose is an issue acutely expressed in Kafka’s prose. His allegories reveal that intellectual performance is not an absolute guarantee for preserving what is good and moral. The strange created world is a world without the fundamental ideas of good and evil, amputated by the disappearance of any logical connection; that is why it appears so eerie to us. Although it apparently seems to be very far from reality, the author creates an experiment in which the absurdity of decisions that destroy countless human lives is taken from ordinary life and transformed in a literary matter. The relationship to life, to its attributed lack of meaning that lead to disasters provoked by people, is clear; fiction transfigured reality, it did not nullify or contradict it.

Two types of dehumanization are clearly exposed: firstly, that of the scientist or technician who actively takes part in the destructive process, as if entranced by the perfection of the killing machine, and secondly, the passive dehumanization of the spectator, who sees the horror and does not act or intervene to stop it, thus becoming responsible as well. The two categories cooperate for the establishment or restoration of barbarism throughout history.
The Civilized Barbarians

The two types of barbarians, the active and the passive one, are very well illustrated by Coetzee’s characters from the novel *Waiting for the Barbarians*, Colonel Joll and the Magistrate. The former is the torturer sent by the secret service called “The Third Bureau” and the latter, the central character, is the spectator to abominable acts, desiring peace and a prosperous life, but who is transformed into an accomplice by his non-reaction. Coetzee’s allegory is located in an imaginary Empire, in an uncertain time and space, probably in South Africa, but the parable is outside time and space.

Colonel Joll hides his gaze behind tinted glasses, and sight becomes one of the main literary themes of this novel. The eyes are windows to the soul, thus the torturer cultivates his dehumanization by hiding his eyes; the tinted glasses keep his perverted human essence from being noticed, being lost in the grotesque zeal to find “the truth.” He is a “truth fanatic,” “a doctor in interrogations,” delighted with his own technique: “First, I get lies, you see—this is what happens—first lies, then pressure, then more pressure, then the truth” (Coetzee 1982, 10). And the Magistrate remarks sardonically: “Pain is truth, all else is subject to doubt” (ibid.). But what kind of “truth” is that which is revealed under torture? How can the colonel be so proud of his methods to make a person give in and agree to say all that the aggressor wants to hear, admitting even to things he has not done, only to survive? This barbarian who appears to be civilized, who devalues the notion of truth itself, does not understand a thing, not only about the human nature towards which he does not exhibit any compassion, but also about the fact that the so-called barbarians are not a real threat. His army is practically disarmed, ravaged by the tough desert conditions, and not by a direct confrontation with the “enemy” after which one side would become the victor, superior to the other. The “enemy” is armed with bows and arrows, old weapons, and lives in tents! The colonel cowardly deserts his companions afterwards, losing his tinted glasses, showing himself not as a cold and rigid person, but as a pathetic being who only wants to save his own life.

The Magistrate is the Empire’s representative who leads a quiet existence, enjoying the perks of his station in life, reading the classics, fascinated by the remains of a civilization discovered through archeological digs, even if he cannot understand it—perhaps this explains the attraction and mystery it exerts upon him—and does not hesitate to lead a promiscuous life. The relationship he develops with the barbarian girl whom he transforms into his whore has more profound explanations. The physical desire he feels for her is underpinned by pity, envy, guilt and cruelty in equal measure. The broken tortured body of the girl, her eyes, who lost their sight, have not lost completely their humanity.
What else is left of this crushed humanity is what the Magistrate intends to find out, but to no avail. This woman seems to be hollow inside, just a surface that makes knowledge impossible. The same significance is attributed to his dreams of children with white, empty, smooth, featureless faces. These beings appear grotesque, terrifying because they are impenetrable. The so-called barbarian is the Other, whom the civilized man cannot reach or understand, and then this human being is considered inhuman, an almost animalic lifeform, despised, who does not know how to behave and must be subdued, dominated by force.

The Magistrate considered himself a civilized being, and would have liked the world to regard him as civilized to the depths of his soul, but then he becomes acutely aware that he is the lie the Empire propagates during peacetime, and Colonel Joll is the truth spread during difficult times. “The two faces of Imperial domination!” It is not insignificant that the Magistrate rediscovers his humanity when he is reduced to the primitive condition of a being who only wants to survive. He refuses to remain an accomplice to an absurd crime, returns the barbarian girl to the tribe, no longer accepts the torture of innocents and is punished for it, becoming himself a victim of imperial representatives who accuse him of treason. However he is unable to keep his dignity, pleads for his life, becomes just a body hoping to appease its hunger and to perform its physiological functions. The Civilized man with refined tastes, cultured and delighted by the classics, can turn in a single moment into a brute, not just by passively watching the torture of his fellow human being, but also by being subjected to a deprived existence. The balance is very fragile and dignity is easily lost. However, many times, only one who lives through such limitations can fully and truly understand the essence of one’s own humanity.

**Is it Impossible to Change Human Nature?**

The allegories created by Swift, Kafka, Coetzee and many others from different cultures and historical eras, highlight an incurable evil and a situation without remedy. The writers do not offer or suggest solutions, but are satisfied just to observe the reality or to criticize it in an indirect, artistic manner. The world does not seem to be morally different now from what it was in the past, but naming the problem, relaying its gravity, its impact over society in general, is an important step taken by art. Literature is not meant to transform evil into a show, which we all can watch and then forget immediately afterwards. Once we become conscious of what is happening, our guilt and responsibility increase when we continue to indulge into an equivocal situation.
The works of the mentioned authors question our trust in reason, offer the image of a falsely idealized civilization, undermining the myth of progress when used to serve destruction. Through their works, Swift and Kafka draw our attention to the dangers of an excessively technicized and rationalized world, of an excess in the very qualities that made our world great. The mechanisms of domination, discipline, and control are a new type of barbarianism, the irruption of savagery into modern civilization. But this problem can be regarded from another point of view. What if Habermas is right when he affirms that there is too little reason in our civilized world, rather than too much, as all the conquests of science and technology let us believe? Perhaps we ought to discuss the matter of a deficit, not of an excess of reason! The reason that is directly and inseparably linked to humanism and morality and does not equally condone immorality.

Christopher Rocco, commenting on Habermas’s theory stated: “the processes of rationalization have not yet been institutionalized, or have proceeded one-sidedly in favor of an instrumental reason embodied in technical-scientific enterprises” (Rocco 1994, 78).

The smooth, nightmarish, featureless faces from Coetzee’s novel remind us of Kafka’s world that lacks categorization (Kategorielose), ordered, meticulous but featureless, without substance, sense and logic, no depth, just surface. But we cannot conceive a rational society without varied intelligence levels, without a meaning that follows or leads to another meaning, without particularities, differences, multiplicity, pluralism, and even contradictions, without those fertile contradictions, not the ones that generate conflicts where a party must always lose, at times painfully. Because, in the bipolar world we live in, one person is civilized and another person is a barbarian, and implicitly only one of the two has rights and is rightful, and usually the barbarian is the loser. He/she does not “deserve” anything for he/she is not worthy, and furthermore he/she must be despised, exiled through racism and xenophobia, as he/she is at an inferior evolutionary stage. In reality he/she is not inferior to the civilized man/woman as the roles can change in a split second, as they both downgrade that which they do not understand, because of a terror of the unknown and hatred of the unknowable. In a solipsist world, only the one representing the culture used as a reference point exists, and only this culture owns the “unique truth,” sola veritates.

We live under the impression that once we become civilized, we can no longer return to barbarianism, but the barbarian ego co-exists sleepily with the civilized ego, it has not been annihilated, and it is a part of the shadow of the civilized being that can always be activated. “The barbarians are here,” Coetzee says (1982, 163). To respond to backwardness, cruelty, savagery with the sophisticated, cold savagery of the torture machine is nothing else than return-
ing to barbarianism, accepting dehumanization. Who is inhumane in Coetzee’s novel: the barbarians, simple, nomadic human beings, living primitively, innocents corrupted by the many “benefits” of civilization, like alcohol, or the torturer who wants to snatch confessions of inexistent attack plans against the Empire from innocent people? There seems to be an ambivalent nature of the human intellect and power, a perilous balance and dialectics between authority, force, rebelliousness on the one hand, and helplessness, weakness, lack of dignity, moral misery on the other. Is this ambivalence perverted—we indulge in it, consciously admit and cultivate it—, or is it that we simply cannot ignore it, cannot give a voice to the irrational, cruel, violent part of us, as in Robert Louis Stevenson’s *Doctor Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, where “the shadow,” Mr. Hyde, is controlled up to a point where he escapes the control of reason? Barbaric, irrational behaviors could be explained in such a manner; the Other is “the shadow of himself” (Stevenson 2006, 90). If human nature is fundamentally bipolar, antagonistic (civilized and savage) and condemned to abandon once in a while, according to circumstances, the voice of reason, then civilization is also a sort of pharmakon, both remedy and poison!

Nevertheless today we are speaking more and more, which can be an indication of a major change in attitude, mentality, and finally in the behavior or internal structures, about the importance of transcending our limitations, to build a Bridge and Door to the world of the Other and to renounce ignorant opacity, and to rectify our insensitivity to particularity. Identity at any level can only be defined in relation to the Other, Huntington said, and Christian Moraru speaks of the manner in which understanding the Other is attempted, is rewarded with self-knowledge and “a double opportunity to discover others, no doubt as well as ourselves. The two discoveries are inseparable” (Moraru 2011, 22). The civilized man must understand that destruction of the Other equates to self-destruction. Nowadays, more than ever, we live in a relating world, “a network society” that obliges us to care for the others. That is why, Christian Moraru says, we must establish “an ecology not an egology” of relationships with our peers and also with those different from us.

Thomas L. Friedman, in his 2005 book *The World is Flat: A Brief History of the Twenty-First Century*, mentions a different paradigm of the assignment of value, which is valid in the field of economics and informational technology especially, but our society is collaborative in nature in all of its levels and it is impossible for these profound changes not to affect all the components of society, especially the way of being and thinking of the human individual. Thus, if in the past value was created in a predominantly vertical system, this system being labeled by Friedman as one of command and control, today the model becomes more and more horizontal, based on connection and multiple forms
of collaboration. “Everywhere you turn,” Friedman says, “hierarchies are being challenged from below or are transforming themselves from top-down structures into more horizontal and collaborative ones” (Friedman 2005, 48). If the old system very clearly defined the leaders and those they led, who was the exploiter and who the exploited, the civilized and the barbarian, in the near future even the meek will have power and will be given the opportunity to demonstrate their value, to prove that they are the keepers of an immense potential for work, creativity and culture.

Anthropologists point out that societies affected by rapid changes (such as the changes affecting today economic trade, the labor market, etc.) are found to be rather unstable. A world without cultural or linguistic differences, without any conflicts fueled by ideologies, and without separations between people that often generate friction, seems to be a remote reality. It is true that the new communication technologies are the main modality that brings people together, without judgments in terms of evolutionary stages. At the same time, it is inferred that these technologies equally lead to uniformization, representing a danger for differences in identity which must be maintained. We are not only similar to each other, but also unique and different from one another. It is an axiomatic truth against which it makes no sense to fight. Thus we must clearly state the different features, those defining aspects representing particularities which must be respected, protected, and those limitations and barriers within our community and individual mentality that create injustice and a flagrant violation of the human rights and freedoms of the Other. People will always need rules, laws to uphold, and the authority principle and its application in daily life, because otherwise anarchy would ensue, but this authority ought not to turn, as it often happens, into domination, control and abuse.

Literary allegories are some of the modalities that help us become more conscious of the grave, absurd, destabilizing consequences for the human being of the refusal to understand, respect, regard with tolerance and openness towards dialogue the one who is different from you. Scientific and technical discoveries have often been used for destruction. Humanity’s progress over thousands of years is undeniable and is overwhelmingly due to scientific and technological advances. These innovations seem to cause significant mutations in the structure of a global society that is infinitely more open towards communication than it used to be. It is possible to cause good changes, mutations of the human structures, which would cease to think of differences in conflicntual terms, annulling once and for all the tension between the civilized man and the barbarian and making it unacceptable for the civilized man to prove himself a barbarian.
Notes

1. “A barbarian, Greek historians and philosophers enlighten us, is fundamentally a non-Greek, a foreigner. Vice versa, a foreigner must be barbaric, totally différent” (Moraru 2011, 28). However, some Greek historians used the world “barbarian” only in the descriptive (non-normative) sense. As Patrick Thollard says, “barbare, chez Strabon, est une catégorie qui permet de classer et de décrire les peuples sans avoir à les juger” (Thollard 1987, 39).

2. Some interpreters have pointed out that Kafka’s stories “are not set in any definite time,” so the characters “tend to be interpreted by readers as actors in an always present” (Gross 2002, 247).

3. In the contractarian political theory, this issue was developed by Thomas Hobbes, whose merit consists in “knowing and seeing against what the liberal ideal of civilization has to be persistently fought for: not merely against rotten institutions, against the evil will of a ruling class, but against the natural evil of man” (Strauss 2007, 107). However, as Gabriela Ratulea pointed out, “it is not clear enough whether, in Hobbes, the moment when nature is denied is equivalent to the assertion of civilization” (Ratulea 2014, 610).

4. Georg Simmel’s metaphor for the multicultural society viewed as a bridge system between separate parts (see Simmel 1994, 5–10).

Works Cited


**Abstract**

The Barbarianism of the Civilized Man: Literary Allegories

The binomial civilized/barbarian is as old as the history of culture and civilization. What is grave is that humanity considers civilization as something definitive, earned for good, while civility can quickly and much too easily be transformed into barbarism. It is what authors like Swift, Kafka or Coetzee demonstrate through literary allegories. Barbarism is equated with the attempt to annihilate the human being with the aid of the machine or through the military superiority of the civilized man. After all appearances this reality emerges: civilized man becoming a barbarian under certain conditions will never change, although in the era of globalism a structural change is foreseen. Communication will create the premise for knowing the Other, for showing understanding and tolerance towards him/her, so, in an optimistic scenario, the barbarianism of the “civilized” man becomes less and less possible.

**Keywords**
civilized, barbarian, literature, allegory, humanity, dehumanization, Swift, Kafka, Coetzee
Dompter le modernisme – l’expressivité selon les modernes

DIX à onze ans avant que le réalisme socialiste réussisse à s’imposer (1948), la poésie roumaine entre dans une nouvelle étape. Le changement passe inaperçu auprès de la majorité des critiques, à l’exception de quelques esprits attentifs, préoccupés de saisir le phénomène littéraire dans toutes ses articulations et nuances. Ainsi, Eugen Simion souligne-t-il dans une analyse de la poésie de Geo Dumitrescu : « La jeune poésie autour de 1940, sous la pression des événements historiques ou par une évolution naturelle, recommence à communiquer. »¹

Le changement est perçu également par Alexandru George, dans un commentaire relatif à Dimitrie Stelaru : « Sa grande originalité, ce qui justifie sa place éminente parmi les contemporains [...], c’est son refus de se laisser contaminer par le climat littéraire des années 1930, dominé par la poésie hermétique, et de le perpétuer [...] »² L’avis est partagé par Ovid S. Crohmalniceanu : « Dimitrie Stelaru [...] a largement contribué à libérer la lyrique roumaine des effets stérilisants de l’intellectualisation excessive. »³

Fait étrange, les histoires littéraires ne se font pas l’écho de ces observa-

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« Le futurisme a trahi la vie [...]. Le dadaïsme, pire encore, l’a ignorée. »

Ioan Barauș
tions. Al. Piru⁴, Alex Ștefănescu⁵, Nicolae Manolescu⁶, Ion Rotaru⁷ ne men-
tionnent aucun changement de paradigme, ni dans les vues d’ensemble, ni dans
les portraits des différents auteurs. Les grands manifestes artistiques de l’époque
sont également ignorés⁸, qui témoignent d’une tension entre les générations et
d’une mutation dans le climat artistique. Dumitru Micu est l’un des rares cri-
tiques à évoquer, sans y insister, une inflexion dans le discours poétique (« Du
point de vue de l’histoire littéraire, le volume⁹ consacrait [...] dans le contexte
lyrique du moment la réaction spontanée contre la poésie difficile, intellectuelle
de manière programmatique [...] »).¹⁰ Tout aussi rapide est I. Negoițescu : « En
tant que poète, Emil Botta représente, à sa manière personnelle, une passerelle
entre les grands poètes de l’entre-deux-guerres et la génération de Stelaru, de
Tonegaru et d’Ioanichie Olteanu, qui ont beaucoup appris de lui. »¹¹

Qualifié hâtivement et imparfaitement de « réaction » ou de « passerelle », le
phénomène cache un véritable bouleversement du paradigme poétique. Il de-
vient visible entre 1937-1947 (période allant du début littéraire d’Emil Botta¹²
aux derniers moments de la presse libre) et se propose de dépasser le modern-
nisme, compris dans un sens large qui inclut tous les mouvements radicaux,
depuis le purisme et la poésie hermétique jusqu’à l’Avant-garde. Cette attitude
définit pratiquement tous les grands poètes de l’époque, à l’exception du Groupe
surréaliste roumain, et elle est facile à retracer autant dans la théorie que dans
la pratique poétique.

Voici, pour commencer, l’opinion tranchante de Geo Dumitrescu : « La for-
mule l’art pour l’art [...] d’une inoffensive stérilité, se sera également avérée
trop longue d’un mot. Il aurait suffi de dire : l’art [...] La formule pacifique
et gratuite est devenue omnipotente, catégorique, intolérante. Elle a mis – et
continue de perpétuer – une distance entre la littérature et le peuple [...] Retirés
loin du monde, les yeux bandés, les créateurs se sont égarés dans les raffinements
mineurs, dans les détails poussiéreux, fruits d’un labeur neurasthénique qui avait
oublié son sens et son but. »¹³

Un point de vue similaire est exprimé par le grand esthéticien, critique litté-
raire et artistique et fondateur du groupe du Criterion, Petru Comarnescu.
Dans un article fondamental sur l’idéologie de l’époque, « La déshumanisation
de la poésie (Observations sur les qualités et les faiblesses de la poésie contem-
poraine) »¹⁴, il exprime son inquiétude de voir la poésie s’éloigner de la vie et
de la société et privilégier le vernis formel et les visions subtiles, bref, d’être
tombée dans un maniérisme où l’adresse l’emporte sur la sincérité et l’authe-
tanticité. Convaincu que le temps est à la « poésie humaine », à la poésie en tant
que « communion lyrique du vécu », le critique appelle les poètes modernistes à
dépasser leurs préjugés quant au contenu.
De telles prises de position sont tout sauf exceptionnelles, dans les cercles littéraires de Bucarest et d’ailleurs. Le manifeste du Cercle littéraire de Sibiu, « La renaissance de la ballade », est un exemple parmi d’autres qui confirme l’existence, au-delà des choix poétiques personnels, d’un état d’esprit général. Après y avoir critiqué la poésie devenue une « logorrhée » sans contenu, et avoir affirmé que « l’exclusivité esthétique ne produit pas de chef-d’œuvre »15, Radu Stanca propose un retour aux sources lyriques d’avant le modernisme. L’expressivité, le mélange du lyrique, de l’épique et du dramatique, la restauration des formules poétiques « révolutives » sont les piliers de la nouvelle conception, qui affirme par là son caractère profondément antimoderniste. Enfin, Ştefan Aug. Doinaş, dans une rétrospective de la « situation de la poésie roumaine de l’époque » formule les mêmes critiques : « nous étions peu satisfaits par l’esthétisme : la poésie pure, que nous connaissions bien (certains d’entre nous pour en avoir fait l’expérience), nous semblait une formule stérile, incapable de contenir la complexité axiologique nécessaire aux œuvres majeures. Le purisme et la tour d’ivoire n’étaient pas, selon nous, un exil salutaire, mais un isolement aseptique destiné à couper l’élan créateur, à nous enfermer dans une expérimentation sans issue. »16


Après le tournant du 23 août 1944, ce type de discours sera vite étouffé par la critique sur commande politique. La littérature « de la tour d’ivoire » sera alors jugée « élusive », « intimiste », « décadente ». Deux « débats » surtout, parmi ceux qui allaient imposer définitivement le nouvel ordre culturel, sont essentiels pour notre sujet : le débat sur « la crise de la culture » et l’attaque contre la « décadence » de toute œuvre qui ne rentrait pas dans le moule étroit de la « nouvelle littérature », de la « littérature pour les masses » ou, selon le nom devenu classique, de la « littérature réaliste socialiste ».

L’ANTIMODERNISME des poètes de la décennie 1937-1947 connaît plusieurs manifestations mais une seule constante : le retour à l’expressivité. La plupart des grands auteurs de l’époque affichent clairement leur option en faveur du message et de l’expression directe19. La clarté du discours n’est toutefois ni radicale, ni fermée à la nouveauté artistique ; au contraire, elle est ouverte à toutes les influences, pourvu qu’elles soient « compréhensibles » et « utiles ». La nouvelle poésie assimile ainsi une partie des expériences du modernisme, ce qui
contribue à lui donner un profil radicalement différent de la poésie du XIXᵉ siècle, comme en témoigne l’œuvre de Dimitrie Stelaru. Sous couvert d’un retour au romantisme, celui-ci crée une poésie flexible, qui tantôt remonte jusqu’aux troubadours, tantôt se colore d’un air moderne, surtout expressionniste.

Tandis que Stelaru et, dans une autre perspective, les membres du Cercle littéraire de Sibiu renoncent au caractère impersonnel de l’acte créateur – un impératif du modernisme – et font revivre le romantisme ou des formes poétiques encore plus anciennes, le groupe de la revue Albatros récupère une autre tradition, dont les échos étaient à peine éteints.


Tout en partageant avec les premiers auteurs cités l’attitude de fronde, l’esprit de groupe et certaines techniques de dépôtisation du discours, les poètes de l’Albatros s’en distinguent profondément par l’accent mis sur le caractère intelligible du message. Ce dernier devient synonyme d’une réhabilitation du fait
biographique, de l’anecdote, des inflexions rhétoriques. La poésie recommence à transmettre des sentiments, des critiques (contre la bourgeoisie, la société, la guerre) et des rêves (images du poète non conformiste, géographies imaginaires, une mythologie poétique), le tout mis en valeur par l’expression limpide, cohérente, sans distorsions syntaxiques.

L’ensemble de la nouvelle poésie est parcouru par un courant de non conformisme qui démonte, avec ironie et sarcasme, les interdits et les préjugés de toute nature. La protestation, fruit d’un fort instinct polémique, prend pour cible tous les vices du temps, depuis l’iniquité sociale jusqu’aux maux provoqués ou amplifiés par la guerre. Il suffit de rappeler à ce titre les noms de Mihai Beniuc et de Miron Radu Paraschivescu, qui expriment, dans deux tonalités différentes, une même insatisfaction : le premier, dans un style direct, tumultueux, marqué par sa situation de Roumain de Transylvanie (voir les nombreuses références à la Transylvanie, à Cluj, au Criș, aux personnages historiques de Gelu, Horea, Avram Iancu, ou à son propre père) ; le second, plus subtile, faisant paraître un volume de Cântice țigânești (Chansons tsiganes) au moment de la déportation des Tsiganes vers les camps de Transnistrie.

L’engagement de la nouvelle poésie se double parfois d’une tristesse à valences métaphysiques, provoquée par la crise « de notre temps vieux et pourri ». C’est ainsi que le poète devient le damné, le paria. Combattant la faim, le froid, la misère, la solitude, « l’errant » et « l’épuisé » esquissé par Ben. Corlaciu resurgit dans les poèmes de Constant Tonegaru et de Ion Caraion, et jusqu’à Dimitrie Stelaru, qui parachève cette image, tout en se confondant avec elle. Stelaru a ainsi le double mérite « d’avoir été le premier à exprimer la poésie du vagabondage » et d’avoir transfiguré « le vagabond », « le mendiant », « le gueux » en « ange » (Înger vagabond) [Ange vagabond], « Cântec de neguri » [Chant des ténèbres], « Rizipit » [Dispersé], « Prea târziu » [Trop tard].

rence des premiers, les textes de Doinaș, malgré leur forme recherchée, ont clairement un fonds d'idées qui les place aux antipodes de la poétique du spontané.


Notes

8. Seul est évoqué l’article de Radu Stanca « Resucrţiile baladei », Revista Cercului Literar (Sibiu), n° 5, 1945, p. 57-61.
17. Ion Caraion, Panopticum, București, Prometeu, 1943.
18. Ibid.
21. Miron Radu Paraschivescu, Cântece țigănești, București, Prometeu, 1941.
25. Dimitrie Stelaru, Ora fantastică, București, Prometeu, 1944.

**Abstract**

*Taming Modernism: On the Modern Coordinates of Expressivity*

This paper aims to demonstrate the fact that during the decade preceding the widespread adoption of socialist realism (1948), a new poetic paradigm gained prominence in the Romanian literary arena. Thus, there occurred a split from a broadly conceived modernist radicalism including not only purism and hermeticism, but also the poetics of the avant-garde, a split that equalled a return to expressivity under modern coordinates. The volumes of poetry and the programmatic articles published at that time, as well as some remarks made by well-known critics, bear testimony to this. Nevertheless, literary histories have remained opaque, failing to depict the above-mentioned paradigm as a worthy presence on the literary landscape of the period.

**Keywords**

modernism, communication, expressivity, poetic paradigm
The Failed Recovery of Dissidence Literature in Romania
I. D. Sîrbu—An Exemplary Case

Coordinates of the Romanian Literary Dissidence

Upon the fall of communism in Romania, everyone was awaiting the emergence of a sizable desk drawer literature, evidence of the resistance through culture during totalitarianism. It is known that Romania is the only country in the former Soviet bloc where there was no samizdat (Linz and Stepan 1996, 352–353). The Czech Republic or East Germany used to be models in this respect, as copies of books written by hand or typed were circulating among intellectuals in the first case and via numerous illegal publications in the former GDR. There were also other forms of samizdat, with an identity-ethnic character among the Russian Hebrew community (Smola 2011, 63), or discursive-undermining for the communist ideology, with movements like Seminar and Synthesis in Bulgaria (Lutzkanova-Vassileva 2009, 133). As there was no internal movement of resistance and solidarity, Romanian literary dissidence—in the
country, not in exile—manifested itself either through desk drawer writings or through encoded subversive elements, which could pass censorship. Although the collective imagination envisaged hundreds of books that were to come out of the drawers of known writers, Romanians were surprised to find that the '90s saw only 4–5 volumes of fiction written in the communist period: A. E. Baconski’s *Biserica neagră* (The black church), Ion Eremia’s *Gulliver în Țara Minciunilor* (Gulliver in the Land of Lies), I. D. Sîrbu’s *Adio, Europa!* (Good bye, Europe!) and *Lupul și catedrala* (The wolf and the cathedral). None of these novels knew a runaway success, aesthetically or as a document of the time. Although the reasons may be diverse, we will try to identify the possible causes of the public resistance to I. D. Sîrbu’s novels, a representative case for the category in discussion.

