Literary Postures in Romanian Diaries Published between 1965 and 1989

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Abstract: *Many recent studies on Romanian post-war literature (published before 1989) prove that the literary practice of that period can hardly be isolated from its social context. This dependency is visible and goes both ways, with literature taking part in the process of studying the sociological characteristics of that era. What I intend to do is to analyze the way this complex relationship between literature and its social environment is put into play in two diaries published in communist Romania: Eugen Barbu's and Maria Banuş's. Therefore, using Jérôme Meizoz's theory on literary postures, as well as studies penned by Peter L. Berger, Thomas Luckmann and Dan Lungu, I will emphasize the postures which Barbu and Banuş build through their diaries and I will discuss the way they manage their identity strategies in the society in which they live and publish.*

Keywords: *autobiographical pact, communism, Romania, postures, society, diary, Eugen Barbu, Maria Banuş*

Résumé : *Beaucoup d'études récentes sur la littérature roumaine d'après la guerre montrent que la pratique littéraire de cette période peut être isolée très difficilement du contexte social. Cette dépendance va dans les deux sens, la littérature étant utilisée en tant que document dans l'étude des caractéristiques sociologiques de cette époque-là. Notre intention est d'analyser la façon à l'aide de laquelle cette relation complexe entre la littérature et son environnement social est mise en action dans deux journaux intimes publiés dans la Roumanie communiste : celui de Eugen Barbu et celui de Maria Banuş. Ainsi, en employant la théorie de Jérôme Meizoz sur les postures littéraires, tout comme les études rédigées par Peter L. Berger, Thomas Luckmann et Dan Lungu, nous allons souligner les postures que Barbu et Banuş construisent dans leurs journaux intimes et nous allons discuter la façon utilisée par eux pour gérer leur stratégies identitaires dans la société dans laquelle ils vivent et publient leurs œuvres.*

Mots-clés : *pacte autobiographique, communisme, la Roumanie, postures, société, journal intime, Eugen Barbu, Maria Banuş*

My paper will dwell on the autobiographical genre in communist Romania, focusing on diaries written and published between 1965 and 1989. I will discuss two volumes belonging to Eugen Barbu and Maria Banuş, and by analyzing them I aim to prove that, apart from being a manner of self-expression and a way of reading oneself, in the communist period the diary was also a tool of creating one's "posture," of conveniently

placing oneself inside the literary field. In order to identify these "postures" (the term was advanced by Jérôme Meizoz), I will adopt a sociological perspective which I will adjust to the limits of literary research. Thus, I will consolidate my discourse with theories developed and discussed by Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann. Not only can literature be investigated with sociological tools, but it can become itself a useful sociological instrument in understanding an era. Bearing this in mind, I will also avail myself of a study by Dan Lungu, who used literature to complete a sociological research on Romanian intellectuals from the second half of the 20th century: *Construcţia identităţii într-o societate totalitară* [*Identity Building in a Totalitarian Society*]. Thus, the autobiographical texts will be placed at the crossroads of two perspectives, and the "postures" I intend to discuss will be investigated through the lens of both literary and sociological approaches.

The Autobiographical Genre in Romanian Communism

Before discussing Eugen Barbu's and Maria Banuș's diaries, I will briefly concentrate on the autobiographical texts written and published by Romanian writers between 1945 and 1989 (though, as I will show below, there are few examples before 1965).

The '50s witnessed the growing popularity of a new genre, the feature report, but, apart from that, there was also a visible development of the travel diary, a species which enabled the author to elude the requirements of the newly imposed socialist realism. Prior to 1965, the most important travel diaries were those written by G. Călinescu, which also functioned as powerful propaganda tools: *Kiev, Moscova, Leningrad* [*Kiev, Moscow, Leningrad*] (1949) and *Am fost în China nouă* [*I've been to New China*] (1955). As Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej's regime was replaced by Nicolae Ceaușescu's more relaxed agenda, the authors of the this kind of diaries were no longer forced to focus their attention on communist spaces; they were now able to travel more freely and write about Western countries and cultures—even about the capitalist United States of America.[1] There were some who still traveled to China (Eugen Barbu, *Jurnal în China* [*China Diary*]) and North Korea (Alexandru Andrițoiu, *Prin țara dimineților liniștite* [*Through the Country of Peaceful Mornings*]), but the most visited countries were France (Victor Torynopol, *Franța în patru anotimpuri* [*France in Four Seasons*]; Eugen Simion, *Timpul trăirii, timpul mărturisirii* [*Time for Living, Time for Disclosure*]; Ion Vitner, *Reverii pe malurile Senei* [*Reveries on the Banks of the Seine*]) and Germany (the same Eugen Simion, with *Sfidarea retoricii: Fals jurnal german* [*In Defiance of Rhetoric: German Pseudo-Diary*]). Other destinations chosen by Romanian writers are Spain, Portugal and Italy. Some of the most notable intellectuals who go there are: Adrian Marino (*Ole, España!*), Stelian Țurlea (*La nord și la sud de Tejo* [*North and South of the Tagus*]), A.E. Baconsky (*Remember: Fals jurnal de călătorie* [*Remember, False Travel Journal*]). The American continents are also eligible: Mexico is described in Octavian Paler's diary, *Caminante: Jurnal și contrajurnal mexican* [*Caminante: Mexican Diary and Counter-Diary*], whereas the USA are presented in Romulus Rusan's *America ogarului cenușiu* [*America of the Greyhound*] and in Ioan Grigorescu's *Spectacolul lumii* [*The Spectacle of the World*].