Ion Dezideriu Sîrbu’s biography (1919–1989) is not much different from that of other “enemies of the regime.” His academic debut in 1947 at the University of Cluj, as an assistant to Liviu Rusu, was discontinued definitively two years later, when he refused to sign a denunciation against Lucian Blaga, his mentor and doctoral thesis advisor. After some provisional jobs in various places in the country and in Bucharest, he came to the attention of the Securitate again in 1956, suspected of collaboration with anti-revolutionaries in Budapest. An aggravating episode, his repeated refusal to inform on his friend and colleague in the Sibiu Literary Circle, Ștefan Aug. Doinaș, got him seven years in jail, followed by house arrest in Craiova and an informative tracking docket from the Securitate until the end of his life, in September 1989.

Although his dramatic destiny and posthumous writings have aroused admiration and praise from important Romanian intellectuals of the last two decades, we cannot speak about a real public success of his anticommunist novels. *Adio, Europa!* has 3 printed editions—two at Cartea Românească (1992–1993 and 1997) and one at Corint (2005)—and a free one in electronic format at LiterNet. *Lupul și catedrala*, the other novel, was published in only one edition, at Casa Școalelor (1995). In what follows we will not talk about the reception and the role of Sîrbu’s memorial writings—that is, *Jurnalul unui jurnalist fără jurnal* (Diary of a journalist without a journal) and three volumes of correspondence—but we will focus exclusively on the reception of his anti-totalitarian novels within the paradigm of the recovery of desk drawer literature.

**Canons and Literary Generations**

Theories of reception, derived from the analysis of canon evolution, are a first key to understanding why Sîrbu’s books fall in the category of mediocre literature. Harold Bloom highlights the crisis of the Western canon, altered by excessive politicization/ideologization at the expense of aesthe-
tics (Bloom 1994, 441, 527). The readers of Romanian literature went through a prolonged identity crisis, when the canon was subordinated to the demands of socialist realism, and manifested a reluctance to everything associated with ideology since 1989. Even if Sirbu’s Romanian discourse includes ideology at thematic levels only as a deconstruction of communism, as anti-ideology, it seems that the prefix cannot counterbalance the semantic load of the root, triggering a reaction of rejection from readers.

The public’s political experience is not negligible at all, being either immediate or mediated by the deluge of written confessions after the Revolution, made by former political prisoners. Surely, until the publication of Sirbu’s novels, prison testimonies already had time to establish hierarchies and achieve publishing success, with top books like Închisorile mele (My prisons), by Ion Ioanid, or Jurnalul fericirii (The happiness diary) by N. Steinhardt. The horizon of expectation has no place to grow and the depicted violence of the communist anti-utopia does not raise the same echo in a supersaturated imaginary. If the parabolic novels in a political key that slipped past the censorship in the ’70s and ’80s were a long-awaited breath of fresh air, the post-revolutionary literature of this kind got nowhere. Allusions and indirect metaphors are insufficient doses when trying to heal through reading the traumas of a beleaguered generation, at both social and individual level.

Another important theorist of reception, Robert Escarpit, theorized the “Generation Syntony” that generates a crisis of the writer, with the decrease of the influence on the general public opinion that consecrated him (Escarpit 1970, 12). Such a perspective would justify the position of the inglorious literary writer, if the work published during one’s lifetime had brought literary fame, but this was not the case. The real readership should have been born after the advent of the posthumous writings. At one time Sirbu himself was aware of his status of persona non grata with any possible reader: “I remain suspended between a generation who wants to forget me and another who has no interest in noting that I was born” (Sirbu 1998b, 151).

Why is his generation so interested in forgetting him? Obviously, he refers primarily to the literary generation to which he belongs. In Romania, as mentioned above, we cannot speak of a samizdat, a cultural solidarity involving mutual support among members and the promotion of fellow writers. On the contrary, opportunism, compromises with the Securitate and solitary creation were common and more representative for the Romanian writers.

Given his great character, disinclined to moral compromise, Sirbu did not hesitate to criticize and ridicule the small ambitions, fears, lack of authenticity or the cultural and political careerism of the writers around him. The colorful violence with which he portrays them reaches alarming levels. For example,
about Eugen Barbu he says in one of the letters that “he had everything; ev-
erything a Vlach who left the pit needed, he could, he had the obligation to
write a great work and he had everything he needed to write it; he missed one
thing: character. Here the language does not forgive him; it executes him, it
puts him on the rack like a Sisyphus of ignorance . . . all his novels are tribes of
hyper-culture and sophistication, Balkan kitsch, small deals with eternity” (Sirbu
1994, 42). About Ștefan Aug. Doinaș, whom he refused to give away to the
Securitate, he says: “the other lines—may he forgive me—are perfect, fantastic,
but artificial; his language writes for itself, like King Midas—what he touches
turns into verse and poetical composition” (Sirbu 1998b, 135). The novelists
of that time are not exempted from Sirbu’s diatribe, either: “I know snobs in
my town who pretend to be crazy about the latest novels of Breban or D. R.
Popescu; studying them closely, I have found that most of them confuse the tor-
ment of not understanding with the feeling that they are witnessing a miracle,
a mystical revelation. Verbs are distinguished: reading separates from making
you read, understanding from making you understand.” Adrian Păunescu “was
withdrawn the endorsement of metaphysical language, he will continue to write
verse, but poetry... nevermore” (Sirbu 1996, 117). The ’80s generation represen-
tatives are equally mocked: “Our ‘modern’ writers (oneiric, textualist, surrealist,
hermeneutic, etc.) are full of talent. But this talent grinds words, style, formulas,
producing some indigestible games and artifices . . . if you strive to read Ne-
delciu, Agopian, Iliescu or Crăciun to the end you remain with the feeling that
you’re lost, you have turned into an idiot . . . Anytime, even drunk and hanging
from a lamp, I can write with my left hand an oneiric text or some textualist
mumbling” (175–176).

The opinions and verdicts of this type brought I. D. Sirbu no support, no
posthumous promotion. No need for a conspiracy theory to understand the
widespread reservations with regard to his writings. All the more so since many
writers who had ingratiated themselves with the regime continued after the ’90s
to play the literary games of the moment.5

The Narrative Formula

If the previous paragraphs focused on the extrinsic criterion for assessing
and promoting Sirbu’s novels, equally important are the intrinsic measures,
the way of constructing the narrative and discursive architecture. The first
one is relevant through the way in which the storyline advances and the planes
interfere more or less coherently.
Both his posthumous novels can be summarized in a few sentences, after identifying the narrative common thread running through them. In Adio, Europa!, the plot is triggered by the Homeric laughter of the main character, Candid Desiderius, in front of a poster with reading recommendations for children: Karl May was replaced there by mistake with Karl Marx. The laughter is heard by someone benevolent to the local authorities. From that moment on, the character will be followed and interrogated endlessly, but guided and protected by his wise wife, Olimpia. The communist hierarchy is allegorized, but the symbols are transparent: Isarlâk is Craiova, the High Porte is Bucharest, and the Sublime Porte is Moscow. Lupul și catedrala proposes a young character, an engineer who lives the obsessive decade questioning reality, the changes, the new world. At the end of the novel a seemingly real story is told. A wolf appeared one winter in front of the cathedral in Cluj and was shot. The symbol of censored freedom is quite transparent.

We intentionally simplified the texture of the novels, just to emphasize the presence of a narrative coherence that links the beginning to the end both times, but which countless times breaks and loses pieces of itself. More important than the narrative evolution are the parentheses, digressions, metaphors and ample allegories of reality, secondary planes, and independent narrative episodes. It seems that the author writes a thesist work, and successively placing the emphasis on arguments which serve him is more important than any narrative coherence.

Much has been written about the epic barriers by which I. D. Sirbu feels suffocated, perceived as Romanian limitations. But the passion for the fragment as a puzzle piece needed to create a complete picture of communism neutralizes the narrative or rather transforms it from a frame into an instrument, for the same persuasive-demonstrative purpose. Of course, this maneuver makes reading difficult and culls the readers dramatically.

**Discourse Architecture**

As if the essay’s fragmentation within narrative conventions were not sufficient, in certain paragraphs there often appear heavy rhetorical syllogisms, the removal of sophistry, unexpected extrapolations, and countless erudite citations requiring from the reader a mental gymnastics usually practiced in the case of texts other than the novel.

The philosophical references are of the most diverse, the author quotes from Heraclitus and Plato, or Heidegger and Ricœur. From literature, he takes ideas from Moldavian chroniclers and from freshly-published South American writers,
with the same ease. He makes references to mythology, anthropology, history, recent scientific discoveries etc. Intertextuality is not free, channeling the views of others to legitimize his perspective on certain fundamental truths. Almost anything can be turned into a pretext for the incrimination of the communist disaster: a greening willow in the winter is the symbol of the rebirth of a people. *Gostat* chickens are a genuine opportunity for philosophical dissertations, also with political connotations. But the risks are high, “the tense cerebral character spews sententious, apodictic expressions everywhere, risking the reader’s fatigue” (Sorohan 1999, 23).

Besides the multitude of references, Sîrbu’s discourse is characterized by a fine intellectualization in the argumentative construction. Some notations are organized on the model of ancient rhetoric, comprising five parts devoted to: 1. intro (*exordium* or *proemium*); 2. story (*narratio*, i.e. the presentation of facts); 3. proof (*argumentatio* or *probatio*); 4. combating contrary assertions (*refutatio*); 5. subscription (*peroratio* or *epilogus*) (Reboul 2009, 74). The fragment below, from Adio, Europa! and featuring Limpi’s monologue, is representative in this respect:

*I dream of a world without ideology [exordium] without a High or Sublime Porte, without a Koran, without infallible presidents-sultans: a world without meetings, to be allowed to sit at my desk, let me smoke a cigarette and let me sip a coffee, not always feel like starting a class struggle, a caste struggle, a race battle from the beginning. That’s it. I know, inequality is a huge pain in the world. This gentleman [Karl Marx], doctor of philosophy, indicated a means of healing. [narratio] What a shame, it was found now, after thirty years of intensive treatment (following another sixty), inequality no longer hurts precisely because the treatment is so painful and bestial that nothing else matters [probatio]. Will we heal some day? I do not believe so. Along the way we will forget why we accepted this surgery without anesthesia, the body will get used to the pain of every day, and we will get sad the day when we are not badgered or we do not applaud crows and painted numbers. We’ll be in awe when our beylerbey finally learns the multiplication table and when the beylerbey starts to study astronomy [refutatio]. It will be all right, and the summer warm... [peroratio].* (Sîrbu 1997, 223)

The only binding element of the digressions and the meditative-ironical speculations is a cohesion strategy specific to the essay: the constant presence not of the subject carrying out the process of reflection, but of the reader who restores it in the act of reading, following the regrouping of semantic units or filling in the areas of indeterminacy.
Therefore, the reader with an insufficient culture or any “comfortable” reading is refused from the beginning when trying to approach writings like Adio, Europa! and Lupul și catedrala. The same happens with the expert reader with high expectations related to the conventions of the species and the authentic construction of narrative elements. Who, then, remains the faithful audience? Maybe those already passionate about the writer’s diary and letters. Or the elitist readers who see in Sîrbu’s baroque novels a refined essayistic approach to a Balkan a world turned upside down by a hysterical history. Either way, the readers remain in limited numbers, so the success of the two novels of dissent and, by extension, of the desk drawer writing genre, remains an illusion.

Notes

1. Virgil Ierunca, one of the writers in exile constantly pursued in Paris by the Securitate, said that the Romanian dissidence lacked a civil dimension: “I believe that Romania is the only country in the Eastern bloc failing the samizdat. However, books would be published which, by their artistic stance, were somewhat in opposition to the regime, but only from the esthetical point of view” (Ierunca 2006, 8).

2. The researcher Clara Mareș investigated I. D. Sîrbu’s secret docket and published a volume impressive not only for the amount of inedited information, but also for the refined analysis regarding the evolution of an unfortunate destiny.


4. The most documented series about the dynamics of the relations between writers under communism is probably that of Eugen Negrici, Literatura română sub comunism (2002, 2003, 2010).

5. “This is an exacerbated continuity. All those who praised, who used to sing odes to Ceaușescu can be found today in key positions in culture—publishing houses, journals, etc., which makes it so that retrograde literature is today encouraged by the very same people” (Ierunca 2006, 8).

6. “The rules of fiction represent for him a kind of writing bureaucracy, that he either observes with exasperating consciousness, or violates impetuously, soaring to interminable divagations” (Ștefănescu 1999, 6); “I. D. Sîrbu (1919–1989) published too little before 1989 and too much after. His quota has increased enormously in recent decades. Today he is paying, seemingly, for the exaggeration of the value of
some honorable works, but no more than that. The man was undoubtedly superior to his work, by his character, but also by an uncommon biography, which could offer material for both fiction and memoirs” (Manolescu 2008, 1431).

7. **Gostat**: abbreviation for state farm, which held the exclusive monopoly on the organized growth of chickens. The products were known for their poor quality.

**References**


Abstract
The Failed Recovery of Dissidence Literature in Romania:
I. D. Sirbu—An Exemplary Case

Because there was no samizdat literature in Romania, historians, men of letters, the public in general were eagerly awaiting the ’90s desk drawer writings of the communist period. The first surprise was that the number was smaller than imagined and then came the revelation that the much-awaited great literature did not bring too much, either as a mirror of the time, or aesthetically. The posthumous novels of Ion D. Sirbu (1919–1989)—an undeniable victim of the regime—are representative of the censored literature, and their lack of success is a social-literary phenomenon that, once investigated, may explain the singular manner of resistance through culture.

Keywords
dissidence, samizdat, censored fiction, desk drawer writings, literary canon
La fondation de la Société littéraire (académique) et la session de constitution de 1867

Dan Berindei

« Nous avons commencé à libérer notre patrie, nous avons commencé à libérer notre langue. » (T. Cipariu)

Immédiatement après la chute du prince régnant Alexandre Jean Couza – période instable du point de vue politique mais d’autant plus propice aux initiatives des plus diverses –, C. A. Rosetti (ministre des Cultes et de l’Instruction publique), sur le conseil de V. A. Urechiă, a jeté les bases de la Société littéraire. La fondation de cette Société littéraire ne serait en rien redevable au Conseil de Régence [Locotenenta Domnească], pense un des chercheurs, le seul mérite pour sa création revenant au ministre C. A. Rosetti. Il ne faudrait pas oublier V. A. Urechiă, qui a été auprès de Rosetti en 1866, tout comme en 1864 et en 1865 il avait été auprès de N. Kretzulesco ou de D. Cariagdi.

Le texte ci-présent est une version en français d’un chapitre (p. 224-250) tiré du livre Cultura națională română modernă (La Culture nationale roumaine moderne) (Bucarest, Eminescu, 1986), article dédié au 150e anniversaire de l’Académie Roumaine.
D’après un journal du Conseil des Ministres du 12/24 mars, Rosetti avait envoyé un rapport au Conseil de Régence (31 mars/12 avril 1866), dans lequel il lui demandait d’approuver le projet de règlement d’une Société littéraire. Il est tout à fait certain que ce projet de règlement avait été rédigé pendant la dernière partie du règne de Couza. Le rapport de Rosetti est intéressant pour plusieurs raisons. Il montrait entre autres que : « Au milieu des préoccupations de réformation dans notre pays, il ne faut pas oublier […] ce que nous devons à la langue et à la littérature nationales. » Il soulignait l’importance de cette Société littéraire, qui allait donner à la nation « les deux colonnades de son temple littéraire : la Grammaire et le Glossaire de la langue ». Rosetti espérait que les gouvernements concernés n’auraient pas empêché la participation des Roumains de l’extérieur des principautés aux sessions de la future société. Le décret du Conseil de Régence du 1er/13 avril 1866 décidait de la fondation à Bucarest d’une Société littéraire ayant pour « mission spéciale » d’établir l’orthographe, la grammaire et le dictionnaire de la langue roumaine. Elle devait être composée de 21 membres provenant de toutes les provinces habitées par des Roumains, de l’intérieur ou de l’extérieur de la Roumanie. La première réunion de cette société était fixée pour le 1er/13 août, et la session devait durer deux mois. Il est à remarquer que le décret du Conseil de Régence limitait la compétence de la société à la langue, bien que sa composition en relevât le caractère national. D’autre part, l’influence du projet de Kretzulesco est visible dans l’article 8 du décret, qui stipulait que « chacune des langues néolatines et des langues des États voisins, qui avaient influencé la formation de la langue roumaine » auraient des représentants dans cette société.

Le décret du Conseil de Régence a suscité un grand enthousiasme parmi les Roumains d’outre-monts, surtout en Transylvanie. *Gazeta Transilvaniei* (La Gazette de Transylvanie) de Brașov parlait d’un « événement exceptionnel dans la littérature roumaine », tout en soulignant que la fondation de la société « rendait éternel à la fois au ministère et à la Régence roumaine ». Iosif Vulcan annonçait dans *Familia* (La Famille) de Pest cette initiative du gouvernement de Bucarest et remerciait Rosetti « qui avait servi d’intermédiaire à la réalisation d’un souhait ardent de nos hommes de lettre et de tous les amis de notre littérature ». Il faisait aussi des propositions au sujet des futurs membres, suggérant parmi les éventuels candidats des noms comme Timotei Cipariu, George Barîțiu, Gavril Munteanu, Alexandru Roman, Dionisie Pascuțiu, Simion Mangiuca, Vincențiu Babeș, Gheorghe Humruzaki et I. G. Sbiera. En guise de conclusions, Iosif Vulcan notait : « Grandiose sera le jour où les représentants de la nation que le sort avait dissipés en sept pays se ressembleront ; sublime sera la minute où le frère de Pind pourra serrer la main de son frère de Criș. » La fondation de la Société littéraire a eu un fort écho en Transylvanie, où le manque
des fonds nécessaires et de la coopération des organes de l’État rendait impossible l’apparition d’une pareille société.6

Un décret de la Régence du 22 avril/4 mai 1866 nommait les membres de la Société littéraire de l’extérieur : Iosif Hodoș et Alexandru Roman pour le Maramureș ; Timotei Cipariu, Gavril Munteanu et George Barăscu pour la Transylvanie ; Andrei Mocioni et Vincențiu Babeș pour le Banat ; Alexandru Hurmuzaki et Ambrosiu Dimitrovița pour la Bucovine ; Alexandru Hasdeu, C. Stamate et I. Străjescu pour la Bessarabie ; I. Caragiani et D. Cozăcăvici pour les Roumains du sud du Danube.7 Après l’apparition de ce décret, C. A. Rosetti fit apprendre cette nomination aux membres concernés en leur demandant de lui communiquer s’ils acceptaient ou non, afin de leur envoyer l’argent nécessaire au voyage.8 Si la nomination de Hurmuzaki a été bien accueillie en Bucovine, celle de Dimitrovița a été regardée avec circonspection. Celui-ci a donc donné sa démission et a recommandé à sa place I. G. Sbiera, qui serait aussitôt nommé.9 Dans une lettre adressée à Rosetti au mois de juin, Alexandru Hasdeu acceptait l’invitation et lui sollicitait d’envoyer l’argent à son fils, Bogdan.10 Le 14/26 juin Timotei Cipariu obtenait de la part de Sterca Şuluțiu, l’archevêque métropolitain, la permission de quitter Blaj pendant deux mois.11


La principale responsable en a été l’épidémie de choléra.15 Gazeta Transilvaniei montrait que « le choléra avait fait des ravages en Moldavie et en Valachie », le nombre de morts s’élève à 450 personnes à Iași dans l’espace d’un seul jour (chiffre probablement exagéré).16 La revue Familia avouait avoir reçu une lettre de Ploiești au sujet du choléra qui y avait atteint « des proportions abominables ».17 Compte tenu de cette situation, le Ministère des Cultes et de l’Instruction publique a sollicité au Conseil des Ministres de reporter la convocation de la Société littéraire.18 Cette proposition a été approuvée.19 En annonçant cette nouvelle, Albina (L’Abeille) de Vienne n’oublia pas de mentionner que certains membres d’outre-monts avaient déjà fait savoir au gouvernement roumain qu’ils « étaient empêchés d’y participer ».20

En faisant des commentaires en marge de cette décision du gouvernement, un correspondant de Gazeta Transilvaniei écrivait qu’elle avait fait « une très
mauvaise impression » et que « la véritable cause de l’ajournement de la convo-
ocation de l’assemblée a été le manque d’argent et non pas le choléra ».21 En fait,
outre l’épidémie de choléra, l’aspect financier et les obstacles à la participation
de certains membres, deux éléments fondamentaux avaient encore contribué à
l’ajournement de l’assemblée. Le premier aurait été la chute du gouvernement,
le 15/27 juillet22, la convocation de l’assemblée de la société étant ajournée une
semaine après le départ de Rosetti du gouvernement, alors que l’épidémie de
choléra avait éclaté longtemps avant. Le second était lié aux tensions qui exis-
taient entre la Roumanie et l’Autriche, générées en principal par le conflit aus-
stro-prusso-italien. Les rumeurs qui circulaient en été 1866 parlaient d’une éven-
tuelle « invasion » roumaine en Transylvanie. Charles Ier a eu pendant ce temps-
là plusieurs rendez-vous avec les émigrés hongrois, le général Türr et le colonel
Kiss. L’installation, durant le même été, d’un camp à Argeş, a été considérée
comme une manifestation de menace contre l’Autriche23, alors que les journaux
Hermannstädter Zeitung et Kronstädter Zeitung parlaient des prétendues inten-
tions guerrières de la Roumanie à l’adresse de l’Autriche – qui ont été démenties
par George Barițiu dans son article « Faimele de invaziune în Transilvania »
(Les rumeurs d’invasion en Transylvanie).24 Compte tenu de cette situation, le
gouvernement autrichien a approuvé l’instauration de la dictature militaire en
Transylvanie en juillet 1866.25 Cet état de tension, qui ne s’atténuerait que vers
l’automne, aurait sans doute empêché le rassemblement de tous les membres de
la Société littéraire à Bucarest. Ce serait une explication supplémentaire pour
l’ajournement de la première session de cette société.

L’an 1866 prit donc fin sans que la première session de la Société littéraire pût
avoir lieu. Cependant, en 1867 les circonstances ont permis et même imposé la
convocation de l’assemblée. Le décret de convocation du 28 mai/9 juin 186726 a
été accueilli avec enthousiasme par tous les Roumains. C’est de cet enthousiasme
qu’à parlé I. C. Massim dans son discours qui a clos la session de la Société aca-
démique.27 Un autre décret a nommé de nouveaux membres pour la Moldavie et
la Valachie : V. Alecsandri, C. Negruzzi, V. A. Urechiă, Heliade Rădulescu, A.
T. Laurian, C. A. Rosetti et I. C. Massim ; à la même occasion, Șt. Gonata a été
nommé à la place de C. Stamate.28 La nomination à nouveau de V. A. Urechiă
comme directeur du Ministère des Cultes et de l’Instruction publique, qui avait
constamment défendu l’idée de fondation d’une Société littéraire, a constitué
un autre élément favorable à la future assemblée.29 En juin 1867 toujours, la
nomination de V. A. Urechiă a été suivie de la démission de C. A. Rosetti de la
Société littéraire, ce qui dévoile les sentiments éthiques de cet homme d’État. La
motivation de cette démission a été la suivante : « plus cet honneur est grand,
plus je dois reconnaître ne pas posséder le savoir particulier et varié dont doit
faire preuve celui qui, en tant que membre de cette société, est appelé à jeter les

Si l’assemblée de la Société littéraire a pu être convoquée en 1867, c’est grâce à l’avènement du gouvernement Constantin Cretzulesco (1/13 mars), dans lequel Dimitrie Brâtianu a pris la tête du Ministère des Cultes et de l’Instruction publique. La situation politique dans l’Empire des Habsbourg a été par ailleurs favorable à cette convocation. Le gouvernement Andrassy qui s’était formé en février 1867 allait conclure un accord avec l’Autriche, en ignorant les intérêts nationaux des autres nations de l’empire. Après le couronnement de François Joseph à Pest au mois de juin, celui-ci, dans sa qualité d’empereur d’Autriche et roi de Hongrie, allait sanctionner les résolutions de la Diète de Pest qui représentaient la base juridique du système dualiste. Ces résolutions étaient en évidente contradiction avec les intérêts de la population roumaine de Transylvanie. C’est à la lumière de ces événements qui avaient lieu dans la première moitié de 1867 qu’on doit comprendre la convocation de la Société littéraire. Elle a constitué un soutien porté par le gouvernement roumain à l’idée nationale qui avait été gravement affectée par l’entente conclue entre les couches dominantes autrichienne et hongroise.

En 1867 il ne s’agissait plus de la convocation d’une société censée résoudre les questions de la langue, mais d’une manifestation nationale organisée par le gouvernement roumain. Et c’était tout à fait normal, étant donné que ce gouvernement radical représentait les intérêts de la bourgeoisie qui se préoccupait de consolider l’État, élargir le marché national, unifier la nation. Vu la situation, la convocation de la Société littéraire en 1867 était, en quelque sorte, une riposte adressée au dualisme.

Pendant la première moitié de 1867 toujours, la Société Transilvania voyait le jour à Bucarest. Les bases en avaient été jetées dans une assemblée dédiée au jour du 3/15 mai 1848. La fondation de cette société (composée surtout d’étudiants et dirigée par Papiu Ilarian) qui était destinée à appuyer les jeunes Transylvains aux études a été annoncée dans tous les journaux roumains. Ce qui nous paraît significatif, c’est que les statuts de cette société ont été publiés dans tous les journaux roumains d’outre-monts. Cependant, le fonctionnement de cette société ne sera approuvé que beaucoup plus tard, par un décret émis le 8/20 décembre 1867. Dans les statuts approuvés on précisait que le but de la Société Transilvania était de « serrer les liens fraternels entre les jeunes gens de toute la Roumanie en aidant les étudiants roumains de Transylvanie » (art. 2). On sou-
L'agitation causée par l'arrivée des membres de la Société littéraire a par ailleurs représenté une manifestation placée sous le même sens national. En annonçant la constitution d'un comité d'accueil des membres de la société, le journal bucurestois Perseverența (Persévérance) espérait que « toute la population de la capitale s'empresserait de souhaiter la bienvenue à nos frères ». Enfin, il ne faut pas oublier la campagne directe de propagande menée d'outre-monts par Alexandru Candiano Popescu, le directeur du journal Perseverența. Celui-ci a franchi les Carpates pour se rendre à Pest et, avant de rentrer en Roumanie, il s'est arrêté en Transylvanie. Il s'y est fait arrêter par les autorités hongroises et, après une courte détention, a été expulsé en Roumanie. L'arrêt de Candiano Popescu a provoqué une vive agitation d'une part et d'autre des Carpates. La propagande pour l'unité nationale a continué dans un autre numéro du Perseverența, par l'annonce de la parution du roman de I. C. Drăgescu, Nopțile carpatine sau istoria martirilor libertății (Les nuits des Carpates ou l'histoire des martyrs de la liberté) dédié au soulèvement de 1784-1785.