Travel diaries, however, do not hold monopoly over the field of autobiographical writings; many writers publish essayistic diaries or put down their reading impressions or their reflections on certain political aspects (including the communist regime and its ideology—usually discussed in an overtly appreciative tone). Some representatives of this species of diaries are Tudor Vianu (*Jurnal* [*Diary*], 1961), Alexandru Ivasiuc (*Pro Domo*, 1974), Florin Mugur (*Profesiunea de scriitor* [*Being a Writer*], 1979), Ion Caraion (*Jurnal* [*Diary*], vol. I, 1980), and Ion Ianoşi (*Opţiuni* [*Choices*], 1989).

Alongside these literary forms which tend to avoid self-expression, there are also "properly autobiographical texts," as Silvian Iosifescu calls them, where the author's voice and personality are somewhat more perceptible, depending on the writer's position in the ideologically controlled literary field. If autobiography *per se* is badly represented (I can only mention Marin Preda's *Viaţa ca o pradă* [*Life as Prey*]—but even so, a classification of autobiographies would need a separate discussion), there are several diaries and memoirs published in Ceauşescu's era. Among the diaries published between 1965 and 1989, I would like to mention Eugen Barbu's *Jurnal* [*Diary*] from 1966, George Ivaşcu's *Jurnal ieşean* [*Jassy Diary*] (1971), Maria Banuş's *Sub camuflaj* [*In Camouflage*] (1978), Aurel Baranga's *Jurnal de atelier* [*A Writer's Diary*] (1978), Tudor Muşatescu's *Pagini de jurnal* [*Diary Pages*] (1984) or Petre Stoica's diary *Viaţa mea la ţară* [*My Life in the Countryside*] (1988). Like these diaries, the memoirs published now cover a larger period, mentioning the pre-war years as well. Among the authors of memoirs, one should list Nicolae Carandino (*De la o zi la alta* [*From One Day to the Next*], 1977), Iorgu Iordan (three volumes of memoirs in 1977), Ion Ianoşi (*Secolul nostru cel de toate zilele* [*Our Daily Century*], 1980), Cella Serghi (*Pe firul de păianjen al memoriei* [*Following the Spider Thread of Memory*], 1977), Virgiliu Monda or Valeriu Cristea. The emphasized aspects vary from one volume to the other: some present the outline of the author's career, others pay more attention to the relationships established among the writers in the literary field and there are some which deal only with a specific period from the author's life.

Re-Socialization Mechanisms

In a study published in 1966, Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann discuss the mechanisms of the social construction of reality and the manner in which man integrates in the process of re-socialization, a process which can be also identified in Romania after the 23rd of August 1944. Making relevant connections with the communist ideology and with communist societies, Berger and Luckmann identify several steps of this construction of reality, which I will use in the following pages.

When dealing with mechanisms of objectifying reality, the two scholars first speak of institutionalization (i.e. the creation of instances of authority superior to the individual, which impose a certain dogma and specific categories). The communist censorship or the Securitate system are examples of this process. Secondly, they talk about legitimation, whose function is "to make objectively available and subjectively plausible the 'first-order' objectivations that have been institutionalized" (Berger and

Luckmann 110). Legitimation is thus illustrated by the case of several Romanian writers who became faithful to the regime by internalizing the rules it imposed and by praising them in their literary creations.

If institutionalization and legitimation are ways in which objective reality is constructed, socialization refers to the subjective pole; it has a primary and a secondary phase. On the one hand, primary socialization refers to an individual's first experience of society and is gained at birth; on the other hand, secondary socialization is based on the division of labor and on the social distribution of knowledge and specific roles—in other words, on how the individual participates in society. From this perspective, communism was a kind of secondary socialization, as it presupposed o new division of labor and knowledge, and a new hierarchy of social roles. Propaganda techniques, rewriting history, erasing inconvenient episodes from the past[2] are all methods of introducing the citizen into a new society, whose rules had to be internalized.