Le journal Plebeul (Le Plébéien), qui paraissait à Galați sous la direction – chose curieuse – d’un avocat transylvain, a fait la seule note discordante au milieu de cette campagne. Hostile aux radicaux, celui-ci a critiqué l’agitation suscitée autour de la question transylvaine. « Qu’est-ce qu’ils vous ont fait, nos frères transylvains, pour ne pas les laisser tranquilles ? Pourquoi alourdissez-vous leur situation alors que vous n’avez ni la volonté sincère ni la capacité de les aider ? » Cet article a été à l’origine d’une campagne de protestation de la part des autres journaux et même de ceux qui s’opposaient au gouvernement. Surtout que son auteur n’avait pas hésité à affirmer que les Roumains transylvains auraient été persécutés en Roumanie. En critiquant l’article paru dans Plebeul, le journal Națiunea română (La Nation roumaine) de Bucarest écrivait que « la Roumanie est pleine de Roumains transylvains, qui occupent presque toutes les chaires des écoles et d’autres hautes fonctions ». En fait, le gouvernement soutenait l’action nationale, mais entre certaines limites, voulant éviter un conflit armé pour lequel la Roumanie n’était pas préparée. Sous cet aspect, la critique du Plebeul était justifiée, car l’action n’avait, apparemment, qu’un aspect d’agitation ; il oubliait toutefois que cette agitation devait assurer les meilleures conditions au futur parachèvement de l’unité nationale.

Comme le moment de rassemblement des membres de la Société littéraire approchait, en Transylvanie comme en Roumanie on parlait de plus en plus du fait que les membres de la société auraient été empêchés d’arriver à Bucarest.
On a même annoncé que les autorités austro-hongroises leur auraient bloqué le départ pour la Roumanie. Le journal *Românul* (Le Roumain) de Bucarest a publié une information semblable, en montrant que les agents du gouvernement, les mêmes qui avaient arrêté Candiano Popescu, avaient l’intention d’interdire le départ des membres de la Société littéraire. En parlant du commissaire royal, le comte Rechy, le correspondant transylvain de la feuille de C. A. Rosetti s’exclamait : « cet aristocrate craint quelques érudits qui se rassemblent pour forger une grammaire et un dictionnaire ! quelle satire ! » À Vienne, Albina dévoilait les obstacles auxquels se heurtaient les membres de la Société littéraire et proposait comme lieu de rassemblement le territoire autrichien au lieu de Bucarest. Malgré ces difficultés, la campagne pour l’unité de la nation roumaine continua. À la veille de l’ouverture de la Société littéraire, les autorités de Brâila ont approuvé de subventionner les études de cinq jeunes Roumains nés dans les provinces roumaines de l’extérieur.

Tous les historiens n’ont pas relevé le caractère festif et la signification nationale de l’accueil des membres de la Société littéraire. Conscient de la situation réelle, Nicolae Iorga a souligné, sans entrer dans des détails, que les membres de la Société littéraire « avaient été accueillis avec un enthousiasme bruyant ». Le comité de réception formé le 10/22 juillet 1867 avait la composition suivante : Ion Fâlcoianu, dr Obedenaru, dr Mâldărescu, Ion C. Gârleanu, Lambru Vasiliescu, Zaharia Boerescu et T. Mehedințeanu. Ce comité fit savoir au public que l’accueil des membres de la Société littéraire aurait lieu le 31 juillet/12 août par « une fête tout à fait littéraire », sous « une tonnelle décoré des drapeaux des provinces roumaines », et qu’il serait suivi le même soir d’« une retraite aux flambeaux ». Le comité faisait appel aux citoyens d’orner les maisons et les magasins. À la veille de l’arrivée des membres de la Société littéraire, le maire C. Panaïot adressa lui aussi un appel à la population de la capitale de se rassembler à la Chaussée, où « la capitale de la Roumanie pourra[ît] voir demain réunie pour la première fois toute la langue roumaine ». Il précisait que les membres de la Société littéraire se rassemblaient « pour forger une œuvre vraiment roumaine, pour jeter les bases de notre langue, de la conscience roumaine ». Répondant à l’appel du comité et du maire et poussés par leurs propres sentiments patriotiques, les citoyens de Bucarest ont fait un accueil chaleureux aux membres de la Société littéraire.

Le gouvernement a assuré les meilleures conditions à l’accueil des membres. Le ministre des Cultes a télégraphié à N. Ionescu et I. Caragiani en leur demandant d’être présents, avec Alesandri et Negruzzi, à Ploiești, le 29 juillet/10 août, « afin de pouvoir entrer le lendemain dans Bucarest avec les membres transylvains », car « la jeunesse veut vous accueillir fraternellement ». Par ailleurs, le préfet de Prahova était appelé à accueillir les membres de la Société littéraire.
comme bon lui semblait, tout en lui demandant d’éviter « toute démonstration de daco-roumanisme ».

Pendant les derniers jours du mois de juillet, le préfet de Prahova, T. Văcărescu, annonça à Urechiă l’arrivée de Gavril Munteanu, qui avait été salué à l’aube par « la fanfare de la ville » et visité ensuite par beaucoup de citoyens. Les autres membres de la société, affirmait le même préfet, devaient arriver au cours de la soirée. D’ailleurs, une correspondance de Ploiești publiée dans Albina évoquait l’accueil chaleureux qu’on avait fait dans la capitale du département de Prahova aux membres transylvains de la future Société académique. On signalait, entre autres, que le poète Antinescu avait lu une ode « au milieu de la jeunesse et du peuple qui portaient des flambeaux et sur les plus beaux airs nationaux ». Enfin, les membres de la Société littéraire se mirent en route vers Bucarest. À Sântica ils furent accueillis par de nombreux fiacres qui les accompagnaient dans un long convoi. Suivis de quelques centaines de fiacres et de charrettes, ils arrivèrent à Bâneasa, où ils furent salués avec enthousiasme.

Dans la matinée du 31 juillet/12 août, « les rues et surtout la Chaussée étaient touffues de gens et de fiacres ». À une distance d’un relais de poste de la capitale, les membres de la société ont été accueillis par Urechiă et par toute la direction de la Société de l’Athénée Roumain. À la 2e ronde de la Chaussée, Ion Fâlcoianu a tenu un discours de bienvenue, en soulignant que c’était un jour solennel qui « représenterait une époque importante dans l’histoire du pays et de la littérature roumaine ». Les nouveau-venus, disait-il, étaient appelés à « unifier la langue roumaine », qui serait « la première pierre de l’édifice grandiose vers lequel nous portons nos désirs ». Il déclara en guise de conclusions que « la langue et la religion de nos ancêtres nous rapprocheraient encore plus dans le futur ». Et il finit son discours en s’exclamant « Vive la nation roumaine ! ». Iosif Hodoș fut le premier à répondre à cet accueil chaleureux. En appelant ceux qui étaient venus l’accueillir « mes frères libres de la Roumanie libre », il exprima sa joie de se trouver parmi eux, là « où on a la liberté de la parole ». Alexandru Roman remercia au nom de Cipariupour « l’accueil solennel et inattendu » et déclara que le temps était venu pour accomplir une union de conscience et de sentiments. Les fiacres continuèrent ensuite en une longue procession de deux heures vers la place Sf. Gheorghe.

Dans la soirée, un banquet a été offert par les membres de l’Athénée Roumain. Dans son toast de bienvenue, V. A. Urechiă a dit entre autres : « La dissolution d’un peuple commence en même temps avec la dissolution de sa langue […] Notre langue reflète le ciel, les champs fleuris et les montagnes grisâtres ; elle se fait l’écho des cris et des soupirs, des joies et des amertumes du cœur et du génie et des aspirations nationales […] Les ailes du vent de montagne sont chargées de plaintes et de douleurs. » À son tour, Iosif Hodoș a déclara dans son discours que « l’esclavage tue les sentiments, la liberté les ressuscite ».
du soir, 2 000 personnes à peu près ont participé à une manifestation organisée sur la place du théâtre. Au moment où les membres de la Société littéraire sortirent sur la terrasse, un « feu bengali » illumina la place tout autour. Alexandru Roman prit la parole pour remercier de cet honneur inattendu et de la sympathie qu’on leur avait montrée tout au long de la route et exprima l’espoir « que l’unité de la langue littéraire puisse conduire, par la voie pacifique des sciences, à notre unité nationale ».61

Pour I. C. Massim, l’accueil des membres de la société a été « une fête vraiment triomphale », surtout qu’elle a eu un caractère spontané. Elle était l’expression d’un large courant d’opinion selon lequel la Société littéraire préfigurait la future unité nationale dans un seul État. Massim ne faisait en fait que synthétiser les pensées de ses contemporains : « Les Roumains, où qu’ils se trouvent, avaient senti que tout comme la langue les avait sauvés dans le passé, à l’avenir l’unité de la langue roumaine, la douce langue roumaine, une seule et même langue dans tous les pays qu’ils habitent, depuis la Tisza au bord de l’Adriatique, serait le solide piédestal d’où ils pourraient s’élancer vers les nobles et grandes missions auxquelles ils avaient été vouées. »62

Les voix dissonantes n’ont évidemment pas manqué, qui ont critiqué la manière dont on avait accueilli les membres de la Société littéraire. Trompeta Carpaṭilor (La Trompette des Carpates) de Bucarest mentionnait qu’un consul – autrichien, bien sûr – s’était fâché de voir une maison pavoisée d’une inscription sur laquelle on pouvait lire « L’Union de tous les Roumains ». Dans la même feuille, un correspondant – qui signait « un professeur » – se plaignait de ce que « les rouges avaient trouvé le moyen d’exploiter même les muses roumaines lors de l’arrivée dans la capitale des membres de la Société littéraire désignés par décret ».63 Par ailleurs, Naṭiunea româna montrait que l’accueil des lettrés s’était transformé « en un jour de peine, la fête dégénérant en une affaire politique ». La même feuille mentionnait que « les membres de la coterie avaient fait des actions et prononcé des paroles par lesquelles les ennemis des Roumains étaient prévenus à nous empêcher d’œuvrer à notre édifice national ». Vu la riposte ferme des autres organes de presse, Naṭiunea româna allait rétracter ce qu’elle avait écrit, en précisant qu’elle ne désapprouvait que « l’excès » dans l’accueil des membres de la Société littéraire. Il n’empêche qu’un peu plus tard elle allait annoncer que les puissances protectrices avaient l’intention d’envoyer en Roumanie une commission chargée d’examiner la question de l’accueil des membres de la Société littéraire.64 Se faisant l’écho de tous les autres journaux et faisant preuve de courage, Concordia de Pest a critiqué avec véhémence l’attitude des feuilles Naṭiunea româna et Trompeta Carpaṭilor, en soulignant qu’« il n’y a pas d’âme de Roumain sur cette terre qui ne se réjouisse de cette initiative du gouvernement de la Roumanie ».65
L'accueil des membres de la Société littéraire n’avait pas encore reçu de caractère officiel, le gouvernement n’y participant que par l’appel que le maire avait adressé aux citadins. La participation du gouvernement aura lieu lors de l’inauguration du 1er/13 août 1867. Elle avait été préparée longtemps avant. Pour cette occasion solennelle, Urechiă a rédigé un programme précis. Par exemple, des élèves alignés le long des rues devaient accueillir les membres de la Société littéraire en chantant des hymnes nationaux (dont Hora Unirii/La Danse de l’Union).

L’inauguration a eu lieu en présence des ministres, mais en l’absence du prince régnant, qui était occupé avec la crise ministérielle. Pendant ces jours-là le cabinet Constantin Cretzulesco était remplacé par le nouveau cabinet Ştefan Golescu. L’inauguration a été faite « en grande pompe, au milieu d’une influence immense et enthousiaste ». Une fois les membres et les ministres arrivés, Ştefan Golescu montra dans son discours que « la société est et restera indépendante et libre, tout comme l’a été, l’est et le sera la langue du peuple roumain, en dépit des servitudes et des vicissitudes qui auraient pu faire baisser le front de certains d’entre nous ». Il demanda à la Société littéraire de ne pas séparer par ses ouvrages « la langue du peuple de celle des couches cultivées, car la langue n’appartient pas à une classe mais à la nation ». Urechiă prit la parole lors de l’inauguration du buste de Zappa, moment où tout le monde se mit à chanter Mult e dulce şi frumoasă limba ce-o vorbim (Elle est douce et belle, la langue que nous parlons). Pour Cipariu, la date du 1er/13 août 1867 était le début d’une nouvelle époque « dans la vie culturelle de la nation roumaine », lorsque « le sentiment national s’est éveillé en tous les Roumains ». Il déclara en guise de conclusions : « Nous avons commencé à libérer notre patrie, nous avons commencé à libérer notre langue, nous avons toujours commencé, messieurs, mais nous n’avons rien achevé, il faut continuer et achever… » Ses paroles ont été couvertes d’un « tonnerre » d’applaudissements. Après avoir écouté plusieurs chansons, les ministres et les membres de la société se retièrent.

L’accès du public dans la salle a été permis pendant toute la journée. Elle était richement ornée, avec la colonne de Trajan profilant sa silhouette « sur un horizon italien », avec la carte de toutes les provinces habitées par des Roumains, avec les portraits de Michel le Brave et Étienne le Grand, avec des inscriptions telles que « la dissolution de la langue fait aussi la dissolution du peuple, arrêtez l’une et vous arrêterez aussi l’autre ». Comme le consul italien avait été présent à l’inauguration, le journal Românul a tenu à préciser que « Qui d’autre que le représentant de l’Italie pourrait mieux sentir la sainteté d’une telle fête… » Le même journal a reproduit les discours de Cipariu et Urechiă, le premier ayant déclaré, entre autres, que « les hommes d’État des Roumains œuvreront à complètement libérer la patrie roumaine ».
La fête d'inauguration a suscité un grand enthousiasme au-delà des Carpates, où la présence dans la salle de la carte de toute la Roumanie a été bien remarquée, tout comme le tableau représentant Michel le Brave en position équestre, « le regard profond, la main tendue pour montrer... quoi ? On a eu l'impression de voir, dans cette direction-là, la statue de la Roumanie enveloppée du tricolore ».75

La société a commencé son activité. Le discours de Dimitrie Brâtianu dans la première réunion a éveillé des doutes parmi les autorités de Vienne et de Pest. Les membres ont été en nombre restreint au début. Les Transylvains, représentant en général le courant étymologique, y ont participé massivement. Hodoş, Roman, Cipariu, Munteanu, Barițiu étaient toujours présents aux travaux de la session (excepté Roman, qui a été malade pour un temps). Les représentants du Banat, Mocioni et Babeș, ont manqué à l’appel. Babeș a envoyé une lettre au Ministère des Cultes et de l’Instruction pour annoncer que son congé n’avait pas été approuvé que pour la fin septembre, ce qui l’empêchait d’être présent aux travaux.76 En parlant plus tard de l’absence de Babeș, Albina a tenu à souligner que celui-ci « a dû sentir les menottes de la subordination ».77 Les représentants de la Bucovine, Hurmuzaki et Sbiera, ont participé à la session mais ont quitté les travaux dix jours à l’avance. Quant à Alexandru Hasdeu, le gouvernement tsariste s’est opposé à sa participation, en dépit des insANCES des autorités roumaines.78 Par contre, Caragiani a pris part à toutes les réunions, étant, en l’absence de Cozacovici, le seul représentant des Macédoniens. Les Valaques ont été présents aux travaux de la session par le Transylvain Laurian et son fidèle Massim – étymologistes tous les deux – ainsi que par Heliade Râdulescu. Par contre, les Moldaves, à l’exception de N. Ionescu qui est arrivé en retard, se sont absents massivement des travaux de la première session. Negruzzi n’y a pas participé, Alecsandri a pris part seulement à la première et à la quatrième réunion, Urechiã a participé au début, se rendant ensuite à Paris79, et Titu Maiorescu n’a participé qu’aux six dernières réunions.80

En ce qui concerne l’orientation et la position représentée par les divers membres de la société, les figures dominantes ont été sans nulle doute Timotei Cipariu et Heliade Râdulescu. Cipariu était le personnage le plus imposant de la session. Il était un érudit que la question de la langue intéressait depuis longtemps déjà et qui cette année-là avait publié plusieurs articles sur l’orthographe et la langue dans sa revue de Blaj Arhiv pentru filologie și istorie (Archives de philologie et d’histoire).81 Une année avant l’ouverture de cette session, il avait déclaré dans un discours prononcé à l’Astra (l’Association transylvaine pour la littérature et la culture du peuple roumain) : « L’unification de la l’orthographe de la langue roumaine est devenue une question de plus en plus urgente. »82 Parmi les autres Transylvains, on remarque Barițiu et la figure de tribun de Iosif
Hodoş. Les représentants du Banat ont été absents. Quant à ceux de Bucovine, on doit mentionner Sbiera, dans sa qualité de spécialiste. Il avait affirmé dès l’année précédente : « Qui peut aujourd’hui regarder avec indifférence la démolition de l’unité de la langue, que même les orages les plus terribles des temps anciens avaient été incapables d’anéantir… »83 Ce qui ne l’a tout de même pas empêché à prendre une position dissonante durant la session, défendant ses idées avec obstination et se montrant hostiles aux autres opinions. Pour ce qui concerne les Moldaves, le seul à avoir une participation intense à la session a été N. Ionescu. Il est arrivé en retard, croyant avoir été nommé pour la province de Macédoine et n’accepta de participer qu’après avoir appris qu’il remplaçait C. A. Rosetti.84 Alecsandri et Negruzzi se sont évidemment abstenus de prendre part à la session85, alors que T. Maiorescu, qui en 1866 avait publié un ouvrage intitulé « Despre scrierea limbii române » (Sur la manière d’écrire en roumain)86, dans lequel il critiquait le système orthographique de Heliade Rădulescu, Laurian et Massim, s’est absenté au début des travaux mais il finit par accepter aux insistances du gouvernement.87 Il est fort probable que l’attitude de Maiorescu, comme celle des autres Moldaves, s’explique par leur hostilité au courant étymologiste. Quant à Heliade Rădulescu, comme Naþiunea românã l’avait bien remarqué88, il n’a manqué que l’inauguration, donc justement la manifestation nationale liée à la Société littéraire. Il deviendra le premier président de la Société académique et participera à toutes les réunions, excepté les deux premières.

Les travaux ont été difficiles pendant la première session, à cause des absences. Le 29 août/10 septembre, Bariþiu a essayé de convaincre ses collègues à élire quatre nouveaux membres, mais sans succès.89 Ce qui nous paraît curieux, c’est que trois membres seulement avaient déclaré vouloir travailler dans la section d’histoire. Il s’agit de Bariþiu, Hodoş et N. Ionescu. Le premier deviendra président de cette section, le deuxième vice-président et le troisième secrétaire.90 Les membres de la Société littéraire venus d’outre-monts ont été pour un temps logés à l’hôtel – Cipariu, par exemple, a habité au début à l’hôtel Fieschi, où le 3/15 août la population est venue lui témoigner sa sympathie91, pour louer ensuite une maison dans le faubourg de Gorgani, où avait été auparavant le Tribunal de la Police. Le propriétaire en était Lambru Vasilescu, le chef de la division de comptabilité au Ministère des Cultes et de l’Instruction publique. Les membres transylvains de la Société littéraire y ont occupé quatre chambres et un salon. Ils restèrent dans cette maison jusqu’au 18/30 septembre, quand, une fois la session close, ils rentrèrent en Transylvanie.92 Quant aux dépenses, selon un rapport de 1869, les frais de voyage et les indemnités se sont élevées en 1867 à 32 448 lei.93

Les travaux proprement dits de la session ont été en général assez stériles, du moins à première vue, bien que la presse, transylvaine en particulier, en eût
beaucoup parlé. Elle n’a réussi à résoudre même pas la question de l’orthographe et a pris des mesures d’avenir en suivant, malheureusement, le courant étymologiste. Il ne faut pas pour autant comprendre que l’activité de la société n’aurait pas été sérieuse, car, outre les séances d’inauguration et d’ouverture, qui avaient vêtu une forme festive, les membres ont effectivement travaillé tous les jours. On pourrait, par exemple, s’imaginer les discours de Cipariu sur l’histoire de la langue roumaine, de Heliade Rădulescu sur les phases d’une langue ou de Laurian sur l’histoire de l’idée de former une société littéraire. Ils ont intensément travaillé à l’un des travaux essentiels de cette session : la rédaction des statuts. Ce fut, sans doute, le résultat fondamental de la session de 1867. Le 31 août/12 septembre on a élu un bureau composé de Heliade Rădulescu comme président, Cipariu comme vice-président et Laurian comme secrétaire. Un projet provisoire d’orthographe a été adopté à la même occasion, la question devant être tranchée pendant la session suivante. Urechiă et Massim ont été élus membres de la délégation permanente. D’autres décisions prises concernaient les programmes de la grammaire et du dictionnaire. D’après l’un des membres, la société travaillait pendant cinq à six heures en séance plénière, tandis que le soir les membres se réunissaient en des commissions pour préparer les travaux jusque tard dans la nuit. Les résultats de la première session ont été, en général, plus faibles qu’on ne l’avait pensé, surtout aux yeux des adversaires du courant étymologiste. La revue *Convorbiri literare* (Conversations littéraires) de Jassy a publié un rapport des travaux qui s’achetait par les mots suivants : « Ce qui est sérieux et solide doit parler par sa propre valeur. »

Les statuts ont été sans conteste l’ouvrage fondamental de la session. Dans l’une des premières réunions, Barițiu proposa que la société littéraire élargît sa sphère d’action pour devenir une société académique. Parmi les arguments apportés, il mentionna les grandes difficultés à fonder une telle société en Transylvanie. Les autres membres ont accepté ce point de vue. Jusqu’à la fin août, la société s’est occupée de la question des statuts. On a décidé qu’elle devait avoir pour principal but « de collaborer au progrès des lettres et des sciences parmi les Roumains ». La Société académique a été partagée en trois sections : littéraire et lexicographique, historique et archéologique et de sciences naturelles (art. 2). Chaque section devait avoir sa propre revue. Les statuts stipulaient aussi que les réunions de chaque session eussent lieu du 1er août au 15 septembre et que dans l’intervalle entre deux sessions la société fut dirigée par le président, le vice-président, le secrétaire et deux autres membres, qui formaient la soi-disant « délégation ». Les statuts ont été votés le 24 août/5 septembre et remis par une adresse au Ministère des Cultes et de l’Instruction publique. L’adresse précisait, entre autres, que la société avait ainsi achevé « le principal ouvrage de la session » et que, outre le domaine de la langue, elle avait l’intention d’embrasser
aussi, « l’histoire et la matière physique qui constituent le patrimoine national du peuple roumain ». La suite a été un rapport du ministre adressé au prince régnant et le décret qui sanctionnait les statuts de la Société académique roumaine.

Dans la séance de clôture de la session, Laurian, dans sa qualité de secrétaire, a lu le rapport d’activité de la société. Il a souligné qu’elle avait élargi sa sphère d’activité mais que son intention était de limiter ses travaux, pendant quelques années, au but principal qu’elle s’était donné, « la langue et la littérature roumaines ». En ce qui concerne la section de sciences naturelles, il signalait que « la société n’avait pas voulu élargir sa sphère d’action sur toutes les sciences naturelles mais elle avait visé seulement la bonne connaissance du territoire habité par l’élément roumain et les produits de ce territoire ». Laurian a continué par montrer que « la société, loin de vouloir se proclamer société philologique, historique ou scientifique, a pensé, modeste comme elle l’était, qu’il suffisait de comprendre dans sa sphère d’activité tout ce qui était censé contribuer à la diffusion du savoir au sein de tout l’élément roumain, considéré du point de vue linguistique, historique et géographique ». Les paroles du premier secrétaire de la Société académique fixaient les limites modestes de cette première session, qui – grâce au développement de la société et de l’État – seraient bientôt dépassées pour donner naissance à l’Académie Roumaine, avec des fonctions culturelles beaucoup plus étendues.

La question nationale a dominé la problématique de la première session de la Société académique. Au début d’août, *Concordia* de Pest publiait une correspondance dans laquelle on disait : « la culture et encore la culture est le levier de notre élévation ». Le même correspondant déclara que « la nation est en mouvement, voire en révolution spirituelle », que « la Société littéraire de Bucarest a été fondée et ses satellites allaient la suivre, comme une conséquence naturelle… » Cette correspondance révèle les grandes espérances fondées sur la Société littéraire et sur le rôle qu’elle devait jouer dans le parachèvement de l’unité nationale. À peu près à la même époque, Bogdan Petriceicu Hasdeu publiait dans *Românul* un article qui s’intitulait « Părțile României » (Les parties de la Roumanie), dans lequel il protestait contre la division du territoire daçe en plusieurs provinces : « La Moldavie, la Transylvanie, la Valachie n’existent pas sur terre, il existe une seule Roumanie, un pied sur le Danube et l’autre sur les ramifications les plus lointaines des Carpates, il existe un seul corps et une seule âme. »

Le rassemblement des membres de la Société littéraire n’a pas éteint la polémique de presse liée au rôle de cette société. Le 9/21 août, *Albina* a combattu par un article de fond le journal *Die Presse* qui paraissait à Vienne et qui continuait
les attaques contre la Société littéraire. Une semaine après, dans Concordia on pouvait lire : « Certaines feuilles allemandes, hongroises et même roumaines de Bucarest et de Jassy se prononcent contre la Société littéraire réunie à Bucarest, affirmant qu’elle aurait des buts et des tendances politiques, qu’elle fait de la politique, voire de la politique compromettante. » Ces rumeurs étaient combattues par la publication d’une lettre que Cipariu avait adressée au journal Româniul. Un article de cette feuille, paru le 11/23 août, répondait à l’accusation selon laquelle la Société littéraire aurait été « obligée par une coterie politique à des actions politiques, à des révoltes, à des révolutions ». On publiait à cette occasion la lettre déjà mentionnée de Cipariu – du 10/22 août – dans laquelle celui-ci soutenait que la délégation de Transylvains était venue à Bucarest dans des buts littéraires seulement. Et il ajoutait : « Nous sommes venus, monsieur le rédacteur, en quittant pour un temps nos affaires publiques et privées et, une fois arrivés ici, après avoir été suspects par nos gouvernements d’avoir des tendances politiques, nous n’avons attendu de la part de nos confrères que d’être épargnés, étant donné notre position difficile par rapport aux gouvernements dont nous sommes les sujets. »

Les membres transylvains de la société ont adopté, en général, une attitude prudente, à l’exception de Iosif Hodoș qui dans la réunion du 12/24 août avait proposé d’envoyer une lettre de félicitations à l’assemblée de l’Astra. D’ailleurs, Românul allait insérer plus tard un télégramme envoyé par dr Ioan Rațiu au sujet de l’assemblée de l’Astra à Cluj, où l’on avait chanté la marche de Michel le Brave qui aurait électrisé le public. De retour en Transylvanie, Cipariu a publié dans son Arhiv pentru filologie și istorie une série de rapports sur l’activité de la société, affirmant avec prudence que les travaux de la société avaient été « purement philologiques » et « tout à fait indépendants ». La même attitude était à remarquer chez Baritiu qui, selon N. Iorga, « n’était plus l’homme d’autrefois, il était maintenant un homme prudent qui ne voulait pas irriter les gouvernements de Vienne et de Pest ». Il n’empêche qu’il a publié dans Românul un long article qui s’intitulait « Ortografia. Gramatica. Critica » (L’Orthographe. La Grammaire. La Critique). L’attitude prudente adoptée par ces hommes de culture transylvains n’était pas conforme à leurs pensées réelles, ce qui explique pourquoi ils ont fait souvent des déclarations à caractère national qui défiaient la prudence.

L’opinion publique avait beaucoup d’attentes de la part de la Société académique en ce qui concerne l’unité nationale. Un correspondant transylvain du Românul soulignait le 16/28 août que les travaux de la Société littéraire devaient « renforcer nos intérêts nationaux ». Ses membres étaient accueillis avec enthousiasme même après l’inauguration de la société. Le 13/25 août, par exemple, ils sont allés au théâtre, où on leur avait réservé deux grandes loges.
Matilda Pascaly a déclamé à cette occasion une « Odă la membrii societăţii » (Ode aux membres de la société), dont le refrain était *Soyez les bienvenus* et qui a été suivie d’un tonnerre d’applaudissements.\footnote{117} Douze jours après, les membres de la société sont à nouveau allés au théâtre, où on leur offrit un programme spécial contenant, entre autres, les poésies « Pandurul cerşetor » (Le pandour mendiant) d’Eugen Carada, « Moartea lui Bălcescu » (La mort de Bălcescu) de V. Alecsandri, « Un resunet » (Un écho) de A. Mureşanu etc.\footnote{118} Par ailleurs, la lettre que Scarlat Rosetti a envoyée à la société dans laquelle il déclarait vouloir « mettre à la disposition de la société durant toute la session aussi bien une collection de dictionnaires que toute sa bibliothèque »\footnote{119} pourrait être considérée toujours comme une manifestation nationale.

L’effervescence créée en Roumanie autour de la question du parachèvement de l’unité nationale a provoqué des inquiétudes en Autriche et en Hongrie, comme le démontre la lettre envoyée par Napoléon III à Charles Ier : « À Vienne, on s’inquiète des manigances d’un certain parti qui voudrait établir des contacts avec des coreligionnaires de Transylvanie. » Napoléon III tenait cette action pour une « propagande dangereuse. »\footnote{120} Le roi Charles mentionne dans ses mémoires que les « frictions » dans les relations avec l’Autriche-Hongrie se multipliaient « tous les jours », surtout après la conclusion du pacte dualiste.\footnote{121}

Le 13/25 septembre, les membres de la Société académique ont pris part à un banquet organisé à Bucarest pour commémorer le combat de Dealul Spirei de 1848. Croyant que leurs paroles ne parviendraient pas cette fois aux oreilles des autorités d’outre-monts, Hodoş et Roman ont parlé clairement de leurs souhaits d’unité nationale. En parlant de l’action menée sur le plan de la langue, Hodoş espérait qu’elle serait suivie de « l’unité physique », alors que Roman faisait mention de « la nostalgie » qu’éprouvaient les Transylvains à penser à leurs frères d’outre-monts. Quant à N. Ionescu, il réclamait l’indépendance, car « elle compléterait et consoliderait définitivement l’unité des Roumains ».\footnote{122}

Dans la dernière réunion de la Société académique, les membres transylvains ont à nouveau eu l’occasion de parler d’unité nationale, ne fût-ce qu’en des termes voilés. Bariţiu, le premier à prendre la parole, a souligné une fois de plus que la société s’était réunie « dans des buts purement scientifiques ». Ce qui ne l’empêcha toutefois pas de se montrer profondément touché, comme tous ses collègues d’ailleurs, par l’hommage que leur avait rendu spontanément « les diverses couches sociales ». Après avoir remercié « tous ceux qui nous avaient accueillis avec élan et charité fraternelle », il acheva son discours en s’exclamant « Vive la nation roumaine ».\footnote{123} Cipariu souhaitait « que le sentiment national qui vient de s’éveiller puisse se répandre dans tous les coins de la Roumanie, pénétrer aussi bien dans les cabanes les plus obscurs du paysan que dans les palais les plus superbes de la grande nation roumaine. Que chaque Roumain
puisse prendre conscience de la dignité nationale et la défendre par la force de sa parole et de son cœur. Que chaque Roumain se sente le fils de la Roumanie, qu’il se sente Roumain par son origine, par sa langue et qu’il soit fier d’être et de se nommer Roumain. Vivent les Roumains ».124

La séance de clôture de la première session rappelait par ses manifestations l’accueil des membres et la séance d’inauguration de la Société académique. Dans une correspondance datant de la jour de clôture de la session, Gazeta Transilvania a conclu que, excepté cinq à six réunions « sèches et moroses », les travaux de la société avaient été « trop intéressantes et pleines de renseignements ».125 Cette feuille transylvaine disait en général la vérité. Bien que les questions de la langue n’eussent pas enregistré de résultats notables, la session de 1867 a été d’une grande importance. D’une part, elle a jeté – par les statuts – les bases de la future Académie Roumaine, de l’autre, elle a eu une signification nationale particulière, étant la première manifestation indiscutable de l’unité nationale culturelle roumaine.

Notes

2. Le rapport est publié dans Analele Societăţii Academice Române (Bucarest), 1869, tome Ier, p. 1-3.
7. Analele Societăţii Academice Române, 1869, tome Ier, p. 5.


11. Șt. Manciulea, Timoteiu Cipariu și Academia Română, Blaj, 1941.

12. Românul, 10 juin 1866, p. 362, col. I-II.

13. Ibid., 18 juin 1866, p. 371 ; 6 juillet 1866, p. 422 ; 12 juillet 1866, p. 442 ; 13 juillet 1866, p. 447 ; 14 juillet 1866, p. 451 ; 19 juillet 1866, p. 466.


17. Familia, n° 22 du 24 juillet/5 août 1866, p. 264.


19. Décret du 22 juillet/3 août 1866 (Analele Societății Academice Române, 1869, tome I, p. 6-8).


25. Ibid., p. 576.


27. Ibid., p. 122.


30. La démission est datée du 19 juin/1er juillet 1867 (Archives de l’État Bucarest, Ministère de la Culture et de l’Instruction publique, n° 474/1867, f. 88).

31. L’ordonnance du 17/29 juin 1867 (ibid., f. 6).

32. Rapport adressé au Conseil des Ministres, 19/31 août 1867 (ibid., f. 95).

33. Analele Societății Academice Române, 1869, tome I, p. 11.

34. Costescu, Fazele ministeriale, op. cit., p. 37.

35. Anast. Fătu, Încercările pentru dezvoltarea ciențelor naturale în România, Bucarest, 1874, p. 95.


39. Voir surtout *Perseverenţa*, n° 37, 38, 39 et 41 de 1867 et *Albina*, n° 80 et 83 de 1867.


42. *Naţiunea română*, n° 19, du 19/31 juillet 1867, p. 73-74.


47. Par exemple, ce caractère n’est pas souligné par Al. Lapedatu, « La a 75-a aniversare a Academiei Române. Constatări și reflecții », in *LXXV de ani de la înființarea Academiei Române, 1866-1941*, Bucarest, 1941, p. 24-29.


53. Dépêche du 27 juillet/8 août 1867 (*ibid.*., f. 35).


55. *Familia*, n° 34, du 24 août/5 septembre 1867, p. 411.


60. *Ibid.*., p. 46.


68. Voir Din viaţa regelui Carol I de un martor ocular, vol. I, Bucarest, 1939, p. 139.
70. Ibid., p. 12-13.
71. Ibid., p. 15-16.
72. Ibid., p. 32-34.
73. Românul, du 2 août 1867, p. 641.
74. Ibid., 4 août 1867, p. 649.
75. Gazeta Transilvaniei, n° 65, du 19/31 août 1867, p. 258.
76. Lettre de juillet 1867 (Archives de l’État Bucarest, Ministère des Cultes et de l’Instruction publique, dossier n° 474/1867, f. 45).
77. Albina, n° 105, du 20 septembre/2 octobre 1867, p. 1.
79. La participation des membres à la session a été consignée dans les procès-verbaux des réunions publiés dans Analele Societăţii Academice Române, 1869, tome Ier. Urechiă n’a participé qu’aux réunions du 1er, 2, 3, 4 et 7 août. Pour les biographies des membres voir Academia Română. Informaţiuni asupra trecutului şi membrilor ei, Bucarest, 1903, p. 19-43.
80. Il a été présent à la session à partir du 7/19 septembre 1867.
82. *Arhiv pentru filologie și istorie*, n° 1, du 1er janvier 1867, p. 6.


84. Voir la dépêche qu’on lui avait adressé par le Ministère des Cultes et de l’Instruction publique le 18/30 août 1867 (Archives de l’État Bucarest, Ministère des Cultes et de l’Instruction publique, dossier n°474/1867, f. 92).

85. Voir *ibid.*, f. 132 (Le Ministère fit savoir à la Société académique que Negruzzi avait annoncé ne pas pouvoir participer aux travaux « à cause de la maladie dont il souffrait ») ; *Analele Societății Academice Române*, 1869, tome Ier, p. 105 (dans la réunion du 5/17 septembre 1867, on a annoncé que Alecsandri avait envoyé une dépêche pour annoncer qu’il ne pouvait pas participer aux travaux).


89. *Analele Societății Academice Române*, 1869, tome Ier, p. 84-85.


94. Voir les collections des feuilles *Concordia, Familia, Albina, Gazeta Transilvaniei*.

95. *Analele Societății Academice Române*, 1869, tome Ier, p. 17.


Abstract
The Creation of the Literary (Academic) Society and the Founding Meeting of 1867

The Literary (later Academic) Society was founded in Bucharest, in 1866, at the initiative of C. A. Rosetti, the then minister for religious denominations and public education. Its mission was to set the orthographical and grammatical rules and compile a dictionary of the Romanian language. The 21 founding members came from all provinces inhabited by Romanians, in Romania proper and in the neighboring countries, and were grouped into three sections: literature and lexicography, history and archaeology, and natural sciences. In 1879, the Academic Society took up the name it still bears today: the Romanian Academy.

Keywords
Literary (Academic) Society, Romanian Academy, C. A. Rosetti, Timotei Cipariu, Ion Heliade Rădulescu
Excmo. Sr. Rector,
Sr. Presidente del Senado,
Señoras y Señores Vicerrectores
Señoras y Señores Decanos,

Nos hemos reunido hoy, para rendir homenaje a uno de los mayores poetas españoles contemporáneos, en la persona del Sr. Antonio Gamoneda, quien nos honra con su presencia, con motivo de la juiciosa decisión del Senado de la Universidad “Babeș-Bolyai” de otorgarle el título de Doctor Honoris Causa.

Antonio Gamoneda nació el 30 de mayo de 1931 en la ciudad de Oviedo, Provincia de Asturias. Es el hijo del poeta modernista con el mismo nombre, autor, a su vez, de un volumen de poesías publicado en 1919, titulado *Otra más alta vida*. En 1934, tras la muerte de su padre, se traslada, junto con su madre, Amelia Lobón, en León. Atraviesa con dificultad el período difícil de la Guerra Civil, que estalla en 1936 y que lo impide seguir el curso normal de la vida escolar. Por

La agrupación de artículos dedicados al poeta español Antonio Gamoneda está occasionada por la concesión del título de Doctor Honoris Causa por la Universidad “Babeș-Bolyai” de Cluj-Napoca, Rumanía, el día 8 de octubre de 2015.
consiguientemente, se ve obligado a leer solo de los pocos libros que poseía, entre los cuales el de su padre. Inicialmente, el poeta vivió en el barrio ferroviario de la ciudad, El Crucero, un lugar desde donde asistió a las represalias y horrores de la Guerra Civil, imágenes que lo perseguirían y que se reflejarían en sus escritos.

En 1941 se inscribe en un colegio dirigido por los monjes jesuitas, donde la escolarización era gratuita y donde permanece hasta el año 1943, cuando abandona de buena gana la escuela.

El día en que cumple los 14 años, empieza a trabajar como mensajero en el Banco Comercial. Consigue terminar los estudios preuniversitarios y se queda como empleado del Banco durante 24 años, hasta el año 1969, período en que desempeña varios cargos en el marco de la institución. Durante todo este periodo, desarrolla una rica actividad en plano político y social, involucrándose y participando activamente en el movimiento de resistencia de la intelectualidad española contra la dictadura de Franco.

Antonio Gamoneda publicó su primer libro, titulado *Sublevación inmóvil*, en el año 1960, en Madrid, volumen que fue nominalizado para los premios Adonais para poesía.

En el año 1969, al nivel de la región de León, Antonio Gamoneda recibe una importante función cultural y funda una colección de poesía. A pesar de que su actividad estaba limitada por la censura franquista, empieza a colaborar con diversas revistas culturales. Siguió escribiendo poesía, pero sus tomos un fueron publicados hasta al cabo de algunos años, a causa de la censura. Ello llevó a un “silencio” poético de aproximadamente 8 años. Tras esta larga pausa, Antonio Gamoneda vuelve con *Descripción de la mentira* (León, 1977), un volumen en que se siente ya la madurez del poeta.

En 1985 recibe el Premio “Castilla y León de las Letras”.

En 1986 publica el volumen *Lápidas*, en Madrid, y después, el volumen *Edad* (1987), revisado por el autor, que le valió el Premio Nacional de Poesía.

En 1992 publica el volumen *Libro del frío*, volumen que le consagrará como uno de los más importantes poetas españoles.

En el año 2000 aparece una versión definitiva del volumen antes mencionado, que incluye *Frío de límites*, un trabajo en colaboración con Antoni Tapies.

En 2005, Antonio Gamoneda será el primero que recibirá el Premio Europeo de Literatura.

En 2006, obtiene el Premio Reina Sofía de Poesía Iberoamericana, así como también un importante galardón literario español, el Premio Miguel de Cervantes.

En el período 1979-1991, fue director de la Fundación Sierra-Pambley, creada en 1887 por Francisco Giner de los Ríos, uno de los fundadores del movimiento titulado Institución Libre de Enseñanza, movimiento que tenía como meta principal modernizar el sistema de enseñanza de España en la segunda mitad del siglo XIX, así como la difusión de la cultura en los ámbitos populares.
De señalar que en este movimiento se han involucrado numerosos intelectuales de izquierda.


En marzo de 2009 tuvo lugar el estreno de la documental *Antonio Gamoneda: Escritura y alquimia*, dirigida por Enrique y César Rendueles Corti, con un escenario de Amalia Iglesias y Julia Piera.


Muchos de los libros de A. Gamoneda fueron traducidos a lenguas extranjeras (francés, alemán, portugués, noruego, árabe), y en rumano apareció el volumen antológico *Claridad sin descanso* (*Claritate neostenită*), en la traducción de Dinu Flămând, editorial Eikon, 2012.

Sobre la obra de Antonio Gamoneda se han escrito muchísimas monografías, estudios y recensiones críticas, publicadas por representantes consagrados de la crítica moderna. Estos comentarios críticos, por sus títulos pueden sugerir la
La notoriedad adquirida a lo largo del tiempo por A. Gamoneda equivale con el redescubrimiento de una poesía extremadamente compleja, que practica un estilo incantatorio y agresivo al mismo tiempo, evolucionando obsesivamente en torno a algunos temas tutelares. Podemos reconocer, de su identificación, elementos del recorrido biográfico del poeta, crecido desde pequeño en un ambiente pobre, en una sociedad sofocada por la dictadura franquista, como intelectual autodidacta, obligado por las circunstancias a elaborar no solo sus estrategias de sobrevivencia física, sino también las que le salvaría el espíritu, la conciencia. Así, sus principales temas son: el niño huérfano, la pobreza (“le doy las gracias a la pobreza porque ella no me maldice”), la guerra, la familia, la madre como figura tutelar, pero también el padre desaparecido prematuramente, después la vejez, la desaparición inminente. Vemos, sin embargo, que por todas partes un aliento interno generaliza y uniformiza los temas personales, confiriéndoles aquel carácter eterno al que solo la gran poesía puede captar. De modo que su poesía social se convierte en un testimonio muy sensible de la compasión discreta y de la amistad frente a su próximo, y el miedo a la muerte, llegado hasta aquella plena y sin descanso “claridad”, puede ser un indirecto y fuerte elogio de la vida.

En lo que concierne la retórica del discurso poético, los críticos que se han dedicado al estudio de su obra han invocado nombres ilustres predecesores, unos perteneciendo a la gran familia europea, desde los surrealistas, a Saint-John
Perse, pasando por René Char, otros perteneciendo a la tradición hispánica, gongorina y manierista. El poeta mismo, en algunos textos que configuran un verdadero tratado de estética, descubre algunos de sus modelos poéticos. Por ejemplo, en el texto titulado, “Sobre blues castellano”, Gamoneda explica la falta de la tonalidad lúdico-irónica en el volumen mencionado, y confiesa que “he escrito este libro dominado por dos fuerzas poéticas [...]. Estas dos fuerzas poéticas fueron el poeta turco Nazim Hikmet y las palabras de las canciones norteamericanas que estuvieron en el origen del jazz: blues y spiritual”.2

Pero el texto más relevante en lo que concierne la concepción estética del poeta español es el titulado “La poesía desde la perspectiva de la muerte”. Siguiendo la línea abierta por una de los representantes destacados de la Generación del ’98, Antonio Machado, Gamoneda descubre, a su vez, que el tiempo, la temporalidad es la esencia de toda emoción lírica. Antonio Machado definía la poesía, de una manera muy lacónica y concisa, como “palabra en el tiempo” y “el poema que no tenga muy marcado el acento temporal está más cerca de la lógica que de la lírica”.3 En el mismo espíritu, Gamoneda afirma que “La temporalidad hace posible una conducta musical del lenguaje, es decir, una composición en el tiempo [...]. El tiempo y la memoria son activos en el momento en que dan contenido al poema”.4 Pero, a esta dimensión temporal, que constituye el ingrediente principal, Gamoneda le añade una segunda dimensión, un segundo ingrediente, esto es, la perspectiva de la muerte: “Mi poesía”, afirma él lo más explícitamente posible, “se ha situado siempre en la perspectiva de la muerte”.5

Otro procedimiento estilístico que creemos que Gamoneda ha aprendido de los poetas de la Generación del ’98 – recogido, por éstos, a su vez, de la estética simbolista – es la musicalidad del verso. En este sentido, el poeta es equiparado a un alquimista, y su obra a una “obra alquímica”, consistiendo en la “transubstanciación de las significaciones, incluso las derivadas del sufrimiento, en las experiencias del placer”.6 Y continúa: “La operación alquímica [...] consiste en la confusión profunda del discurso musical y del discurso significativo.”7 En otras palabras, la poesía extrae su savia, en plano expresivo, de la musicalidad del verso, en el sentido de la estética simbolista y de la relevancia del signo lingüístico, en el espíritu de la teoría saussuriana. “Sin la noción del tiempo no es posible la temporalización del discurso poético” y “la poesía no sería posible – no existiría – si no supiéramos que moriremos”.8 La poesía implica estos dos factores fundamentales: la memoria y la perspectiva de la muerte: “La memoria es la conciencia de la pérdida del presente, la conciencia del pasar, después la memoria es también la conciencia de que te diriges hacia la muerte. Conforme a ello, la poesía es el arte de la memoria en la perspectiva de la muerte.”9 Y concluye el poeta sus consideraciones sobre la definición y el papel de la poesía, con esta confesión de una asombrosa sinceridad y al mismo tiempo de un dramatismo desgarrador: “En lo que me concierne, pienso sin-
ceramente que la totalidad de mi poesía no es otra cosa que el relato del modo en que yo voy hacia la muerte.”

En el mismo ensayo, el poeta nos ofrece también algunos comentarios relativos al modo en que su obra ha sido recepcionada por la crítica literaria. Por ejemplo, rechaza la opinión conforma a la cual hubiera sido influido en gran medida por la estética y los modelos poéticos surrealistas: “se afirma que existe un componente surrealista en mi poesía, sobre todo en Descripción de la mentira. Yo no lo creo.” Esta afirmación categórica va seguida por un ejemplo con el fin de destacar la diferencia fundamental entre la imaginación “delirante” de los surrealistas, productora de metáforas gratuitas, exentas de todo contenido afectivo o emotivo – un juego gratuito de la mente – y las metáforas de su propia poesía, que tienen en su base un estrato sentimental y emotivo, sólidamente anclado en su memoria, al tratarse de una recuperación afectiva del pasado: “Cuando yo digo: Hay azúcar debajo de la noche; hay la mentira como un corazón clandestino escondido bajo las alfombras de la muerte, yo sé que estoy recuperando materias de mi infancia, cuerpos reconocibles: yo robaba azúcar, jugaba con las alfombras y mi madre me amenazaba con la muerte. No se trata, pues, de imaginación ‘delirante’; se trata de la invocación del tiempo: el pasado, mi tiempo.”

En la opinión de A. Gamoneda, la poesía, el arte, la labor creadora en general, es una labor paradójica, exactamente porque viene realizada desde la perspectiva de la muerte. “Parece claro – afirma el poeta – que, en mi caso, la paradoja consiste en la voluntad de construir un objeto de arte con el miedo a la muerte.”

En el final de su ensayo, A. Gamoneda nos ofrece preciosos hitos críticos, concernientes a la evolución de su lírica en plano estrictamente formal, es decir, relacionados a la métrica o al ritmo del verso. Se desprende, de estas consideraciones, una evolución en lo que concierne la configuración del poema, desde la tradición de la organización versal y estrófica, hacia la modernidad que supone la desaparición de cualesquiera formas de configuración métrica, siendo éstas sustituidas por “bloques rítmicos”. En lo que conciernen estos “bloques rítmicos”, afirma el autor, “me niego a admitir que se trata de prosa, porque yo tengo la noción de unos “contornos” poemáticos, la noción de una especie de conformación estrófica”. Se trataría, pues, de una “narratividad siempre presente”, que llevaría, paulatinamente, a una “pérdida de la conciencia en lo relativo al género literario” y a “una gloriosa confusión concerniente a la existencia o inexistencia de ciertos géneros”.

Encontrándose, ahora, en aquella fase de la vida que tan poéticamente define mediante la metáfora “claridad sin descanso”, Antonio Gamoneda sigue asombrándonos por la vitalidad y fuerza expresiva de su poesía, manifestándose como uno de aquellos grandes creadores profundos que obliga a la palabra a sacar a la superficie la diversidad dolorosa de nuestro espíritu. La alta distinción
académica que le ofrece hoy la Universidad “Babeș-Bolyai” no hace sino añadir más brillantez a ese soñador luminoso que, en una sola frase, sabe resumir tanto los poderes como los magníficos límites de la creación poética, en cohabitación con el cuerpo en que ellos viven bajo la forma del espíritu. 

Gracias!

Notas

2. Ibid., pág. 56.
5. Ibid., pág. 168.
6. Ibid.
7. Ibid.
8. Ibid., pág. 169.
9. Ibid., pág. 170.
10. Ibid.
11. Ibid.
12. Ibid., pág. 171.
13. Ibid., pág. 172.
14. Ibid.
15. Ibid., pág. 454.

Abstract

Laudatio

Antonio Gamoneda is one of the greatest contemporary Spanish poets. About his works were written many monographs, studies and critical reviews. Some critics noted the influence of illustrious predecessors, such as Saint-John Perse, René Char and other poets of the surrealist family. But the poet himself explains, in some texts which constitute a real aesthetic treatise, some of his poetical models. He speaks about two poetical forces: the Turkish writer Nazim Hikmet and the North-American blues spirituals. Gamoneda follows the line opened by the representatives of the Spanish Generation of 1898, for example, Antonio Machado, who defined poetry as “word in time.” Gamoneda also states that poetry is “a composition in time,” but he adds a second dimension, that is, the perspective of death.

Keywords

Antonio Gamoneda, Babeș-Bolyai University, Doctor Honoris Causa, modern Spanish poetry
Discurso de recepción

Señor Rector,
Señor Presidente del Senado,
Señores Prorrrectores y Decanos,
Señores miembros del Claustro de Doctores,
Señores profesores de esta histórica (centenaria con nombres diversos pero constante y unitariamente humanista), de ésta, decía, Universidad “Babeș-Bolyai”, la más alta institución académica de un país que es crucero de lenguas y culturas, patria de grandes escritores y lingüistas quizá por ello.

Tal es el país y tal es también esta nuestra – mía también ya – Universidad, patria académica multilingüística, casa plural de la palabra; de la palabra que es potencia exclusiva de los seres humanos.

Habiendo mencionado la “palabra” y la Lingüística, con un apresuramiento que supongo significativo, quiero decir ya mi respetuosa admiración por la persona y la obra de Eugen Coșeriu, el decisivo autor de “Determinación y entorno”; y por escritores tan amados como Mihai Eminescu, que acuñó definitivamente la cifra romántica de “Hyperion”; y de pensadores amargos y luminosos, como lo fue Emil Cioran.

Y habiendo citado a Cioran, permítanme decirles que alguna cercanía advierto en mí con él; cercanía no con su
enorme talento, sino con sus creadoras incertidumbres, con su dolorosa manera de contemplar la existencia.

Dice este temible y gran pensador que la vida es un *accidente*; sí, un accidente *incomprensible*, añadiría yo. Pero el pensamiento de Cioran tiene su base en la contradicción y la perplejidad, por él mismo reconocidas. Ciertamente, la vida es un accidente incomprensible, pero está en nosotros y, precisamente por ese estar en nosotros, nos impone una conducta en la conciencia y en la práctica; y esta conducta no puede ser otra que la que “conduce” al amor, a la amistad y a la solidaridad. Esta conducta es la necesaria cobertura de que “la vida no tenga ningún sentido”, y de que no sea otra cosa que la “ilusión (la precaria realidad) de nuestra (propia) vida”, como Cioran decía.

De este error presencial, sin embargo; del sufrimiento existencial y de la conducta necesaria dentro de tal error, dice algo mi libro *Canción errónea*, y es quizá mi “canción”, mi conciencia errónea, presente en tal libro y en otros precedentes, la que me tiene hoy aquí, con ustedes, en situación de amistad solidaria y de gratitud. Trataré de explicarme.

Cuando un ser humano vive ya, y lo sabe, días declinantes de su vida; los días de un último aprendizaje que conlleva la última ciencia, la ciencia que conviene a la cercanía y a una decorosa aceptación de la muerte; cuando este hombre, que ya apenas espera nada, recibe un honor y un reconocimiento como el que ustedes me han otorgado, y lo recibe, como yo lo hago, entendiendo que tiene el valor de una generosa y amistosa solidaridad, ese hombre advierte que ha sido *existencialmente recolocado*, y que este hecho le proporciona inesperadas luces e inesperadas perspectivas.

Porque esto es lo que ustedes han hecho conmigo: me han hecho donación de una feliz perplejidad; una perplejidad que, a pesar de Cioran (o puede que así do a la hipótesis de la *contradicción*, que también Cioran postulaba), me depara *hic et nunc* una reconciliación con la vida.

Gracias, pues; gratitud que le sobrepasa, de parte de este hombre, de este humilde escritor español que, al parecer, soy yo. Y ustedes no olviden que doctorándome, haciéndome suyo, me han transformado (quisiera decir que para siempre, pero diré tan sólo que mientras viva) en manera hermosa y positiva.

Gracias, pues, aún y una vez más, por ello, gracias incesantes.

Diré ahora la que es acostumbrada breve lección; la diré con humildad. Consideren que, implícitamente, estoy diciéndoles mi vida; mi vida en la que la poesía, acompañada por el amor, la amistad y la difícil esperanza de un tiempo que merezca ser vivido, y que, a pesar de Cioran o quizá acorde con Cioran, quién sabe, pueda ser entendido como *una razón para existir*. 
En el proceso de hominización, cuando el primate adquiere la postura erecta, aparece en él la capacidad de emitir fonación articulada. De esta fonación surgirá la palabra que nombra por primera vez seres, objetos, alimentos, necesidades, deseos y sentimientos.

En este humanoide avanzado, que todavía no es un sapiens, la palabra hubo de ser previa a su elemental pensamiento. Más precisamente: la palabra fue la facultad generadora de su pensamiento.

Antes de la palabra, en el homínido, los seres y las cosas tendrían una existencia meramente objetiva. En la subjetividad no habría existencia; no habría pensamiento tal como nosotros lo concebimos.

Tiempo después, hubieron de darse en el primitivo, con espontánea naturalidad, impulsos y hábitos que le aproximarían a la canción y la danza. “Canción” y “danza” es mucho decir, pero me puede ayudar a expresarme mejor en relación con el ritmo; con un ritmo primitivo, aunque ya importantísimo en lo que concierne a la sensibilidad estética, a su vez primitiva.

Reparen en que, nada más nacer, los niños, seres que también debemos entender primitivos, son sensibles a la canción de las madres y al hecho de ser mecidos en sus brazos.

Algo hay en esto; algo que concierne, en modo amplio, a la sensibilidad y al placer primarios y, dentro de éstos, a la vocalización y a la rítmica. Este “algo” parece darse en el ser humano con una naturalidad innata.

Entrados en un terreno que supone asociación de primitivismo y componentes estéticos, también poéticos por tanto, quiero recordar que mi nieta Cecilia, en sus cuatro años, dijo en una ocasión: “La luna sangra en el río”. Un perfecto octosílabo provisto, además, de una espléndida metonimia. Yo me dije: “Ya les leen en el parvulario a Lorca”. No; el verso no es de Lorca ni de ningún poeta. 

Accidentalmente, la niña, todavía un “primitivo”, había hecho poesía. Más precisamente: había liberado una tendencia rítmica innata en palabras cuyo significado no conocería de manera cabal. Casualidad, sí, pero también una importantísima experiencia poética, precisamente porque se corresponde con la infancia, con un primitivismo, dicho sea una vez más.

Empieza a manifestarse razonable, pienso, la hipótesis de que el primitivo, creador de las primeras palabras, actuaba en cierta medida como un poeta. Nombrar por primera vez una realidad y originar al nombrarla su presencia mental, constituía y constituye, a mi juicio, un acto de creación y de revelación, es decir, un pronunciamiento con valor poético. Hago este supuesto desde la convicción de que la poesía verdadera no es simple palabra ornamentada, sino, como ya he insinuado al referirme a la primera palabra articulada del prehistórico, creación
y revelación. Añado que sólo se puede crear lo que no existe (en el ser humano emisor, al menos), y sólo se puede revelar lo desconocido.

Me permito, me arriesgo, en este momento, a entrar en mecanismos pseudocientíficos por mi parte, que poco o nada sé de neurociencia; en mecanismos que, muy probablemente, podrían ser avalados, quizá no tardando, en modo científicamente solvente.

Habrá de existir, en modo general en el viviente humano y en modo particular y con especial dotación en el poeta o la poeta, una zona cerebral, un “polígono” neuronal cuyos neurotransmisores estarán particularmente dotados para activar un imaginario que aparecerá mediando una emisión léxica parcial o totalmente imprevista. *Este imaginario se corresponderá con el que yo digo “pensamiento impensado”, con un lenguaje interior mínimamente o nada deliberado, que brotará, y esto es importante, rítmicamente.* Repito: *que brotará rítmicamente.* Y en modo más atrevido y radical añado: las significaciones poéticas son creadas por la rítmica. Y más radicalmente aún: el pensamiento poético es pensamiento rítmico. Les recomiendo a este respecto un repaso de la *Poética* de Aristóteles.

Ha de existir también en el individuo poeta otro polígono cerebral que, espontáneamente, sin reflexión ni proyecto, crea y preserva, ajeno a la lógica del pensamiento convencional, un sentido precisamente poético, para cada una de las representaciones léxicas surgidas y para el conjunto de éstas en el que se dice poema.

Dice el filósofo español José Luis Pardo: “El poder de la palabra para deshacer los significados establecidos es un poder subversivo y liberador”. Parece claro que el filósofo avisa de que el significado establecido, por el uso o por el poder académico, y el significado poético no son necesariamente el mismo.

Partiendo de la propuesta de Pardo es posible afirmar que, en poesía, “se piensa lo que se dice” y que, contrariamente, en la expresión convencional “se dice lo que se piensa”. Obviamente, lo que dice el poeta no es aleatorio ni casual, porque el poeta sabe aunque no sepa que sabe.

En España, en los siglos XVIII y XIX., se advierte un lamentable vaciamiento poético. Hay una causa: la intempestiva vocación realista que sucede al Barroco, vocación que, en parte importante, también se da en la segunda mitad del siglo XX y en el ahora mismo del XXI.

Desde Garcilaso y Gutemberg hasta nuestros días, liberada ya la poesía de su función medieval formativa o informativa, que hoy diríamos mediática, poca importancia tiene en poesía el realismo, simple verosimilitud, *porque la palabra poética es, por sí misma, una realidad*; una realidad intelectual creada y revelada por el poeta. Los “toros celestes” de Lorca, que aparecen en su gran poema “Llanto por la muerte de Ignacio Sánchez Mejías” no existen exterior y objetivamente, pero existen en ustedes, en su espacio intelectual, desde el punto y momento en que Lorca se los ha revelado.
Quiero añadir algo: los significados convencionales, provistos o no de eufonía, ornamentados o no, ligados, incluso, a un pensamiento relevante, son poéticamente regresivos y hasta reaccionarios. También, aunque proporcione una aparente superación de los “significados establecidos”, el uso gratuito del hermetismo o el irracionalismo, instrumentados por un trivial afán de originalidad, es poéticamente nulo, regresivo y, como digo, reaccionario.

Según todo esto, el poeta auténtico puede no ser, al menos en principio, plenamente consciente de las significaciones que ha generado, afectadas, como están, por una semántica imprevista ligada al ritmo y no a la deliberación, pero sí será consciente de que está creando realidades sensibles, intelectuales y poéticas instantáneas, y creando, finalmente, el sentido del poema, sentido que, siempre dentro de la autenticidad y sean las que sean los temas y el repertorio léxico presentes en él, ha de ser acorde con su sentimentalidad y sus convicciones, con la conciencia que, real y existencialmente, subyace en él, en el poeta.

Quiero hablar brevemente de ese “no saber” que tanto menciono. No hay, por lo que a mí concierne, descubrimiento ni novedad. Se trata del “no saber sabiendo” que decía Juan de Yepes o San Juan de la Cruz, como prefieran, el huérfano de Fontiveros, curador de bubas, el frailecico apaleado y hambriento: “No saber sabiendo”. Se dice, como puede verse, en tres sencillas y poderosas palabras, que muchos no entienden o no quieren entender. Y no entienden o no quieren entender porque el lenguaje interior poético, es decir, el pensamiento poético, comporta una realidad otra, una realidad que, aun teniendo una raíz existencial, no es idéntica, ni en su naturaleza, ni en sus significaciones, ni en su aspecto a la realidad habitual, exterior y objetiva.

Quizá no es fácil la admisión de esta realidad otra porque domina la convicción de que lo real es sólo lo objetivamente verificable. Así ocurre también, por ejemplo, con los sueños, que también son ajenos a la lógica social y culturalmente normalizada. Y digo yo: ¿no es real algo que a todos, alguna vez, nos ha procurado felicidad o infelicidad? ¿No funcionará, en modo generalizado, un entendimiento restrictivo de lo que la realidad es?

Resumo y termino. La palabra y el pensamiento poéticos se generan rítmicamente; la poesía comporta creación y revelación; la poesía es una realidad “otra”, una realidad en sí misma; la poesía, su carácter musical, rítmico, es antes sensible que inteligible; éste fundamento sensible es determinante de su condición estética; la poesía, lo sepamos o no, llevará consigo nuestra conciencia, en relación con la amistad o el amor, con la felicidad y la infelicidad, con la historia y los hechos sociales, con la justicia y, más intensamente aún, con la injusticia, con el sufrimiento establecido que planetariamente soportamos.

Muchas gracias por su atención, muchas gracias.
Abstract
Acceptance Speech

Poetry entails both creation and revelation, it is “another” reality—an inner, self-sufficient one—bestowed upon us at birth. Thus, poetic words and poetic thought are rhythmically generated, and this musical character of poetry is sensible rather than intelligible. This sensibility determines its aesthetic condition. Poetic creation also reflects our consciousness, when it comes to friendship or love, happiness and sadness, history and social actions, justice and—much more intensely—the injustice and the suffering experienced by humankind throughout the world.

Keywords
poetry, phonation, rhythm, creation and revelation
El poeta Antonio Gamoneda nace el 30 de mayo de 1931, en Oviedo, Asturias, España. Es hijo del poeta modernista homónimo Antonio Gamoneda, el cual publicó un único libro, *Otra más alta vida*, en 1919.

En 1934, tras la muerte de su padre, se muda, junto a su madre, Amelia Lobón, a León.

En 1936, por causa de la Guerra Civil española, las escuelas cierran; es entonces cuando Antonio Gamoneda aprende a leer solo de los pocos libros que tenía, entre los que estaba el de su padre. Al principio, el poeta vive en el barrio ferroviario de la ciudad, El Crucero, el lugar donde asistió a las represalias de la Guerra Civil, generadoras de unas imágenes que le perseguirían a lo largo de su vida y que se reflejarían en su escritura.

En 1941, se matricula en un colegio de agustinos, cuya escolarización es gratuita, hasta el año 1943, cuando Antonio Gamoneda deja voluntariamente la escuela.

El día que cumple los 14 años, empieza a trabajar como mensajero en el Banco Comercial. Finaliza por su cuenta los estudios preuniversitarios y mantiene su puesto de empleado del banco durante 24 años, hasta 1969; a lo largo de ese período ocupando distintas funciones en la entidad.

Mientras es empleado del banco, forma parte del movimiento de resistencia de los intelectuales contra la dictadura de Francisco Franco.
Antonio Gamoneda publica su primer libro en 1960, en Madrid, Sublevación inmóvil.
En 1969, Antonio Gamoneda recibe un importante cargo cultural a nivel de la región de León y funda una colección de poesía. Al restringirse su actividad, empieza a colaborar con diversas revistas culturales. Continúa a escribir poesía, pero sus libros se publican solo después de unos años, por causa de la censura. Ello lo lleva a un “silencio” poético de aproximadamente 8 años. Tras esta larga pausa, Antonio Gamoneda vuelve con Descripción de la mentira (León, 1977), un poema en el que se nota ya la madurez del poeta.
En 1986, publica Lápidas (Madrid) y Edad, volumen revisado por el autor.
En 1992, publica el volumen Libro del frío, que le consagraría como uno de los más ilustres poetas españoles.
En el año 2000, aparece una versión definitiva del volumen que incluye también Frío de límites, una obra en colaboración con Antoni Tàpies.
En 2005, Antonio Gamoneda será el primero en recibir el Premio Europeo de Literatura.
En 2006, obtiene el Premio Reina Sofía de Poesía Iberoamericana y el Premio Miguel de Cervantes.

En el período 1979-1991, es director de la Fundación Sierra-Pambley, creada en 1887 por Francisco Giner de los Ríos, a raíz de los principios de la difusión de la cultura en los entornos populares, en la que se han involucrado numerosos intelectuales de izquierda (las así llamadas Instituciones Libres de Enseñanza).
En marzo de 2009, tiene lugar el estreno del documental Antonio Gamoneda: Escritura y alquimia, dirigido por Enrique y César Rendueles Corti, con un guión de Amalia Iglesias y Julia Picra.
Ha sido investido con el título Doctor Honoris Causa por la Universidad de León (2000), por la Universidad Autónoma de Santo Domingo (2011) y por la Universidad “Babeș-Bolyai” de Cluj-Napoca (2015).

Libros de poesía

1960 Sublevación inmóvil
1979 León de la mirada (2ª ed. 1990)
1980 Tauromaquia y destino
1986 Lápidas (2ª ed. 2006)
1990 Zamora
1993 Sección de la memoria
1994 Tauromaquia: Mortal 1936 (en colaboración con Juan Barjola)
1995 El vigilante de la nieve
1995 Libro de los venenos: corrupción y fábula del Libro Sexto de Pedacio Dioscórides y Andrés de Laguna, acerca de los venenos mortíferos y de las fieras que arrojan de sí ponzón (2ª ed. 1997, 3ª ed. 2006)

2000 Pavana impura


2004 Cecilia

2004 Reescritura (con CD)

2004 Canción errónea (2ª ed. 2012)

2005 Poema de Antonio Gamoneda

2009 Extravío en la luz

**Antologías de autor**


2002 Antología

2002 Antología poética (2ª ed. 2007)

2002 Descripción del frío

2004 Atravesando olvido (1947-2002). Antología personal


2004 Lengua y herida. Antología

2006 Sublevación inmóvil y otros poemas

2006 Antología poética

2006 Ávida vena

2006 Sílabas negras

2007 Antología mínima

2007 Cecilia y otros poemas

2007 Visión del frío

2007 Antología y voz (con CD)

**Ensayos**

1963 Poesía y conciencia. Notas para una revisión

1972 El tema del agua en la poesía hispánica

1978 Francisco Echauz. La dimensión ideológica de la forma

1989 Poesía, situación, utilidad

1989 Sobre la utilidad de la poesía provinciana

1992 El arte de la memoria

1995 Aquella primera pasión de la lectura

1995 La poésie dans la perspective de la mort

1995 Una lectura posesiva de Jorge Guillén

1997 El cuerpo de los símbolos (Memoria, poética, ensayo)
1997 ¿Existe o existió la Generación del Cincuenta?
1998 La creación poética: radicación, espacios, límites
1999 Poesía en los años 2000?
2000 Valente: de la contemplación de la muerte
2000 Del sentir invisible de Marga Clark
2000 Conocimiento, revelación, lenguajes
2001 Hablo con Blanca Varela
2001 Memoria de Valente
2002 Luis Cernuda: el poeta y el crítico
2002 Poesía y literatura: límites?
2004 Presencias de la poesía europea
2004 Poesía, existencia, muerte
2004 Las lágrimas de Claudio
2006 Prólogo
2006 Quelques mots sur la poésie
2006 Sur la poésie. Discours de réception du Prix européen de littérature
2007 Valente: texto y contexto
2008 Ángel González: un histórico
2008 Pórtico
2013 Fonación, palabra y escritura, pensamiento poético

**Autobiografía**

1968 *La aventura física de María Ruiz*
1985 *Relación de Don Sotero. Los Cuadernos del Norte*
1997 *Relación y fábula* (“Relación de Don Sotero” y “Fábula de Pieter”) (2ª ed. 2002)
2009 *Un armario lleno de sombra*

**Obras en colaboración con artistas visuales**

1984 “Lapidario incompleto”. En Antonio Gamoneda, Luis Mateo Díez, José María Merino, *León: traza y memoria*
1996 *Encuentro en el territorio del frío*
1999 *Tú?*
2000 *Eros y Thánatos*
2002 *Más allá de la sombra*
2002 *Memoria volcánica*
2008 *Extravío en la luz*
Obras traducidas por Antonio Gamoneda

1976 M. Mentré, *Contribución al estudio de la miniatura en León y Castilla en la Alta Edad Media*

Libros traducidos en otras lenguas

1995 *Vigilante de la niev, Ele*
1996 *Poemas*
1996 *Pierres gravées*
1996 *Livre du froid*
1998 *Livro do frio*
2000 *Froid de limites*
2000 *Mortel*
2002 *Beskrivning av lögnen*
2002 *Pétale blessé*
2004 *Ardem as perdas*
2004 *Blues castillan*
2004 *De l’impossibilité*
2004 *Description du mensonge*
2004 *In ki kvær meubær*
2004 *Passion du regard*
2005 *Boek van de kou*
2005 *Livre du froid*
2006 *Cecilia*
2006 *Clarté sans repos*
   (s.d.) *Kitab al-bard*
2007 *Descrição da mentira*
2007 *Förlusterna Glöder*
2009 *Gravestones*
2012 *Claritate neostenitã*

Libros audio

1992 *Dos poetas en su voz. Manuel Álvarez Ortega y Antonio Gamoneda*
2004 *La voz de Antonio Gamoneda*
Otros trabajos

1981 José Luis Sánchez. *Humanismo y volumen*
1981 Silverio Rivas. *Viaje al interior de la escultura*
1993 Otra más alta vida (1919)

Monografías y dossiers sobre Antonio Gamoneda

1987 *Un ángel más*
1988 *Filandón /Diario de León*
1991 *Gamoneda: una poética temporalizada en el espacio leonés*
1993 *Antonio Gamoneda*
1995 *Noire et Blanche*
1996 *Antonio Gamoneda*
1999 *Collection de l’Umbo*
2001 *Con Antonio Gamoneda*
2003 *La alegría de los naufragios*
2006 “Antonio Gamoneda”. En *Quimera.*
2007 *Antonio Gamoneda, Premio Cervantes 2006*
2007 *Filandón/Diario de León*
2007 *República de las Letras*
2007 *Minerva*
2008 *Ínsula*

Críticas y reseñas sobre la obra de Antonio Gamoneda


**Premios y distinciones**

1959 Premio Adonais de Poesía
1985 Premio “Castilla y León de las Letras”
1988 Premio Nacional de Poesía
2000 Doctor Honoris Causa de la Universidad de León
2004 Premio de la Crítica de la Región de Castilla y León
2004 Premio Cultura y Literatura de la ciudad de Madrid
2004 Medalla de Plata (Principado de las Asturias)
2005 Premio Europeo de Literatura
2006 Premio Reina Sofía de Poesía Iberoamericana
2006 Premio Miguel de Cervantes
2006 Medalla de Oro del Círculo de Bellas Artes
2007 Medalla de Oro de la Provincia de León
2009 Premio Quijote de las Letras Españolas
2011 Doctor Honoris Causa de la Universidad Autónoma de Santo Domingo
2013 Premio de la Crítica de la Región de Castilla y León
2015 Doctor Honoris Causa de la Universidad “Babeș-Bolyai” de Cluj

(Traducido por DIANA MOTOC y OLIVIA N. PETRESCU)
The First Jazz Scholar to Become Doctor Honoris Causa of G. Dima Music Academy in Cluj

Virgil Mihaiu

John Edward Hasse (b. November 20, 1948 in Aberdeen, South Dakota, USA), the Smithsonian Institution’s “Ambassador of Jazz” and founder of worldwide Jazz Appreciation Month—nowadays celebrated in all 50 States and in over 40 countries—is the first jazz scholar to receive the Doctor Honoris Causa title from a Romanian academic establishment. The Senate of G. Dima Music Academy in Cluj (rector: Vasile Jucan) had the initiative, with support from the American Embassy in Bucharest and the Transylvania Cultural Community Association led by young promoter Tudor Vesa. Previous DHC-laureates of this institution included violinists Yehudi Menuhin and Sherban Lupu, composers Iannis Xenakis, Krzysztof Penderecki, Pascal Bentoiu, Ştefan Niculescu, György Ligeti, Costin Miereanu, Tudor Jarda, Dieter Acker, György Kurtag, Ghenadie Ciobanu, organist Kurt Mild, opera singers José Carreras, Virginia Zeani, Lya Hubic, Lucia Stânescu, Viorica Cortez, David Ohanesian, Alexandru Virgil Mihaiu

Romanian writer, jazz critic, diplomat, jazz aesthetics professor at G. Dima Music Academy in Cluj, polyglot, and performer.
Fărcaș, Angela Gheorghiu, Mariana Nicolesco, conductors Erich Bergel, Lawrence Foster, Cristian Mandeal, Petre Sbârcea, Marin Constantin, Nicola Debelic, Emil Simon, musicologists and promoters Roman Vlad, Ioan Holender, Raoul Șorban, Ileana Szenik.

Hasse is long-time Curator of American Music at the Smithsonian’s National Museum of American History in Washington, D.C., author of books on Duke Ellington and jazz, and founder of the Smithsonian Jazz Masterworks Orchestra. For more than 30 years he has served as Curator of American Music at the Smithsonian Institution’s National Museum of History, where he took care of a number of memorable exhibitions on Duke Ellington, Ray Charles, Ella Fitzgerald, a history of the piano, as seen through the Smithsonian collections, etc. In 2001 he was awarded the honorary title Doctor of Humane Letters by Walsh University, North Canton, OH. Among his publications there are some reference books like *Ragtime: Its History, Composers, and Music* (New York: Schirmer Books, 1985; London: Macmillan, 1985 and 1986) and *Beyond Category: The Life and Genius of Duke Ellington*, with a Foreword by Wynton Marsalis (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1993; New York: Da Capo Press, 1995; London: Omnibus Press, 1996). No wonder that John Edward Hasse was entrusted with the mission to coordinate the album anthology *Jazz: The First Century* (New York: William Morrow/Harper Collins Publishers, 2000), edited on the first centennial anniversary of this musical genre. In his Introduction to this volume, Hasse displays some of his generous ideas and principles that have guided his activity as a jazz scholar and promoter:

*A new form of musical expression emerged at the outset of the twentieth century. One hundred years later it was still vital. And somehow, in the intervening years, it had become the most expansive and influential approach to music-making introduced during that time. That music was jazz. And the idea behind it was powerful: Employ improvisation, hot rhythm, and other enlivening devices in the performance of music from an array of sources—in effect making something new and exciting from something old and familiar. The concept proved fruitful, its creative possibilities inexhaustible. The music grew accordingly, and it accrued the history and the qualities that make for enduring art. . . Jazz is as much about the personal as it is about the collective. The jazz musician, through inflections and stylings, puts his or her distinctive stamp on the material, making something personal out of something shared. Like democracy at its best, a jazz band maintains an optimum balance between the individual and the group and upholds the value of both. In a century rife with the predictable, the dehumanizing, and the dispiriting, jazz affirmed the fresh, the human, the hopeful. It came to represent humanity at its best: striving for*
beauty, personal achievement, and perfection, and communicating a message that brings pleasure to the world.

In his acceptance speech, John Edward Hasse mentioned Duke Ellington’s quotation “If jazz means anything, it is freedom of expression,” elaborating further as follows:

The jazz musician improvises, and the immediacy of that approach to invention ensures that the message comes from the heart. At the same time, the depth and scope of the jazz language—on a par with the most complex “classical” music—make that communication as deep and articulate as musical expression can be. The reflection of life in all its complexity has one of its truest images in jazz. . . . For early New Orleans players, jazz could also mean freedom from anonymity, poverty, and powerlessness. For 1920 “Jazz Age” adherents, it could mean freedom from old, tired social mores. . . . For citizens of communist nations, jazz could powerfully symbolize freedom and individualism.

The recent Doctor Honoris Causa expressed his consideration for Romania’s lively cultural (jazz included) scene, for Cluj’s current status as European Youth Capital, and his support for the city’s application to become Europe’s Cultural Capital in 2021. Actually, the 2000-year old Transylvanian metropolis was the first in Romania to host the International Jazz Day, in 2013. The Laudatio was delivered by Virgil Mihaiu, Romania’s correspondent for the world-famous Down Beat magazine and founder of the Jazz Aesthetics Course at the Cluj Music Academy. As a trustworthy disciple of his renowned masters back in the 1960s—jazz pianists Sir Roland Hanna and Jacky Byard—John Edward Hasse gave a brief piano-jazz recital, and the ceremony ended with the audience’s prolonged applause.

Abstract
The First Jazz Scholar to Become Doctor Honoris Causa of G. Dima Music Academy in Cluj

The text is a summary of the Laudatio delivered by the jazz aesthetics professor Virgil Mihaiu at the ceremony during which the curator at the Smithsonian’s National Museum of American History John Edward Hasse was awarded the title of Doctor Honoris Causa.

Keywords
What are the elements of a journey? A starting point, a movement over time, and a destination. At the outset, the destination may be unknown; if known, it may alter. A journey entails some sort of change—at least a shift of location. And most journeyers find themselves experiencing internal change, whether small or transformative.

Metaphorically speaking, jazz has made two interweaving journeys: one across space and another across time, both of which have transformed the music. This essay provides a few thoughts on these journeys, touching on its dissemination across the United States and around the world, including to Romania; its progression through one style after another; its movement from a lowly, even scandalous entertainment to a widely respected art-form; and its progressively larger influence on art and culture. And on a personal note, this article traces another jazz journey, that of an American boy from a very humble background growing up in a small prairie town, to a public career pursuing jazz at the world’s largest museum complex, a journey that took him many places, including Romania, and changed him.
The Geographical Journey of Jazz

WHERE DOES JAZZ COME FROM? It is rooted in earlier styles of African-American music, especially ragtime, which modeled form in jazz, and blues, which shaped melody in jazz and gave the music soul. Some elements of jazz can be traced back to Europe, some back to Africa; but the synthesis is entirely American.

The earliest jazz was not written down, but passed on aurally, a kind of folk music. The city of New Orleans gave rise to the first jazz musicians. This great seaport, near the mouth of the Mississippi River, became a paella of Afro-American, Anglo-American, French, German, Italian, Mexican, Caribbean, and even Native-American musical influences, and the first center of jazz. African Americans such as Buddy Bolden, Creoles of color such as Ferdinand LaMenthe (who took the stage name “Jelly Roll” Morton), and Italian-Americans such as Nick LaRocca played a role in the early development of jazz. In fact, Americans of many ethnic backgrounds have contributed to jazz, though most of the foremost innovators—those who transformed the aesthetic—have been black.

In Chicago and many other US cities, each ethnic group—black, Irish, Greek, etc.—typically lived in its own neighborhood. In New Orleans, by contrast, families from different ethnic backgrounds often lived cheek-by-jowl. Since there was no air conditioning, windows were open and music of all kinds was in the air, audible for anyone to listen to and imitate. This access provided countless opportunities for musical interchange, a process central to the birth and growth of jazz.

New Orleans was fabled for its dancing: jazz began as a small-combo music, typically used for dances, sometimes for parades. In the late 1910s, the first jazz recordings were issued and the music generated national interest. A growing diaspora of Crescent City players spread the sound, and it caught the fancy of many young people at a time when, across the nation, public dancing was becoming a craze and nightlife was increasing as a part of urban culture.

New Orleans wasn’t the only source of the music in the 1910s. During the middle and late teens, early jazz was emerging in Los Angeles, San Francisco, Chicago, Kansas City, New York, and Washington, DC. There and elsewhere, musicians were experimenting. They were trying out looser rhythms, exploring syncopation, bending notes, embellishing melodies, varying familiar songs, devising their own “breaks,” and creating their own tunes.

In the 1920s, jazz became a popular phenomenon. As Americans took to ballrooms in greater and greater numbers, jazz and dance bands grew in size to heighten musical interest and to produce more volume to fill the larger and larger dance halls. Jazz music reached its all-time peak of popularity in the late
1930s and early 1940s, when 3,000 “name” swing bands played jazz music for
dancing in the United States.

By the end of World War II, a new, modern style of jazz called “bebop”—
more melodically angular and rhythmically asymmetrical—burst forth in the
United States. Bebop and even newer styles of jazz after the War were intended
less for dancing than for listening, as jazz moved from the dance hall to the night
club, concert hall, and festival stage. The 1950s saw cool, hard bop, and modal
jazz, while the 1960s experienced free jazz, jazz-rock, and various other kinds
of fusions. In the United States, Latin jazz became prominent. While younger
musicians often took up a new style, many of the older players continued in
the style that they grew up with. That pattern continues to the present time.
What this means is that, over the decades, the jazz listener has had the choice of
an increasing number of styles of the music. Today, if one is diligent, in major
American cities one can hear most of the major styles of jazz—from traditional
to contemporary.

While jazz is a quintessentially American music, early on, it began to spread
abroad. Even before jazz came on the scene, ragtime and syncopated dance mu-
ic were making their way to Europe and even South Africa through touring
minstrel and vaudeville performers and published sheet music. In 1918, Lt.
James Reese Europe’s “Hellfighters” US army band created a sensation when it
performed proto-jazz in Paris. The appreciation of jazz quickly became an inter-
national phenomenon. In 1919, the Original Dixieland Jazz Band, from New
Orleans, spent the year touring England. That same year, New Orleans-born
clarinetist and soprano saxophonist Sidney Bechet went to Europe, whereupon
the Swiss conductor Ernst Ansermet proclaimed him “an extraordinary clarinet
virtuoso” and “an artist of genius.” After the defeat of the Ottoman Empire in
World War I, Constantinople drew jazz musicians from Europe and the United
States; some Western musicians traveled between Constantinople to Cairo to
perform.

In Paris, jazz was embraced immediately as a manifestation of modernism,
pointing to a difference in the early reception of jazz in Europe and the United
States. As Jed Rasula observed, “The greatest difference between the European
and American responses to jazz . . . [was] that the avant-garde was a pervasive
phenomenon across Europe when jazz appeared, whereas it had played almost
no role in the United States.”

Phonograph recordings and touring American musicians did more than any-
th to spread jazz across oceans. Listeners in Europe first encountered Duke
Ellington and Louis Armstrong via records, which built up great anticipation
among jazz aficionados for their first visits to Great Britain and the continent.
As interest in the music and its associated dance steps spread, in the 1930s,
American jazz musicians ventured as far afield as Shanghai, Bombay, and Dja-
After World War II, the United States’ Voice of America short-wave broadcasts carried jazz throughout the world. The growing influence of American jazz—in fact, much of America’s vernacular music—around the world went hand-in-hand with growing American economic might—and the international reach of the American music and record industry. By the middle of the 20th century, American popular music, for better or worse, had become the dominant force in music of the world, a position it maintains in the second decade of the 21st century.

In finding an audience abroad, jazz inspired musicians in those countries to learn to play the music. In 1918, the first jazz band in Australia became a sensation in Sydney.

Jazz performance took root in many countries, especially in Canada, Europe, and Japan. France produced the great Gypsy jazz guitarist Django Reinhardt and the swinging jazz violinist Stéphane Grappelli, who together offered the first real alternative to an American sound in jazz. Today jazz sustains a variety of national flavors, and there are school jazz bands in many nations. Jazz festivals are now held in many parts of the world, ranging from tiny Ascona, Switzerland to Tokyo, Japan, and Mumbai, India. The venerable American jazz magazine Down Beat counts subscribers in 114 countries.

The history of jazz in Romania has been well-documented, most recently by Virgil Mihaiu in his book Jazz Connections in Romania. In the 1910s, he recounts, Romanian dance bands performed and recorded a number of American ragtime instrumentals. In 1926, reedman Emil Berindei established a band he
called The Hot Chops, and when Radio Romania was inaugurated in 1928, the ensemble became the first to broadcast jazz in that country.\(^8\) As Romania was largely agrarian, jazz was limited mostly to cities. In the 1930s, though derivative of American jazz, such bands as the Jazzul Telefoanelor big band, Radio Big Band, and James Kok Orchestra, introduced more Romanians to jazz through performances, recordings, and radio. “Although during the cold war years,” wrote Milhaiu, “jazz was excommunicated as a vicious ideological device of the imperialists, it managed more or less to survive in the underground.”\(^9\) Then, after the fall of dictator Nicolae Ceaușescu in 1989, jazz was free to compete with other forms of music and entertainment in Romania. The music continues to weave a complex history in this easternmost Latin country.

As jazz journeyed through time and around the earth, it changed. Just as the mother tongue of the island of England—English—went all around the world, taking root in different countries to produce markedly different pronunciations and even vocabularies, so jazz traveled from the United States around the planet and took on varying accents and sounds. I am reminded of trumpeter Clark Terry’s description of learning jazz: “Imitate. Assimilate. Innovate.”\(^10\) In some nations, innovation has come from combining elements of American jazz with local musical influences. For instance, jazz in Cuba, Brazil, and South Africa came to sound much different than jazz in the United States—but each style is still jazz. This phenomenon has been described as “glocalization”—from the combination of “global” and “local”—wherein musicians incorporate their own national musical culture into the language of jazz.\(^11\)

Jazz now belongs to the world—something I have experienced first-hand in Cuba, Kenya, Ethiopia, Mauritius, Sweden, Romania, and elsewhere. I’ll never forget being in the center of South Africa, when a busload of township students came to hear me lecture on Louis Armstrong. These 14-year-old boys, who had ridden a bus for two hours to attend, lived in shacks, with no electricity or running water: they were as poor as they could be. But when I began playing a recording of Louis Armstrong singing *Hello Dolly*, they smiled and started singing along. They knew the words, they knew the melody. In Alexandria, Egypt, I was giving a lecture on Louis Armstrong and noticed an elderly Muslim woman, with black-clad headscarf, smiling broadly. It turned out that she knew no English, but was moved by Louis Armstrong’s ebullience and brilliance. All over Africa today, Louis Armstrong is the most popular American jazz musician—someone who can bring joy to people’s hearts, even when they don’t speak English. I am struck by these examples of how jazz can conquer time, space, language, and culture. I’ve seen it many times.

Jazz is such a globalized idiom that today one could bring together a Turkish trumpeter, a Thai trombonist, a Chinese clarinetist, a Senegalese saxophonist, a
Polish pianist, a Brazilian bassist, a Guinean guitarist, and a Dominican drummer, and though they might not share any spoken language, they might well instantly communicate in the international language of jazz.

**Jazz’s Stylistic and Cultural Journey**

Jazz didn’t progress slowly. In the course of its first century, it recapitulated the centuries-long evolution of European classical music from a localized dance accompaniment to an international art with an avant-garde edge. Separated by only twenty actual years, Louis Armstrong’s *West End Blues* of 1928 and Charlie Parker’s *Parker’s Mood* of 1948 nonetheless seem light years apart. This contrast bespeaks the extraordinary rate of change in jazz, matching the velocity of transformation in other sectors of twentieth-century life.

As jazz evolved, the shapes it took made it a musical analog to historic events and trends. Nightclub jazz and dance-hall swing of the 1920s and thirties, for example, rose on a wave of postwar American optimism, a surging youth culture, and shifting social currents. The music’s multiethnic flavors—heard, for instance, in the Afro-Cuban beat of Dizzy Gillespie’s *Manteca*, the calypso of Sonny Rollins’ *St. Thomas*, and the bossa nova of Stan Getz’s *The Girl from Ipanema*—emerged with both the growth of U.S. immigration and the increasing interconnectedness of world cultures due to advances in communications and transportation technology. Progressive bebop of the 1940s articulated the new assertiveness of African Americans in the United States, and the even more progressive “free” jazz of the sixties echoed the anti-repressive call of the civil-rights and counterculture movements. Post-sixties jazz synthesizers and electronics signaled alliance with the digital information revolution, while the kaleidoscopic sonic arrays of some late-century jazz reflected the increasingly fractured and data-bombarded state of late-century consciousness. Where there was a change in the status of human existence, there was a jazz movement to match it.

Jazz not only mirrored social and cultural change but also brought it on. Long before American society was racially integrated, jazz musicians were recording in multi-hued bands and becoming celebrities across the color line. Jazz led the way towards racial integration in the United States, even before baseball and the American armed forces were integrated.

Jazz did all those things because, at its core, it’s about honest, instantaneous, high-level communication and expression. The jazz musician improvises, and the immediacy of that approach to invention ensures that the message comes from the heart. At the same time, the depth and scope of the jazz language—on a par with the most complex “classical” music—make that communication as
deep and articulate as musical expression can be. The reflection of life in all its complexity has one of its truest images in jazz.

It wouldn’t be that way if not for the freedom jazz affords and encourages. “If jazz means anything,” wrote Duke Ellington, “it is freedom of expression.” For early New Orleans players, jazz could also mean freedom from anonymity, poverty, and powerlessness. For 1920s “Jazz Age” adherents, it could mean freedom from old, tired social mores. For people in Nazi-occupied Europe, it could mean independence from regimentation. For citizens of communist nations, jazz could powerfully symbolize freedom and individualism. And for countless Americans, jazz could eloquently protest racial injustice and express a mighty yearning for freedom and respect.

Jazz is as much about the personal as it is about the collective. Through inflections and stylings the jazz musician puts his or her own distinctive stamp on the material, making something personal out of something shared. Like democracy at its best, a jazz band maintains an optimum balance between the individual and the group and upholds the value of both.

In a century—the 20th—rife with the predictable, the dehumanizing, and the dispiriting, jazz affirmed the fresh, the human, the hopeful. It came to represent humankind at its best: striving for beauty, personal achievement, and perfection, and communicating a message that brings pleasure to the world.

From Marginal to Mainstream

N the early part of the twentieth century, the new ragtime music attracted legions of young Americans. Some oldsters, however, charged that ragtime was pernicious, undermined traditional morals, and was ruining the musicianship of young people. This opposition to ragtime morphed into an antipathy to jazz. However much youngsters liked the new jazz sound, many oldsters resisted it on musical or moralistic grounds. “Does Jazz Put the Sin in Syncopation?” asked a 1921 article in *Ladies Home Journal*, answering its own
question with an emphatic affirmative. Jazz and blues were often denounced as “the devil’s music” and regarded as disreputable by many middle-class whites and blacks alike.

Part of the reason jazz was controversial from the beginning was that the occupation of jazz musician challenged notions of middle-class respectability and normative behavior. Late hours, uncertain employment, and an often-itinerant work life—not to mention jazz’s early associations with New Orleans sporting houses, scandalous dancing, drinking, and nightlife—led some parents to ask, “Would you want your daughter to marry a jazz musician?” For most of its history, the jazz musician has been seen as an outsider. Jazz musicians often actively cultivated the image of outsider, as it was their artistic prerogative to stand apart from, or outside, the main culture.

In the United States, the stereotyping of the jazz musician as outsider would ultimately be challenged, if not shattered, by the rise of Wynton Marsalis, in the 1990s and the 2000s, as an immaculately attired, eloquent, powerful cultural figure who was equally at home teaching in an inner-city school, hosting his own show on PBS television, lobbying on Capitol Hill, or performing at the White House.

Jazz has struggled to earn respect and recognition in its native land. On the one hand, major institutions—notably the Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts in New York City and, in Washington, DC, the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts and the Smithsonian Institution—have established impor-
tant and influential jazz programs. The federal government, through its National Endowment for the Arts, annually honors four musicians, naming them “Jazz Masters.” Jazz scholarship is booming.

On the other hand, in the United States, jazz has all but disappeared from the major television networks and the number of public radio stations playing jazz is shrinking. While teaching of jazz in American colleges and universities became common starting in the 1960s, even in 2015, the majority of US institutions of higher learning do not teach jazz history or performance. Jazz continues to be a stepchild in the academic halls of the land that gave birth to the music.

Even while jazz was treated as second-class by parts of the American elite, it accrued deep influence in culture and society—a sharply ironic duality. While many gatekeepers of culture and academe undervalued jazz, many members of the public embraced the music.

Although jazz has absorbed influences from other kinds of music, even more so, it has influenced other musics—ranging from popular singing, rhythm & blues, and country music, to rock and Western classical music. Jazz moved many African American musical practices right into the musical mainstream, thereby transforming American music and spurring the creation of new styles, including r&b, rock and roll, and soul. Beyond music, jazz has inspired creation in other fields, by dancers, choreographers, novelists, poets, painters, classical composers, and filmmakers. It has influenced and enriched the American English language.

A Personal Jazz Journey

In the Midwestern state of South Dakota—one of the flattest and least populated states in America—I was brought up in a small town of 5,000 people, in a family of German and Scandinavian origin. Our town was homogeneous—there were no minorities; on Sunday, people went to either the Catholic church or one of the Protestant churches; and everyone knew who the town’s three Jewish families were. Because the University of South Dakota was located there, I had periodic opportunities to hear first-class concerts performed by university and visiting artists. We didn’t have much money—but there was enough to pay for weekly piano lessons. I listened a lot to radio, and at night, I’d fall asleep aside a white, vacuum-tube AM radio nestled next to my head, listening to distant stations: Chicago, Minneapolis, Little Rock, Dallas, Denver, sometimes even New York. When I was 10, my father bought me a ticket to a “Jazz Unlimited” concert at the University, a fundraiser for the musical fraternity Pi Mu Alpha Sinfonia. The first half was performed by a Dixieland combo; the second half by a student big band, playing charts of Count Basie, Neil Hefti, and
others. Jazz seized my imagination. Here was something new: musicians spinning spontaneous melody lines at the speed of thought, to a propulsive, swinging beat. Soon, I'd start picking out tunes on the piano, playing by ear or note, and trying a bit of variation and embellishment. I was on my way to improvising jazz. In high school, I formed a jazz trio to play bars, nightclubs, and dances. At the same time, I joined a rock and roll band, playing stand-up Farfisa organ.

As a freshman at Carleton College in Northfield, Minnesota, I seized the opportunity to take my first course in jazz history. A visiting professor, John S. “Jack” Lucas, opened up a window for me—Baby Dodds, Louis Armstrong, Coleman Hawkins, Charlie Parker, Miles Davis. I became intrigued. When during my sophomore year, I studied in New York City for four months, I managed to sign up for lessons with two prominent jazz pianists—Jaki Byard and Roland Hanna—and I listened to and met as many jazz musicians as I could—Bill Evans, Billy Taylor, Dave Liebman, Jimmy Garrison, and others.

When Roland Hanna told me that to attain his level of excellence, he practiced eight hours a day, I realized that as much as jazz and other music spoke to my soul, I didn’t have the discipline to practice all day long. But I did love playing the piano, especially when I could play what I chose—at the time, Scott Joplin rags and jazz pieces.

After I graduated from college in 1971, I worked on a presidential political campaign. When the election was over, I realized that I was destined to work in music and I enrolled in a Ph.D. program in ethnomusicology at Indiana University, which I chose because that was where David Baker—one of the world’s leading jazz educators—taught. I took nearly every jazz course I could, including a seminar on Miles Davis and John Coltrane.

In both college and graduate school, I encountered an air of disdain from some faculty and students pursuing classical music. When told I was researching my doctoral dissertation on ragtime, one fellow graduate student—a woman studying to be an opera singer—replied incredulously, “Ragtime!?” Then with outright derision, she asked, “What’s to study about ragtime?” I shall never forget that contemptuousness.

In 1976, I started presenting lecture-concerts of ragtime music, combining commentary, slides of colorful sheet music covers projected on a big screen, and my playing. Back then, this multi-media approach was new to audiences, and I enjoyed success. I loved educating and entertaining them. I set my sights on becoming a college professor teaching the history of jazz and American music, but as I completed my Ph.D. degree, I found there was a dearth of teaching positions. So I enrolled in a summer-long, intensive business training at the Wharton School, one of the nation’s top business schools. I then landed a position at Procter & Gamble, at its corporate headquarters in Cincinnati, Ohio, and was assigned to the Head & Shoulder brand group—marketing dandruff shampoo!
learned much about marketing consumer products, writing highly concise business memos, packaging and graphic design, but ultimately selling shampoo did not speak to my soul, and I left the company. For a while, I played jazz piano in a piano bar, then secured a grant to conduct music research.

I was elated when, in 1984, I took a position of Curator of American Music at the National Museum of American History of the Smithsonian Institution, in Washington, DC.18 Established in 1846 by a request from the son of an English nobleman named James Smithson, the Smithsonian is the world’s largest museum and research complex, with nineteen museums and galleries, the national zoo, and a number of research centers. The Smithsonian has 138 million objects, works or art, and specimens. Each year, the Smithsonian draws about 30 million visitors to its museums and 100 million visitors to its websites.19

Soon I realized that I had found my calling. My duties are broad and the job is demanding: it means wearing about twelve different “hats”—collector, preservationist, exhibit curator, scholar, public speaker, advocate, spokesperson, public servant, coalition builder, cultural ambassador, friend-raiser and fundraiser. Because I am the only such curator at the Smithsonian, I feel a great sense of responsibility. I am grateful beyond words for the opportunity to do this work—it’s the dream of a lifetime.

People often ask me, “What does a music curator do?” I tell them that my position at the Smithsonian includes five areas of responsibility.

The first and core responsibility: building the national collections of musical instruments, scores, parts, sheet music, documents, recordings, films, awards, and other memorabilia. Upon arriving, I was given carte blanche to collect and research as I wished. Convinced that the most innovative, accomplished, and consequential music invented in the United States is jazz, I determined to focus much—though not all—of my energies on that musical genre. What should I collect first? I decided to invite one of jazz’s foremost living innovators—Dizzy Gillespie—to donate one of his trumpets. From there, the museum’s history of jazz collection grew and grew.

In 1988, we acquired the Duke Ellington Collection from his son, Mercer Ellington. Included are about one hundred thousand pages of unpublished music that Duke Ellington and Billy Strayhorn composed for the Duke Ellington Orchestra, another hundred thousand pages of documents, several thousand photographs, and five hundred artifacts.20 Since that acquisition, we have acquired several dozen other Ellington-related collections, making the Smithsonian unquestionably the world’s leading repository of Ellingtonia, drawing researchers and musicians from many countries. We’ve acquired musical scores and/or band “parts” of Jimmie Lunceford, Benny Carter, Thelonious Monk, Gil Evans, Ralph Burns, Bill Holman, Bill Russo, Chico O’Farrill, Paquito d’Rivera and others; a collection of 300 jazz films; a trove of 12,000 jazz photographs; musical in-

A second responsibility: conducting research and writing articles and books. I have done extensive research on Duke Ellington, resulting in a book, a book chapter, magazine and journal articles, and a CD boxed set. I have written about ragtime, the Apollo Theater, the history of jazz, and such figures as songwriter Hoagy Carmichael and record producer Ahmet Ertegun.

Third: developing museum exhibitions. As professors teach in classrooms, curators teach through museum exhibitions. Mine have included half a dozen on Ellington, several on jazz photography, and exhibits on Frank Sinatra, Ella Fitzgerald, Ray Charles, and the history of the piano.

Another way that a music curator can teach is by producing historically informed performances. After we acquired the vast Duke Ellington Collection in 1988, I wanted to bring alive Ellington’s music—to make the archives sing. For this purpose, I conceived and founded a seventeen-member big band, the Smithsonian Jazz Masterworks Orchestra, and oversaw it for almost a decade. In addition to a regular series of concerts at the Smithsonian, the orchestra has performed at the White House, the Monterey Jazz Festival, across the United States and Canada, as well as in Europe and Africa.

Fourth: undertaking public service, lecturing, lending advice. This broad area of responsibility ranges from answering public inquiries to representing the Museum at international conferences. I have led several initiatives: I founded and directed Jazz Appreciation Month (JAM), which is now celebrated every April in all fifty US states and 40 other countries, including Romania. It has been a thrill to go lecture in such far-apart cities as Nairobi, Cape Town, Riga, and Cluj-Napoca and see our Jazz Appreciation Month posters on display there.

I also serve as chair of a Smithsonian-wide initiative called Smithsonian Music. With the recognition that if all the Smithsonian’s material, programmatic, and human resources were combined, the Smithsonian would be the world’s largest museum of music, staff from across the Institution are working to make its resources more available to the public in the United States and around the world. One of the most gratifying aspects of this work has been lecturing on American music in fifteen other countries, mostly at the request of US embassies. I love doing my tiny part to bridge cultural differences, enhance understanding, build friendship, and inform people about the history of American music.

To my great surprise, in April 2015, G. Dima Academy of Music in Cluj-Napoca named me Doctor Honoris Causa. It was a complete surprise. After the jolt wore off, I felt humbled and honored. And then when I learned of others who have received this honor—violinist Yehudi Menuhin and composers Iannis
Xenakis, Krzysztof Penderecki, and György Ligeti—my sense of gratitude rose even higher. Besides my gratitude to the Academy, I am thankful to the noted Academy faculty member, Virgil Mihaiu. I hold Professor Mihaiu in great esteem and consider him Romania’s leading jazz scholar, critic, broadcaster, impresario, and advocate. He was the first Romanian correspondent for the world’s leading jazz magazine, *Down Beat*, which has been published continuously since 1934. He has authored 15 books, including works on jazz in Romania, in Portugal, and in Europe. He regularly serves as a master of ceremonies for jazz concerts and festivals not only in Romania but in other nations. These activities are in addition to his teaching honors and his work as a poet and diplomat. A man of the world, Virgil speaks an awe-inspiring 12 languages, in addition to the language of music. He is respected wherever he goes. When I meet some of his former students, I could instantly see the admiration they hold for him—it’s on their faces. I am also indebted to the impressive young impresario Tudor Vesa of Cluj-Napoca, for persuading the United States Embassy in Bucharest to take me to Romania. With indefatigable energy and self-sacrificing generosity, Tudor is leading Romanian celebrations of Jazz Appreciation Month and International Jazz Day. Fifth and finally: helping to raise funds. The United States Congress provides the Smithsonian with roughly only two-thirds of what it needs to do its work. This means that the museums are constantly raising money from founda-
tions, corporations, and individuals. One of my jobs is to assist our fundraising department in generating private funding to support our work.

How Has Jazz Affected My Journey Through Life?

Jazz is a music born of diversity, rising up from the bouillabaisse culture of New Orleans. Recognizing its deep roots in the African American experience, in college I chose to major in Black Studies, so I could understand jazz and African American music in their social, cultural, and historical contexts. In graduate school, I conducted fieldwork in African American churches and produced a documentary video about black gospel music. Jazz led me to make many friendships across the color lines. Building upon my father’s instinctive empathy for people struggling with adversity, jazz helped me to become more empathetic not just to jazz as an “underdog” music in the United States—scuffling for respect and audience—but for the people and culture that produced that music.

My fascination for jazz led me to pursue a doctoral degree in ethnomusicology, which taught me a great deal about the musics of Africans and African Americans, the richness of working with living informants (fieldwork), the inherent musicality of human beings, and the contrast between the universal and the unique among the world’s musical cultures. If it had not been for jazz, I probably would have pursued a different academic and career path, perhaps in politics, cinema, or education. I am thankful beyond words for the path I have made.

As a jazz pianist, I learned that there is no one correct way to perform a piece; each time you interpret it, you can vary the melody, rhythm, and harmony. In my life, this realization has come to mean there is always another way to do something. And if you get stopped in your tracks, find another way: go around the obstacle, under it, over it, or create an entirely new path.

Realizing that virtually every jazz musician—even the most brilliant—makes mistakes during performances has prompted me to become more tolerant of mistakes, at least well-intentioned mistakes. As each of us extemporize and improvise our way through our daily lives, we are all bound to make mistakes. A more generous and forgiving attitude towards failings could, I have come to believe, benefit all of us.

As a teenager, I was, like most of my peers, caught up in the most popular rock and roll music—which is what we listened to on radio. Without examining it, my peers largely liked certain songs because they were popular. Once I began studying jazz in college, my attitude changed radically. Despite its relative lack of exposure in the national media, jazz, I comprehended, was one of the most significant art forms in the United States. And within jazz, I realized there were radio hits—Eddie Harris’s Listen Here, Ramsey Lewis’s The In Crowd, Herbie Mann’s Comin’ Home, Baby—that made me want to get up and dance, but did
not represent the music at its most accomplished and enduring. In other words, I
learned that typically to find what is of deep value and enduring worth, one must
look beyond what is popular today. Most of pop culture at any given moment
tends to be ephemeral and not destined to be valued highly in, say, 500 years.

Perhaps it’s my German heritage, perhaps it’s the part of me that’s an edu-
cator, but I naturally like things to be ordered and clear. Categories are one
time-honored way of achieving that. But, I learned as I studied Duke Ellington,
he was of an opposite mind. He hated categories of all types. When Ellington
wanted to lavish the highest possible praise on a musician, he’d say that person
was “beyond category.” For him, it was more than saying, in the familiar Eng-
lish-language term, “beyond compare”—i.e., nonpareil. Ellington was declaring
that a person’s brilliance and uniqueness made him or her transcend any catego-
rization, and for Ellington, that was extremely desirable. When I am tempted
to place a mental boundary around something, sometimes I stop and think of
Ellington, and try to adjust to a more elastic viewpoint. I find it both a challeng-
ing and refreshing exercise for the mind.

Jazz has provided me with continuing inspiration. Besides the motivations
discussed above, it has encouraged me to go ahead and experiment, to imagine
something where there was nothing: silence, a blank piece of paper, etc. Jazz has
inspired me to create and invent—words on a book page, a newly improvised
melody at the piano, or an entity that didn’t exist before—a month to celebrate
jazz every year (Jazz Appreciation Month), or a national jazz band (the Smith-
sonian Jazz Masterworks Orchestra).

Conclusion

Jazz has traveled to every corner of the earth, in the process advancing in
its recognition and understanding. I have traveled to some of those places.
Like many voyagers, I have been changed by my travels and have, at the
same time, left some little footprints. During my personal jazz journey, I’ve
striven to contribute my small part to heightening esteem for and understand-
ing of jazz. In exchange, jazz has bettered me as a professional and as a person.

Notes

1. Charles Hamm, Putting Popular Music in Its Place (Cambridge: Cambridge
University Press, 1995), 183. See also David Coplan, In Township Tonight! South Af-
rica’s Black City Music and Theatre (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 70.


8. Virgil Mihaiu, Jazz Connections in Romania (Bucharest: Institutul Cultural Român, 2007), 46–47.

9. Ibid., 53.


19. See www.si.edu.
Abstract

Jazz Journeys

The paper offers a synthetic presentation of the “journeys” of jazz across the world, from the beginnings of the genre in New Orleans until today, when jazz belongs to the whole world. Attention is also given to the stylistic changes experienced by jazz in the course of time, under the influence of various historic events and trends, such as the civil-rights and counterculture movements, and to the manner in which this music could itself operate as an agent of social change. The second part of the paper presents biographic information, outlining the personal jazz journey of the author.

Keywords

jazz, history of music, jazz styles, National Museum of American History
A New Approach to Arts Management in the Context of the Romanian Contemporary Art Scene

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After 1989, Romania found itself integrated in an unexpected but real manner in the complex European cultural space. The main issue, which surfaced immediately, was the almost total absence of a general infrastructure, which would have allowed the successful promotion of both existing values and the values that were bound to appear. In the context of seismic social movements, the world of art had to find a new voice and a new matrix to allow the creative incorporation of its past and at the same time to produce new values during the process. Immediately, the new environment created a sharp need for new forms, to correspond to these new needs.

In the beginning, the forms were created by mimesis, following the model of traditional art galleries in Western Europe or the US, because often the lack of experience leads to imitation at an initial stage. The first galleries which were founded did not
take into consideration the obvious fact that generally commercial galleries survive due to the existence of a specialized art public, used to the existence of a functional art market, and with a certain type of transactions involving art. Romania in the 1990s did not have such a public in the way it existed in the capitalist world. It can take decades to shape it, and a business based on a model that requires its existence cannot survive. As a consequence, the system had to adapt to the local reality and new forms of promoting contemporary art took up, either mimetically or creatively, certain components of the North-American and West European system. At the same time, they also identified and exploited the strengths of the system of art transactions typical for the Romanian market. The result was a model adapted to the situation on the ground.

Overall, the system of selling and acquiring art is very complex, but at the same time it has not changed radically in the last decades. Today, artists at the beginning of their career still look for galleries to represent them, even though nowadays there are other less direct ways to obtain notoriety. Usually, an artist creates an Internet site to present his or her work to collectors or to galleries of interest. In its turn, a commercial gallery decides to work with artists first and foremost based on the preferences of the owner and/or director, or taking into account the commercial potential of the art in itself. Whether it is stated obvi-
ously or not in the curatorial policy (or whether such policy even exists), galleries are first and foremost glorified “shops,” selling an exclusive merchandise and surviving mostly by means of sales to private clients, to corporate clients who may wish to embellish their offices or to start a collection with investment potential, or to museums that want to acquire contemporary art or secondary market art, belonging to the rarefied market of important names. In order for the art to sell, the gallerist must make choices depending on the stable of clients, but must also look for new clients for the type of art that he or she considers worthy or innovative. If the advertising and sales process goes well, the artist starts to have a devoted audience following his or her career. This public may include art collectors and art critics or writers who appreciate the value and the novelty of the art, but also occasional buyers who may want to decorate their apartment, even though their numbers have decreased in the context of the economic crisis which affected the middle class. This can be the moment when museums and auction houses start being interested, especially if the artist has been promoted in the right manner. In recent years a new model has taken shape, namely the takeover by important galleries of artists promoted by collectors willing to invest, in the manner of artistic sponsorship, which has become more palatable; the launch can involve collectors ready to buy, or auctions already lined up. Sometimes, the gallery or representative is eliminated early in the game, when the artist reaches a certain market share and considers that he or she can control the market better with direct involvement.

As always, the main areas of focus are the art audience—in other words, the collectors who trust an artist enough to provide funds to assist in building a future and acquire the art based on purely aesthetic reasons or as an investment, in the hope that its value will increase—and the art critics (even though there is chatter about the death of art criticism, there are still lots of art columns in print or online) or curators, who can make or break the market price of an artist by their institutional vote and can influence a career. In recent years, much of the arts trade has taken place in auction houses, and often a high auction price or estimate determines an overall raise in prices for collectors. This border between auctions and galleries, which years ago was quite clear, has become increasingly blurred when the auction houses started selling inventory directly by means of spaces posing as commercial galleries, without going through the auction process, which undermines a whole sector of the art world. This approach represents an invasion of extreme commercialism in the traditional space of the art gallery, which exists, is perpetuated and cannot be ignored as a manner of trading in object-oriented art.

The situation has changed regarding the promotion of a visual artist. The share of direct advertising has gone down once the seismic changes in print me-
dia became a fact. Magazines considered very important and trendsetters have either disappeared completely, or became a different type of media entities, often with a different agenda. Social media arrived on the scene, and it has proven quickly that it can create a viral phenomenon from everything, including art, especially if there is any whiff of sensationalism either in terms of the theme or as an evolution, and which can generate income in other ways than direct sale transactions. Overnight, Facebook, Instagram or Twitter can make an artist or an image familiar to the whole computer literate world. Another recent shift is gallery participation in art fairs, which represent a concentration, albeit fake and temporary, of the market, and offer galleries who are not in the first tier access to a world of international collectors who would be out of bounds otherwise.

In this context, the evolution with the most impact may be the pervasive infiltration of social media communication in all the layers of daily life; it allows access to personalized information, while creating the illusion of the global community sharing the same interests, images, fashions, feelings. It is an evolution that Romania experienced directly post–1989, even though with less fervor than the US. It is true that the space has become more democratic, as the internet provided the false feeling that access to information is uniform, but at the same time the boundaries between fields of study and domains of expertise have become more fluid and it has become increasingly harder to access or identify the real markers of value due to the plethora of information and the multitude of fake experts. The world of art has always been characterized by a fundamental lack of transparency, which places it in contrast with the apparent lack of mediation in social media, based by definition on the concept of direct experience, a fundamentally fake concept. Often the fact that information (including information about auction prices, the market price of an artist, or reports about the evolution of prices in a given period of time) exists online and actually contributes to an increased lack of transparency, because the information is as manipulated in this field as it is in others, and what seems like “trending” is in fact another instance of 15 minute celebrity. Yesterday’s nuggets of information start being recycled the moment they appear in order to make room for the new ones, and there are companies specializing in “burying” unsavory information from the results of search engines and web crawlers. It is a recyclable continuum, a perpetuum mobile, tiresome in its mechanical rhythm. Inevitably, we live in a stupor of excess imagery and last-minute information, of five minute celebrity with Twitter followers, of live wars and lives spent online, together with millions of users who have access to a connected computer. The image has stopped belonging to its creator and it seems to belong instead to a collective digital subconscious. Visual identity is not an introspective process anymore, but often a collection of features, colors and images collected from various sources, Instagram-type. The
user is not necessarily unhappy with the offer and does not try to observe creatively or from a historical perspective, but responds with Pavlovian exactness to stimuli from an area in which the offer has become a synonym for saturation. The context has fundamentally made the production of something increasingly hard in the context of visual over-saturation.

As the capacity of selection of the contemporary individual seems to have been atrophied in order to relinquish supremacy to another hypertrophied organ, of consumerism and rapid elimination from the system, short term memory, minimal focus and ready-made perceptions are the easy choice and sell well. This phenomenon is easy to recognize in the art world, where tendencies follow one another rapidly and predictably. The eyes of the 21st century person perceive more than can be processed successfully. The author of the image is often meaningless, and its role is replaced by the shock value of the object created or its novelty (often apparent or falsified). The effect is no longer satisfaction, but rather an all-encompassing cultural indigestion, which could be equivalent to boredom. Before digesting anything new, there is a new layer over it. Yesterday’s artists are not needed tomorrow, others will come up, and the result is a depository of feelings and recycled nostalgias, of objects and ready-made perceptions, reminding us of a past which can be closer than we think, with a history that is in fact meaningless, because what exists is a monotonously pixilated present in which patterns are not always obvious, and which moves rapidly under our gluttonous eyes. In this new reality, artists are often content to recycle a formula which has already proven its curatorial viability; at other times, they look for originality on purpose either by borrowing tools and ideas which can be imbued with conceptual value from other fields (such is the case of bio art, rapid prototyping sculpture) or by experimenting with borderline ideas from other domains, in a perpetual extension of the domain of art which seems to evolve as far away from the visual as possible.

This structure, more or less stable and at the same time in continuous transformation in order to find the ideal balance between profit maximization and
cultural activity (or its pretense), has been for years the standard operating procedure in the Western World, and it was the cultural paradigm Romania had to enter post–1990. The integration process was meant both to recover the lost steps, to create the non-existent structures, and to be able to synchronize everything with the ongoing activity.

In this context, two important phenomena took place in Romania, chronologically: first, artists wanted to be in touch with the public outside the geographic boundaries without fully understanding what this entailed, and secondly, there was an acute need for cultural management, for something/somebody to select from the informational labyrinth and to offer the semblance of certainty while defining a clear axiology. At a pragmatic level, Romanian artists noticed quickly that the Uniunea Artiștilor Plastic (Union of Plastic Artists) galleries in existence were not a system with sufficient flexibility to satisfy this need in its current shape. A first development was the appearance of artist-run spaces, and of cultural and non-profit management.

The entry in the arena of contemporary Romanian art post–1989 may have seemed rather abrupt to the European and us audience; the situation is in fact entirely different. It is something that developed gradually. In the ’90s, the first commercial galleries following the classical model, with private ownership, were opened first in Bucharest and then in other cities, among which Cluj-Napoca. The first centers for contemporary art were also inaugurated in this period (such as Pavilion Unicredit), the first biennials, such as Periferic (Iași) and the Bucharest Biennial, opened to the public. There were also magazines that survived during all the years of rapid transition and disappeared after a few issues. In other words, cultural life diversified rapidly and tremendously, and perhaps the most important fact was that there were voices different from the institutional ones, whose inflexible attitude had become synonymous with arrogance. The impact was immediate. Because in Romania everything takes place at the boundary between the Balkans and the West, contemporary art is perceived often as a reason for praise when there is an important success, but not as a meaningful in-

Cornel Brudașcu, Family Portrait, 1971, oil on canvas, 160×160
vestment because it does not provide immediate and tangible benefits, and the long term benefits are not taken into consideration. Due to the need for long term investment which is not perceived as worthy, almost everything happened without any significant contribution of the state-run cultural institutions, which preferred to support classical art, which does not threaten the established status quo, and have often ignored or sabotaged the contemporary art developments which took the form of non-profits, small galleries or magazines published in negligible numbers but which promoted artists without an obvious or anti-system agenda. The Sindan Cultural Foundation of Bucharest, a non-profit sponsored by the eponymous pharmaceutical company, was an important player, because it created the basis of a cultural center active in Cluj between 1999 and 2003. It was a period without too many local alternatives to showcase contemporary art; among the artists exhibited there were Victor Man, Adrian Ghenie, and Ciprian Mureșan. One of the important projects was Re: Location, in collaboration with the Tranzit Foundation, Cluj, CIAC Bucharest, the National Museum of Contemporary Art of Bucharest, the National Museum of Art of Cluj, the Cluj University of Art and Design and the French Cultural Center, financed from the 2000 European Union program for culture as a part of the network of European Art Centers.

Romania in the 1990s never had a presence such as Charles Saatchi, who understood both the financial and cultural potential of a real and long term investment in contemporary art, and who started a durable project, with results known to the whole world by now. On the contrary, there has been a bottled up conflict between the contemporary artists and a diseased old structure, which denied the inevitable changes unfolding with or without their cooperation. As a consequence, there were instances when Romanian artists who are known internationally discovered that they lost the studio spaces they had been assigned or were put down on Romanian blogs, exactly in an area where they should have had maximum support. A classical subject of cultural scandal is, for example, the 2010 evacuation by the University of Art (after two years without utilities) of the Archive of Contemporary Art from the Bucharest studio of Dan and Lia Perjovschi. It was an evacuation enthusiastically supported by some from the artistic milieu; the archive ended up in Sibiu. The argument of the contribution of the two to Romanian culture, their international fame or their marketability did not seem to matter in the context. Another example is the case of the fake scandal created by the exhibition organized by the Romanian Cultural Institute in New York while the institution was led by Horia-Roman Patapievici, and known for the symbol of the most famous artifact, the pink pony. The fact that an institution financed from public funds had finally decided to get involved in the promotion of contemporary art actively mattered only as long as it played a
clearly defined part in the background policy, and not as a step forward. The Romanian Cultural Institute, in fact the only government institution which had a coherent program of cultural management abroad in a certain period and which provided results, ended up as a scapegoat for an inexistent error and, in fact, for its own coherent accomplishments in an area of maximum confusion.

After a few years, a number of galleries from Romania managed to enter the international market by means of art fairs, and when artists participated in projects organized by famous curators. In time, some collectors have come to the fore (paradoxically for those who do not understand the cultural milieu in Romania, mostly collectors from other countries) and supported artists enough to raise their auction prices. Then, there were reviews in important magazines and newspapers, and the rest is already history. The Romanian school of art is an interesting topic again, and so is the Cluj School of art, and this time respect is quantified in something Western society can understand and respect, namely the power of very high prices and market share. The prices of Romanian artists are still on a growth curve and their art is already on the secondary market in the US and Europe. Adrian Ghenie was listed by artnet.com among the top 50 contemporary artists in terms of price growth.

The Paintbrush Factory of Cluj is already a well-known cultural space and has become a symbol of transition; it now hosts six galleries, offices for various artistic projects as well as numerous artist spaces. It all started as a project of the non-profit gallery Sabot, to which Gallery Plan B, looking for a new space at the time, became associated. In 2009, they decided together to move to a recently decommissioned industrial space that could be adapted to the needs of contemporary art. Gallery Plan B had started as a project of a few artists whose names are now internationally famous and who decided after a first and rather unsuccessful confrontation with the West to look for an alternative to operate independently from administrative interference and start by opening an independent space. In time, especially after the Paintbrush Factory became the host space for other galleries, it became much more than that, namely a brand-space for the new Romanian artistic matrix. The events hosted in recent years are often with international resonance, known not only in Romania, and often involve prestigious galleries or institutions from all over the world.

Contemporary Romanian artists, and especially the ones from Cluj, are now the focus of attention. In recent years, there have been a series of exhibitions in important private galleries and museums, and their auction prices are on an upward trend. A few names are nowadays well known to the American art public: Adrian Ghenie, exhibited by Haunch of Venison, David Nolan Gallery NYC and Pace Gallery, Marius Bercea, exhibited at David Nolan Gallery, Dan Perjovschi, with numerous exhibitions at Lombard Fried. Other exhibitions took place in
museums, such as Dumitru Gorzo’s at the New Jersey Museum of Contemporary Art, Adrian Ghenie at the Denver Museum of Contemporary Art, or the exhibition *Six Lines of Flight: Shifting Geographies in Contemporary Art* at the San Francisco MoMA, which featured Adrian Ghenie, Victor Man, and Ciprian Mureșan. Dan Perjovschi created an installation in the Donald B. and Catherine C. Marron Atrium on the second floor of the new building of the New York Museum of Modern Art.

Is there an explanation for this extraordinary success of Romanian contemporary art, and especially of the Cluj School of artists? Could it be that the market is self-regulating, finding new material at various intervals, and will forget these artists rapidly when something more interesting surfaces? It appears rather as a fortuitous convergence of a series of factors, one of them being the timely appearance of an independent, flexible system of galleries, non-profits and cultural publications which function non-preferentially and without a political clientele, with cultural management programs that generate results. The artists and the future artistic managers traveled, learnt what was to learn and returned determined to apply what they thought could function in Romania, with the shoestring budgets and minimal means available. The emergence of this vital system of support coincided with the real integration of Romania in the system of cultural globalization which allowed artists from this geographic area to export an object, not only an idea, and provided the opportunity to be discovered by the ones who matter in the relatively opaque and not too generous world of art and top art collectors. There were attempts at cultural sponsorships from private individuals; even though they were considered controversial and seen as promotional market instruments operating for purely commercial reasons, they can be events which strengthen the trust in certain artists and reinforce a cultural model. In 2006, Espace Culturel Louis Vuitton hosted an exhibition entitled *Scènes Roumaines*, defined in the press release as an area in which “hyper-realism converges with the oneiric” and featuring artists Ioana Bătrânu, Dan Beudean, Mihuț Boșcu Kafchin, Geta Brătescu, Simon Cantemir Hauși, Oana Fărcaș, Adrian Ghenie, Ion Grigorescu, Ciprian Mureșan, Sergiu Toma, Mircea Suciu, Șerban Savu, and Bogdan Vlăduță. In time, support from auction houses also became manifest. The support started on a small scale and became manifest in 2008 by means of an exhibition organized at Espace Tajan during *FIAC* Paris by Rodica Seward. The Romanian-born owner of Tajan auction house is an active collector who discovered Romanian contemporary artists at the Armory Fair in New York City and has been a constant supporter since then, and the results became manifest internationally. Another interesting exhibition that offered Romanian artists European exposure was at Arken Museum, Copenhagen, May 2013: *HOTSPOT CLUJ: New Romanian Art* (Marius
Bercea, Răzvan Botiş, Radu Cioca, Radu Comşa, Adrian Ghenie, Dan Măciucă, Ciprian Mureşan, Cristi Pogăcean, Șerban Savu) which discussed the transition from the communist system to the new society by means of painting, sculpture, performance art, video and drawing.

It all coincided with the preference of the collector and curatorial world in this exact historical moment for the symbolic figurative, which is the trademark of contemporary Romanian artists. The success of the visual artists became manifest in the same period when Romanian filmmakers were awarded important international prizes for films tackling the same issues of everyday life. It is a story of daily occurrences that present a transitional imaginary, an existential crisis, which is at the point of being crushed by History. Just like Romanian cinematography has appropriated these experiences and imbued them with universal relevance, visual art succeeded in penetrating the superficial layer of the communist experience and plugged into the same stream of ideas. The symbolic figuration of these artists feeds from specific experiences of the Ceauşescu years, which were formative. There are other influences in the background, since after 1989 the post-communist landscape and the results of the rapid implementation of capitalist principles had sometimes devastating consequences for the cultural paradigm. The underlying feeling of frustration, of movement which is too slow or takes place in a closed circle, in a universe outside of time, which rarely communicates with the exterior, with the world, was converted into a sharp need to restructure the opaque areas. Once that restructuring was discovered, it became apparent what all the multi-disciplinary artists had in common: the need to understand the history and the Romanian present, not only by means of clichés, but rather by deconstructing them in order to reconstruct them in a personal manner which has gained universal value. By adapting these very intimate elements, Romanian contemporary art has developed a personal semiotics, images and motifs that integrate the Romanian tradition with the imagery of global contemporary art, which become recognizable and managed to reconfigure the anxiety of entering a new system and adapting to it in a visual language that is unmistakable.

How does the Intact Cultural Foundation fit in this context? It is to a certain extent the embodiment of every artist’s dream to exist and exhibit in a space run and managed by another artist, and which can exist without commercial interference. Intact Cultural Foundation, under whose supervision Spaţiu Intact (translated in English as “Intact Space”, www.spatiuin-tact.ro) is functioning, was founded in 2000. It started as a promotional entity focused on performing and visual arts, and it organized events in the fields of theater, music and visual art. Historically speaking, this was a fundamentally ex-
ploratory period, since cultural operators 10 years after 1989 were still in the process of defining the ground rules, exploring the options and literally attempting to create a new cultural matrix to allow them to function successfully as the new social system was shaping itself.

Since the system was at a point where major readjustments were needed but not necessarily in sight, funding was difficult to obtain for private cultural agents and operators. It was a time when Romania was not yet a member of the EU, so EU funding was a distant dream, and when the local structure had no plan or set place for cultural management, which was regarded as a luxury. At the same time, cultural management was lacking and the impact of its absence was starting to be felt on the local market. The educational system was in turmoil (and it still is) so any type of educational initiative was felt either as a threat by the system or as something that would not survive in the long run, which eliminated the incentive for investment. The foundation decided to focus initially on the musical scene and coordinated a series of successful exchanges in the Romanian and European cultural space, with fewer visual arts projects.

In the historical context then came the landmark moment when a group of artists and associations decided to start adapting the dilapidated industrial space of the Paintbrush Factory into a space for all the branches of contemporary art, since it was clear the establishment was not going to participate in the change. It was an ad-hoc action with a long term impact for the cultural scene of Cluj and ultimately, the world. As discussed in the first part of this essay, one of the first hurdles was
the observation that communication and collaboration between the existing institutions, namely the University of Art, the Union of Plastic Artists and the Ministry of Culture, was scarce and lacking focus, perspective or sometimes even the will to change. A space that soon became a destination for art promoters, gallerists and curators from abroad was not locally considered important enough to attract funding. It is an established fact that the cultural scene can change the face of a city or a country, but it is also a fact that it requires long term planning, commitment and initiative from the persons on the ground, who understand the logistic challenges. And it also requires patience, since it may sometimes take years for the results to be noticed.

What distinguishes the Intact Cultural Foundation and its off-shoot at the Paintbrush Factory, Spațiu Intact, is that it is first and foremost an artist-run space, and its founder, Florin Ștefan, is an artist himself, with an educational experience which provides it with a different dynamic. The purpose of the foundation when it moved into its new space was mainly to fill a niche, namely, to offer artist residencies to encourage independence and creativity in young artists who were in dire need of support early in their career. The foundation started by providing modest subsidies and financing, plus other opportunities, to members of the generation of young artists. But it was soon clear that the market required

You, Me and Every Thing in Between, curator Simona Nastac, Spațiu Intact, 2015
more than that, so when the opportunity to expand became a reality, it became obvious that while gathering funding according to a non-profit model the foundation could also promote artists through means available to a commercial entity that could successfully be adapted to the non-profit model, so the decision was made to open an exhibition space.

Overall, the Intact Cultural Foundation and its off-shoot, Spaţiu Intact, represent in fact a highly successful hybrid entity that seems to function at first glance as a commercial gallery, with an exhibition space that looks apparently no different from the “white cube” everyone is familiar with, but the gallery interface is in fact an umbrella which covers a much larger range of non-profit cultural management activities. Carefully curated exhibitions may introduce the work of an unknown but remarkable artist from Cluj to curators of international renown or artists in the top tier looking for a worthy mentee. The educational structure was always underlying, and the opportunity to extend the space in order to offer more residencies was invaluable. From the immediate objectives such as offering studio space, materials and access to current information to artists, the focus shifted to carefully organized events and meetings with curators, gallerists and collectors visiting the vibrant space which is the Paintbrush
Factory, to conferences and workshops that would spread the word about the available opportunities.

It is a type of opportunity a regular commercial gallery may not be in the position to offer because it does not benefit from the necessary infrastructure and especially because survival can be dependent on sales. Since the collector audience is still small in Romania and most collectors are, unfortunately, prestige collectors who prefer to acquire art by artists that are already known, or who already have a following and a gallery abroad, the chance of the very young artists who may represent Romanian contemporary art in the future may very well be lost before it even manifests itself, especially since their commercial potential is not obvious because they never had the much needed promotion. In fact, Spațiu Intact does what a commercial gallery with a structured curatorial policy does, while not having to submit to the whims and shifts of the market as a commercial gallery would: it promotes artists it believes in and who bring something new, and it does so with the help of sponsors and other artists who are already established and in the position to help others and who believe in the mission outlined by its founder. It is a unique entity in the context of the Romanian art market, where galleries that have been around for over a decade are still considered new developments, but at the same time it represents the realistic version of understanding cultural policy on the ground.

Such cultural policies may very well represent the future, since they have a series of elements that are valuable and can function in the context of a weaker art market. A few defining features can be emphasized: such entities, if devoted to the promotion of contemporary art in a specific geographic region and not only to exploiting and safeguarding, for example, the patrimony of one artist, can easily attract funding by means of collaborative projects with well-known entities in order to promote the development of a whole new generation. A cultural foundation is in the position to generate income through exhibitions that are viable and curatorially challenging and which can attract sponsorships while also reflecting a realistic understanding of a very specific market with its issues and advantages and tapping into resources a commercial entity cannot access. And, last but not least, they can incorporate the educational component and offer direct access to information and contacts that would otherwise be inaccessible, even in the age of an apparently total transparency. Its success represents a validation of its capability to function as a hybrid entity, a dynamic interface that serves both collectors and artists, and its legacy, besides its present accomplishments, may very well be the proof that not all solutions exist already and there is still room for innovation in the existing cultural paradigm.
Abstract
A New Approach to Arts Management
in the Context of the Romanian Contemporary Art Scene

After the fall of the communist regime, Romania found itself integrated in the complex European cultural space but faced the almost total absence of a general infrastructure, which would have allowed the successful promotion of both existing values and the values that were bound to appear. The world of art had to find a new voice and a new matrix to allow the incorporation of its past and to produce new values during the process. The present paper looks at the manner in which the Romanian artistic community responded to these challenges, from the new practices of art galleries or auction houses, through the recourse to social media, to artist-run spaces and especially the experience of the Spațiu Intact project.

Keywords
arts management, art galleries, art collectors, auction houses, social media, artist-run spaces, Romanian contemporary arts
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Introduction

Although the notion of artistic research is a relatively new one, entering the academic circuit, as an autonomous domain of research, only 10–15 years ago, it already enjoys a large and consistent debate in the international academic communities. Artistic research consists, in the first place, of the research of the art practice, defining itself in this respect as a process oriented and founded on practice, assimilated into the vast entity called “contemporary culture.” The art practice is an open and inclusive one, one that avoids raising borders between the different means and methods of knowledge production. As such, the whole matter of artistic research clearly delimits itself from scientific research, as well as from other disciplines dealing with art—such as art history, sociology or the philosophy of art. Artistic research is concerned, instead, with the self-reflective and self-critical processes of the person which determines and takes part in the production of significations in contemporary art, and with the instruments specific to it.
In order to be assimilated to the practice of artistic research, a project needs to begin with a question, with a problem or a doubt that it is able to express, and to try to offer an answer to it or to generate new questions through the creative process and/or the final product it comes to—the work of art. This way, the whole effort of the project is centered on the artwork, as the priority and goal of the entire process. The material of the research is given by the artistic process and by the experience of this process, with a focus on the ways in which this process is going to be transmitted and “packed” into the artwork. The methods of research and presentation, and the instruments used to communicate, are chosen and adapted with respect to the necessities and constraints of each particular case, keeping a special interest in the interpretative quality of the research. In the framework of this process, information is thought of as “raw material,” meaningless in itself, a material on which the research and the artistic process are built: the conceptualized information (the theorization of phenomena) transforms the matter it deals with into a question that needs a material perception—a form, an object—which, in turn, creates new questions. It is a reflective process describing a circle of interpretation between the conceptual and the material elements of the research, or, in other words, not studying something, but studying with something, in a continuous reciprocity.\(^3\)

The Artistic Research Project *Unfinished Measurements*: Presentation of the Map of Ideas and Processes

The theoretical matter from which this project began refers to the major influence played by numbers within the contemporary world: counting, accounting, measuring, numbering, are all of them instruments for statistics which, in turn, gathers all its results in databases that operate as referential (valorization) systems according to which we define our present and the reality of the world. All these referential systems based on numbers, on numerical values, are integrated into the collective perception as holders of an impartial and incontestable truth of the world. They are collectively assimilated as constitutive elements of the common reality and not just as simple conventions by means of which we’re trying to standardize our perception and communication with regard to some segments or aspects of that reality. Within this artistic research I wanted to explore, with the instruments of visual arts, the possibilities of working with these conventions and with the main coordinates of their standardized perceptions and, in these frames, to found ways of communicating a questioning of their pretended impartiality, of their “degree” of truth.
The subject itself is nothing new, as it has already benefited from several remarkable approaches within the visual arts. One of the most recent, ample and renowned of them is the project *The Most Wanted and the Least Wanted Paintings* of the Russian artists Vitaly Komar and Alex Melamid. They worked with the instruments of statistics, seeking to obtain an image on what the contemporary art would look like if it were to follow the taste of the people. Even if the aims of their project are completely different from mine, the way they’re referring to numbers is in perfect consensus with the way I intended to work with them in the beginning of this project:

*In a way it was a traditional idea, because a faith in numbers is fundamental to people, starting with Plato’s idea of a world which is based on numbers. In ancient Greece, when sculptors wanted to create an ideal human body, they measured the most beautiful men and women and then made an average measurement, and that’s how they described the ideal of beauty and how the most beautiful sculpture was created. In a way, this is the same thing; in principle, it’s nothing new. It’s interesting: we believe in numbers, and numbers never lie. Numbers are innocent. It’s absolutely true data. It doesn’t say anything about personalities, but it says some-

![Miklos Onucsan, Unfinished Measurements II, detail (2014), engraved stone, exhibition view. Credits: the artist and Plan B Gallery.](image-url)
thing more about ideals, and about how this world functions. That’s really the truth, as much as we can get to the truth. Truth is a number.5

Numbers are the expression of a system of conventions invented by humans to help them orient within nature and their world, and systemize what they understood from them. Languages are also systems of conventions—from the verbal and digital languages, to those of music or the visual arts. In time, though, some of these systems of conventions came to be not just simple instruments filtrating the surrounding reality, but became themselves reality. Usually, we disregard the fact that “measurement,” for example, in the terms of information theory, is just a set of observations that reduce uncertainty,6 and we tend to perceive everything that is measured and expressed in numbers as the most certain feature of the image of reality.

What I intended in the course of this project was to express these thoughts by means of several systems of conventions—numbers, statistics, verbal language, visual language—in order to test the possibility of communicating the fragility of these certainties, and to outline different points of view in regard to them.

The first practical stage of the project was assigned to measurement and its communication. What I needed for this stage was a set of natural, not man-made “samples,” and a system of measurements at hand, easy to find, and which uses accessible measurement instruments. Within these confines, I opted to work with river stones—objects with irregular shapes and variable dimensions that I gathered from different places. Considering the irregularity of the stones, they weren’t fit to be measured in centimeters, and the most effective way to measure them was weighing. I weighed each of the stones separately, I took notes of their weight individually and within decimal points, thus achieving the result of applying the first conventional system upon the real object—that of measuring. Once the measurement was done for every one of the stones, its result became a feature of each of them: the measurement came to define the stone; accord-
ing to our perception of numbers it named its “identity,” its truth. The objects I was working with were not anonymous or insignificant any more, but turned into value-bearing stones, into stones possessing a truth suited to be expressed in numbers.

One of the most ancient and practiced ways in which humans recorded their values throughout their history was writing, at its very beginning in the form of engraved writing. Today the only values that are recorded by engraving are only those considered to be general for a society, a nation, or an era. Following this reasoning, I considered it justified to engrave on each river stone its measured weight, to note in its own material that value which defines it according to our system of conventions, which makes it a “known reality.” But the process stumbled, at this point, on a problem: by engraving into the stone the number of its weight, an amount of material is lost with the engraving and the weight becomes implicitly smaller. Immediately after one “labels” the named thing with its value, one loses the accuracy of that value. (In certain respects, this was a different illustration of the famous quote from Niels Bohr according to which the instrument you choose for a measurement will always influence that which you’re trying to measure.) As such, the only correct proposition that I was allowed to engrave had to be in the past tense: “It was 2,345 kg” was the most accurate numerical truth I could write down. If I were to find out what the present value of the stone was, this would have meant to weigh it again, and after that to engrave it again, and to get caught in a process that, followed up to its end, would finally destroy the object of investigation. But this stage of the project has led to a result relevant for the course of my research and I kept that sample of the nine engraved stones I worked with in this form, with their sentences in the past tense, and I exhibited them as an installation under the title *Unfinished Measurements I*.

At this point in the investigation, I searched for a way to take the idea forward or in a different direction. First of all, I considered the expansion of the idea—expansion in a geographical sense—imagining a systematization of this type applied to a whole geographical area: to measure all the natural stones, small or huge, and to engrave them with what their weight used to be. I imagined a project of a hyper-dimensioned installation aiming to provide some statistical data on the variations of stones and their weight in different areas, an evaluation supposed to remain embedded in the natural landscape of that area as a collection of precise data of a known reality. Not having the possibility to build an installation at such a scale, I had to find other ways to continue the research. The expansion of the first stage of the process could mean not just the increase in the number of stones to work with, but also choosing to work with a single stone of larger dimensions. If the same process is to be applied to a much big-
ger stone, its “labeling” has to grow proportionally with the dimensions of the stone, and, as such, the quantity of the material (dust) carved out of the stone through engraving is a significant one. I stopped upon this possible resultant of the process: that quantity of dust carved out from the stone is precisely the reason why it was possible to engrave an accurate statement about the weight of that stone only in the past tense. That dusty material had, in this sense, an implicit temporal dimension: it represented the mathematical difference between the truth of the past time and the truth of the present time. Following these thoughts, I engraved a stone of 859,950 kg, I carefully gathered all the dust carved out of it during engraving and I used it to fill an hourglass—an instrument belonging to one of the conventional systems of time measurement. This way, the weight missing from the stone on account of the engraving became time, and the material/matter was transferred to a different system of measurement: it is no longer characterized by weighting, but it measures minutes. The hourglass filled with the dust carved out of the letters and numbers engraved on the stone measures 3 minutes and 4 seconds. If I were to apply this process to several large stones, then every single stone I would engrave with the numbers of its weight would result in a different interval of time measured by its own hourglass. Through this process, I would be able to obtain a collection of matter systematized according to its material value (expressed in weight) and according to time: an archive. This is the installation titled *Unfinished Measurements II (Towards an Archive)*, where the archive is understood in its broad outlines, as a place where things are saved, gathered, indexed, and buried, but also as a place where things gain new meanings.

By working with the truths of numbers upon matter, with language, with writing and time, within the first two stages of the process I came to the idea of the archive—a particularly complex notion that bears multiple potential implications within any historical moment of any society. The archive holds the accumulation of the remnants of the past from which histories are discerned and instituted—histories rather than history, in the plural and in a variety of versions, depending on the socio-political needs for legitimizing each present moment that accesses them. Remaining at these issues, I sought to continue my series of “measurements” and to direct it towards history and towards finding a visual way of questioning the multiple re-writings and re-uses of it. History manifests itself visually in the public space by means of monuments—a wide range of forms of commemoration ranging from the figurative statuary to the simpler memorial plaques having various records engraved on them. I decided to work with this latter form of commemoration, being a quite common one and easily at hand. The problem I wanted to answer was how many times can one engrave, erase, and re-engrave a marble plaque of medium dimensions and having the
standard thickness of the memorial plaques usually exhibited in public spaces. I was going to engrave a text on such a plaque and then erase it thoroughly by polishing, preparing the surface to be inscribed again, and continue with this succession of actions until the plaque became so thin as to be impossible to engrave it again without perforating it. The whole succession of engravings and erasures had to be documented, in order to create a testimonial of the process. I considered photography to be better suited for such a task than filming: photography is less spectacular, it seems more “credible” as an objective witness, and it is easier to materialize into an image, being printable. What I needed was a succession of stills following all the stages of the process and testifying to it. As to the text to be engraved, it had to meet some criteria: to be able to follow closely the numbering of the plaque’s engravings and, at the same time, not to make any explicit comments on the theoretical phenomenon I aimed to investigate—i.e. the endurance of the material used for commemorations at the fluctuating uses of history. The textual formulation I found most adapted to these criteria was: “The first text has been engraved,” followed, after re-polishing the plaque, by “The second text has been engraved,” and so on. Once the process started, there were possible eight successive engravings and erasures of the marble plaque, un-
til the plaque came to be 2.5 mm thick, from an initial thickness of 2.5 cm. Not a single new engraving was possible without destroying the plaque, so the process stopped at this point. The work Unfinished Measurements III is exhibited with its two components: the commemorative marble plaque, thinned by excessive use, and the photos that document, step by step, all the stages of the research process the plaque was subjected to.

The series Unfinished Measurements materialized, until now, in these three stages of investigation, each of them finalized with a form of visual communication, offering some answers to the theoretical problem identified in the beginning of the research, but at the same time remaining open towards new questions and new possible points of view on this problem. In the economy of my artistic practice, the series of the Unfinished Measurements projects remains open, and I am working on expanding and diversifying it in the future.

(Translated by Madalina Brașoveanu)

Notes

1. The autonomous domain of artistic research has special departments in some renowned universities: e.g. University of Amsterdam (Master Program of Artistic Research), University of California Berkeley (Center of Artistic Research), ELIA or the European League of Art Institutes (editor of several publications on artistic research), and the Art Academy in Helsinki (a department and a doctoral program of artistic research since 1997).

2. For a consistent debate on the theoretical problems linked to this new domain of research, as well as on its methodological specificities, see: Mika Hannula, Juha Suoranta, and Tere Vadén, Artistic Research. Theories, Methods and Practices (Gothenburg: University of Gothenburg/Art Monitor, 2005); Mick Wilson and Schelte van Ruiten, eds., SHARE: Handbook for Artistic Research Education (Amsterdam–Dublin–Gothenburg, European League of Institutes of Arts, 2013); Henk Borgdorff, The Debate on Research in the Arts (Sensuous Knowledge 2., Bergen National Academy of the Arts, 2006); Annette W. Balkema and Henk Slager, eds., Artistic Research (Amsterdam: Lier en Boog, Series of Philosophy of Art and Art Theory, vol. 18, 2004).

3. See esp. Hannula et al.


5. Ibid.

6. Measurement is defined as “A set of observations that reduce uncertainty where the result is expressed as a quantity.” See Douglas Hubbard, How to Measure Anything (New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons, 2007), 21.
Abstract


This article presents a detailed “map” of the ideas, the questioning, and the ongoing processes of an artistic research project (*Unfinished Measurements I, II, and III*) I engaged in recently. Starting from the theoretical problematization of the continuous and vivid faith that people in general have in numbers, I’ve searched for ways to question this faith and its implications with the means of research, expression, and communication specific to the visual arts. For now, the results of this artistic research project are materialized in three different works, exhibited as parts of the series *Unfinished Measurements*.

Keywords

artistic research, visual arts, numbers, statistics, history, truth, archive, installation
Adrian Ghenie : le travail de la figure

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Parmi les artistes roumains contemporains, Adrian Ghenie est peut-être celui qui invite le plus, de façon constante, insistant, provocante, à poser cette question urgente et brûlante : comment pense l’image ? Que fait-elle de l’histoire ? De l’histoire de l’art et de la grande histoire, de l’histoire du savoir et de l’histoire personnelle, car il joue avec toutes ces histoires à la fois.1

Il m’a semblé alors, si je voulais formuler une réponse à cette question, qu’il fallait parcourir le chemin à l’envers, partir non pas de ce qui est représenté dans les tableaux d’Adrian Ghenie – un homme, un visage, et plus généralement, une figure humaine défigurée –, mais de ce qui se présente de face dans ses tableaux, c’est-à-dire la matière même de la peinture, la matière-peinture, la « texture »2, comme il dit dans un entretien avec Luiza Vasiliu. C’est bien ce regard sensible plutôt à la présence qu’à la représentation qui m’a permis d’observer par la suite que la défiguration de la figure humaine, thème et technique

Cette recherche a été soutenue par une subvention de l’Autorité Nationale Roumaine pour la Recherche Scientifique et de l’Innovation, CNCS-UEFISCDI, numéro de projet PN-II-RU-TE-2014-4-0787.
récurrentes chez Ghenie, pousse le discours critique à réévaluer les catégories et les concepts dont il se sert habituellement pour approcher, classer, ordonner, inscrire dans une certaine histoire, les œuvres et les artistes. Parmi ces catégories et concepts, la figure, avec ses variations sémantiques (le figuratif, le figural, la figurabilité), m’intéresse ici tout particulièrement puisque c’est autour de ce mot-catégorie-concept que tourne son travail.

C’est ainsi que l’appartenance d’Adrian Ghenie à ce que les historiens de l’art appellent « l’art figuratif » devient problématique : son travail de peintre ne cesse de brouiller et de déconstruire une telle catégorie. Dans le même entretien avec Luiza Vasiliu, il fait d’ailleurs remarquer à quel point la logique oppositive figuratif-abstrait ne va pas de soi pour lui, et à quel point il se préoccupe de faire de la peinture figurative avec les moyens mêmes de l’art abstrait. Si le figuratif est le travail par excellence de la ressemblance – relation fondamentale pour comprendre aussi bien l’existence et la pensée humaines que l’histoire de l’art et, plus généralement, tout ensemble figuratif –, il met alors en danger la relation même de ressemblance. C’est bien cette relation de ressemblance que le travail d’artiste d’Adrian Ghenie cherche à mettre en question afin de tester les limites de la représentation. Il ne faut surtout pas comprendre par là qu’il rompt définitivement avec la ressemblance, loin de là. Au contraire, il ne cesse d’explorer le semblable pour passer, de manière imprévisible et rapide, au dissemblable, à ce que j’appellerai dans le sillage de Georges Didi-Huberman une « ressemblance informe ». La forme s’engage chez Adrian Ghenie dans un processus de déformation, il défait – « déconstruit », dit-il dans l’entretien avec Luiza Vasiliu cité plus haut – la représentation de la figure humaine, et avec les procédés qu’il choisit pour défigurer la figure se lance dans un ample travail de démontage figuratif de l’imaginaire collectif. Souvent, ses peintures sont des formes visuelles où il met ensemble des figures qui s’opposent pour violenter le regard et provoquer la pensée à réfléchir sur la dialectique qui s’installe dès lors entre ce qui se ressemble et ce qui diffère. Il suffit d’évoquer en ce sens la manière dont il fait intervenir dans les séries d’autoportraits et de portraits qu’il expose depuis les années 2000 dans le monde entier des figures historiques telles que Marcel Duchamp ou Charles Darwin, Vincent van Gogh ou Lénine pour produire de la ressemblance et d’attirer ainsi l’attention sur sa disproportion et sa disparition, et non seulement pour interroger l’histoire avec les moyens d’un art devenu lui-même historique. Darwin’s Room, par exemple, l’exposition qui a représenté la Roumanie à la Biennale de Venise en 2015, est une façon de mettre en question les repères que nous prenons afin de mieux comprendre notre propre histoire mais aussi, et peut-être surtout, de défaire nos habitudes de pensée, les formes de notre savoir et de notre culture. Les portraits de Darwin ou les autoportraits du peintre en tant que Darwin, à travers lesquels l’artiste plonge dans l’histoire du XXe siècle pour nous la rendre comme un immense laboratoire de l’évolution
humaine, s’inscrivent dans ce travail de déconstruction de longue haleine qui cherche à problématiser jusqu’à rendre critique la représentation des grandes figures de notre modernité, ainsi que la façon dont elles se sont inscrites dans l’imaginaire culturel. Il s’intéresse alors à l’art figuratif non pas dans son opposition à l’art abstrait mais à partir de celui-ci, afin de mieux rendre compte des paradoxes, pour ainsi dire constitutifs, de l’art figuratif et de montrer, avec les moyens de la peinture moderne, les tensions qui surgissent entre les différentes temporalités de l’histoire et de l’image. La figure humaine défigurée dirait alors pour lui, la présence avant la représentation, la sensation avant la signification, la force avant la forme. Elle dirait encore la puissance figurale de l’image avant tout pouvoir représentatif de l’image, et ce changement de perspective renvoie à quelque chose qui émerge dans l’image : le travail même de dé-formation ou de dé-figuration des formes convenues, qui se manifeste, surgit dans l’excès, le débordement, le déplacement de celles-ci.

Dans l’ensemble des peintures exposées à la Biennale de Venise, deux œuvres représentent Darwin en compagnie d’un satyre. On ne sait pas pour quelle raison précisément ces deux figures tiennent ensemble, si c’est pour « dire » que le satyre, mi-homme mi-animal, ne trouve pas de place dans le schéma évolutif du monde tel qu’il a été envisagé par la théorie de Darwin, si c’est pour laisser voir les tensions qui surgissent entre les différentes temporalités de l’histoire et de l’image ou autres. D’une image à l’autre, de l’étude au tableau, ce qui m’intéresse à observer ici, c’est précisément le travail de la figure chez Ghenie. Je dis « travail de la figure » puisque ce dont il est question ici est moins une figure « figurée », figure fixée pour ainsi dire en objet représentationnel, et qui renvoie habituellement à la forme, à l’aspect, à l’eidos, qu’une figure « figurante », figure en tension, en mouvement, en acte, « en train de se faire, en train d’apparaître. En train de “se présenter”, et non pas en train de “représenter” » dirigent Didi-Huberman. Bref, une figure qui montrerait dès lors le processus même de figuration.

Au passage de l’étude au tableau on assiste à une sorte de mise en échec de tout geste figuratif. La défiguration, propre au travail d’Adrian Ghenie, intervient ici moins au niveau thématique de l’œuvre – bien que celle-ci soit une évidence du tableau – qu’au niveau technique, de la pratique artistique. Elle est un acte de création, une surface que l’artiste explore et reconstitue à l’infini par des modalités des plus variées : fragmentation, dislocation, dissolution, effacement des traits distinctifs du visage, disparition de l’expressivité du visage, déformations de toutes sortes allant du pathétique au monstrueux, qui me font parler ici de l’événement figural du visible, de la « prise en compte de la figurabilité » (Rücksicht auf Darstellbarkeit), avec une formule que j’emprunte à Freud qui désigne par là une des quatre opérations de l’élaboration de l’image de rêve, et que j’évoque ici tout en pensant à la fécondité qu’elle a connue auprès des historiens de l’art et des philosophes de l’image, de Jean-François Lyotard et
Louis Marin à Georges Didi-Huberman et Bertrand Prévost, par exemple. Tout l’intérêt porté à la figurabilité freudienne consisterait ici au fait de revenir à un questionnement de l’image qui ne présupposerait pas encore la « figure figurée », mais seulement la « figure figurante », à savoir le processus, le chemin, la question en acte, faite couleurs, faite volumes : la question encore ouverte de savoir ce qui pourrait bien, dans telle surface peinte ou dans tel repli de la pierre, devenir visible : autrement dit, elle consisterait à comprendre comment pense l’image, d’une part, mais aussi comment on pense avec des images, de l’autre.

Brisant le concept classique de représentation, la figurabilité freudienne met en crise toute pensée figurative de l’image, annonçant une « manière décisive et nouvelle de voir ». Par des valeurs intrinsèques telles que la déformation (Entstellung), la condensation, le déplacement, le jeu des ruptures logiques, l’image qui se présente visuellement dans le rêve rompt avec tout travail de représentation pour se faire aussitôt travail de « présentation » : quelque chose est là, et ce qui se présente à nous n’est pas un tableau figuratif, mais une organisation paradoxe qui déroute le sens du discours et la transparence représentative des éléments figurés, c’est-à-dire le processus même de figuration à l’œuvre. Quelque chose est là, et le travail du rêve « présente », laisse voir tout simplement des éléments figuratifs entre lesquels aucune relation de causalité ne peut se décider.

On peut reconnaître dans l’usage de la figure chez Adrian Ghenie un fonctionnement pareil de l’image : la mise ensemble des figures de Darwin et du satyre est une façon de créer et maintenir dans l’acte de création une tension pour ainsi dire originaire – féconde par ailleurs aussi bien pour la pratique artistique que pour la pensée théorique – entre deux mondes, deux temporalités, deux régimes de sens et de vision qui s’opposent (et se complètent) à la façon du couple métaphorique que forment Apollon et de Dionysos : la figure humaine (Darwin) et la figure mythologique (le satyre), le réel (Darwin) et l’imaginaire (le satyre), l’ordre rationnel (Darwin) et le désordre irrationnel (le satyre). Mais il arrive dans l’économie du tableau que ces deux modes de penser et de créer se mêlent l’un à l’autre : les traits (physiques et métaphysiques) qui au départ font la figure du satyre semblent envahir l’espace du tableau et contaminer les autres figures : la figure de Darwin, si l’on reste dans l’ordre représentatif, et plus loin, la figure même de l’œuvre, si l’on reste dans l’ordre intensif et on regarde dans ce tableau non pas les formes, aussi déformées soient-elles, mais la matière même dont est faite la peinture : autrement dit, tout ce qui dans l’économie du tableau résiste à l’ordre et à l’organisation, comme si la peinture était faite de séries successives d’accidents compositionnels altérant les lignes et les formes.

Tout en posant la question urgente et critique de la façon dont on regarde les images, le travail pictural d’Adrian Ghenie permet, en plus, de renouer avec une pensée de la figure d’avant la constitution de l’histoire de l’art comme discipline,
et de récupérer ainsi un sens oublié de ce terme, un sens qui dirait sa force active et performative avant la figurabilité freudienne, et que Georges Didi-Huberman retrouve, par exemple, chez Giovanni Balbi, un théologien dominicain de Gênes, qui au XIIIe siècle, dans un dictionnaire célèbre intitulé *Catholicon*, définit le verbe *figurare* par ses contraires : *praefigurare* et *defigurare*, puisque l’acte de figurer consiste encore, à l’époque, à « transposer ou transporter le sens [de la chose que l’on veut signifier] dans une autre figure »12, et non pas à restituer à la chose son aspect « figuratif ». Figurer, cela revient à dire : opérer tout un travail de déplacement de cet aspect figuratif « pour tenter d’appréhender ou d’approcher, par un détour, le nœud de sa vérité essentielle »13.

Mais cette tentative d’interroger le travail de la figure dans la peinture d’Adrian Ghenie dans ce déplacement-dépassement des disciplines (métapsychologie – théologie – histoire de l’art) sert à observer et à formuler ici ce qui permet, autorise, encourage l’actualisation d’une pensée de la figure entendue comme processus de figuration, que l’homme médiéval mettait à profit dans ses pratiques artistiques, et que l’homme contemporain se doit pour sa part, de réinventer, de récréer, sans pourtant ignorer l’histoire des pratiques artistiques qui devient ici un outil de travail en soi.14 Au-delà de la mise en crise du concept classique de représentation, face aux tableaux que peint Adrian Ghenie nous pouvons nous interroger aussi sur la façon dont nous envisageons l’histoire (l’histoire de l’art, et plus largement toute histoire des idées), par un travail qui se donne comme objet la restitution, et partant, la construction d’une mémoire culturelle de la figure.

Mais ce travail que Adrian Ghenie mène en peintre fait écho à un autre travail mené par Erich Auerbach en philologue et comparatiste dans un petit essai publié en 1938, qui prolonge et approfondit son travail sur Dante, et s’intitule tout simplement *Figura*.15 Partant de l’histoire sémantique du latin *figura*, Auerbach procède ici à l’archéologie de l’invention d’un mot et des différents sens qui l’ont accompagné à travers ses occurrences, depuis sa première occurrence chez Terrence jusqu’à Augustin, pour rendre compte de la complexité et de l’ambivalence originales de la figure, et rejeter par la suite les bases d’une interprétation dite « figurative » de Dante. Mais si je cite ici cet essai, c’est pour réfléchir avec Marc André Bernier, le traducteur français de l’ouvrage, à cette « possibilité offerte à tout projet qui entend soustraire cette notion au régime métaphorique traditionnel de l’écart et de l’ornement ».16 Et effectivement, cette possibilité « offerte à tout projet », on la voit prendre contour à nos jours, aussi bien du côté des pratiques visuelles que des théories de l’image, chez certains artistes-penseurs intéressés à poser les bases d’un art figuratif « affectif » comme c’est le cas d’Adrian Ghenie.
Notes


3. Ibid., p. 89-90. Je cite largement (dans ma traduction) : « En général, je suis classé parmi les artistes figuratifs, à l’opposée donc de l’abstraction pure. Il y a une figuration que l’on peut reconnaître dans mes peintures. Mais les raisons pour lesquelles je suis un peintre figuratif et non pas un peintre abstrait sont plutôt d’ordre affectif et tiennent à la tradition même de la peinture figurative à laquelle je me rapporte. Le moment où une peinture s’approche trop du figuratif et je dois la penser au sens figuratif, peindre les yeux, la bouche, par exemple, c’est précisément le moment où la peinture manque d’intérêt. Toute narration que l’on fait sur la toile manque essentiellement d’intérêt, toute tentative d’imiter avec un pinceau une texture est dès le départ une perte de temps. Par conséquent, je n’ai pas trop mis l’accent sur la peinture figurative du XXe siècle, mais sur la peinture abstraite du XXe siècle. J’ai essayé de faire du figuratif mais avec les outils de la peinture abstraite. Tous lesasperge-ments à la Pollock, certains traits à la Rothko, tous ces monticules que j’ai empruntés à Gorki, la décalcomanie à Max Ernst, tout cela est une boîte à outils qui appartient à la peinture abstraite. Jouer avec eux doit générer quelque part une image figurative. Mais je ne peins pas l’arbre, en essayant d’imiter les ombres, la couleur. »

4. C’est à Georges Didi-Huberman que j’emprunte la formule de « ressemblance informe » qui donne, par ailleurs, le titre de l’ouvrage qu’il consacre à Georges Bataille. Il s’agit, plus précisément, de La ressemblance informe ou le gai savoir visuel selon Georges Bataille [1995], Macula, Paris, 2003. « L’informe, dit-il, qualifiait […] un certain pouvoir qu’ont les formes elles-mêmes de se déformer toujours, de passer subitement du semblable au dissemblable, et plus précisément – car il eût suffi de dire déformation pour nommer tout cela – d’engager la forme humaine dans ce processus si exactement décrit par Bataille à propos du sacrifice aztèque : un processus où la forme s’ouvre, se « dément » et se révèle tout à la fois ; où la forme s’écrase, se voue au lieu dans la plus entière dissemblance avec elle-même ; où la forme s’agglutine, comme le dissemblable viendrait toucher, masquer, envahir le semblable ; et où la forme qu’elle défigure mais qu’elle ne révoque pas –, pour l’envahir monstrueusement (magiquement, dirait l’ethnologue) par contact et par dévoration » (p. 135).

5. Pour une sélection des expositions personnelles et de groupe d’Adrian Ghenie, accueillies à différentes occasions par les musées et les galeries d’art contemporain des grandes villes européennes et américaines, de Cluj (Galerie Plan B, 2006) à Venise (Pavillon roumain à la Biennale de Venise, 2015), voir Şuteu et Pop, Adrian Ghenie, Darwin’s Room, op. cit., p. 119-120.


7. Je remercie Andrei State de m’avoir fait remarquer ceci.


11. Ibid., p. 176.


13. Ibid., p. 213.

14. Il me semble d’importance en ce sens une très fine précision d’Adrian Ghenie quant à la proximité avec Francis Bacon que les historiens de l’art ont remarquée à plusieurs reprises avec plus ou moins de reproche à son égard : il reconnaît d’une part la proximité de leurs techniques artistiques mais la différence qui les sépare est énorme : l’un (Francis Bacon) invente la défiguration de la figure humaine alors que l’autre (Adrian Ghenie) travaille avec cet « outil » auquel il a accès parce que, justement, c’est devenue une « histoire » (cf. l’entretien avec Luiza Vasiliu, op. cit., p. 90).


Abstract:
Adrian Ghenie: The Figure at Work

How do images think? How do they engage with history? Adrian Ghenie’s artworks invite us to reflect on such questions in order to bring forward the fragility (but also the fecundity) of the various discourses and devices by means of which we make sense of the world. This paper aims at answering those questions by exploring the meaning and function of two notions at the very core of art history—namely, the “figure” and “figurative” painting—and by emphasizing their problematic status in Ghenie’s work. Thus, Darwin’s Room, the Romanian artist’s project for the 56th International Art Exhibition in Venice in 2015, will be analyzed here from a figural perspective allowing the author to account for Ghenie’s work on and with the pictorial figure.

Keywords
contemporary art, figural, figurability, figura, defacement, likeness, Adrian Ghenie
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