Methods of Managing One's Social Identity

After this quick overview of Berger and Luckmann's theories, I would like to discuss the theoretical frame and results of one of Dan Lungu's research projects, *Construcţia identităţii într-o societate totalitară*. First published in 2003 and reprinted in 2013, this text focuses on the relationship between Romanian writers and the communist regime—on the distribution of roles in the communist era—, with the instruments of sociology. His vision is grounded in Pierre Bourdieu's *Rules of Art* and in studies by B. Lahire, Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, but Dan Lungu is primarily interested in the identity of the writers of communist Romania. After a meaningful analysis of the political, social and cultural background, Lungu identifies three ways of dealing with the communist ideology; writers adopted one of these three patterns of behavior, according to their artistic and ethical principles. One of these identity strategies is accepting the impositions of the regime and placing oneself at the heteronomous pole, governed by the political power. Many writers from this category had their diaries or memoirs published between 1945 and 1965, an interval in which autobiographical writings could not contain anything harmful to the regime. The second category consists of writers who dissimulate their loyalty towards the party, just so that they can obtain different privileges and have access to opportunities which would be unavailable if they expressed their real "dispositions" (inclinations and convictions). Those representatives of the autobiographical genre who list themselves in this category used their diaries to create a comfortable position for themselves in the literary field. The third category is less well represented in the autobiographical writings published under communism, as it includes writers who refused to obey the party and who suffered the consequences of such a decision in prison, exile or internal exile, having no access to literary privileges such as seeing their work published.

Literary Postures

As the writer was considered a "socializing agent" (Lungu 15)[3], the regime's attention was constantly focused on him, forcing him to choose in which of the aforementioned categories he would place himself. Therefore, writers would search for any practical method to balance their disposition with the position they were expected to occupy in the literary field. The autobiographical genre was one of these methods, as diaries and memoirs could serve as instruments to create one's posture. The term is discussed by Jérôme Meizoz in his study *Postures littéraires: Mises en scene modernes de l'auteur* [*Literary Postures: Modern Stagings of the Author*], published in 2007.

Once the literary field has gained its autonomy (Meizoz uses Bourdieu's concepts), the author loses the support of the exterior authority that used to legitimate his practice, and so he is forced to build his own authority, relying solely on his texts; Meizoz uses an idea expressed by Pierre Michou in a 1997 article published in *Magazine littéraire*, where he said that "all writers were impostors, because they were the only ones who could legitimate themselves" (qtd. in Meizoz 11). Thus, Jérôme Meizoz coins the term *posture*, which designates "the complex locutionary and institutional acts through which a voice and a face render themselves recognizable in the literary field" (11). With this concept as a reading tool, the authors' image is safeguarded against the one-dimensional perspective of previous theories and placed instead at the crossroads of linguistic and sociologic investigations; the literary work is no longer seen as a discourse emerging from a hidden self, from "a self-devouring creative capacity, isolated in its ivory tower" (Meizoz 14). Instead, it "depends, to a great extent, on institutional effects" (Meizoz 14). These institutional effects are the social and literary roles writers play in the field. Autobiographical texts become a method of merging both the literary and the social personality of the author in a heteronomous posture, which I will try to highlight in what follows.

Eugen Barbu's Diary

Published in 1966, Eugen Barbu's *Jurnal* contains entries from 1942 to 1965, but the writer observes chronology only for the first decade; from 1952 onwards, he selects the material for his entries with no pre-established order (there are many details about his projects and his travels abroad—especially to China, on which he will publish another diary in 1970). On the one hand, from the 1950s, he starts writing for different literary magazines, so he gains the proper means to sustain his literary and ideological *posture*. On the other hand, his diaries cover a period when he had no public activity, and thus become a useful tool in stressing his precocious communist beliefs. The subsequent fabrication of the diary, revealed by the way in which the author selects and mixes the dates,[4] generated a general mistrust in its authenticity.

If diarists like Aurel Baranga use their diaries published after 1965 to move away from their previous Stalinist commitment, Eugen Barbu starts his cultural career only shortly after Nicolae Ceauşescu's rise to power, so he has no sins to confess and justify

(in Luckmann and Berger's words, he did not need any re-socialization, since he had already successfully passed through a primary socialization process). His behavior is in total harmony with the newly installed government and its rules. In this way, by obeying them right from the beginning, Barbu immediately gets multiple advantages: huge print runs, reprints of his books, important jobs in party-controlled magazines, a visible position in the Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party, the title of corresponding member in the Romanian Academy and that of deputy. In 1945, he is hesitant about enrolling in the communist party: "I'm still not sure if I should become a member of the communist Party or not. Politics really scares me" (Barbu 81). If at the age of 21 he is reluctant towards obtaining an institutionalized proof of his commitment, in his diary he constantly focuses on his childhood and teenage socialist attraction.

One of his arguments is his repeatedly expressed hatred for the bourgeoisie and the practices against which the "new man" was fighting. He hates hierarchy and is an advocate of communist uniformity: "I can't stand people being classified into categories and, what's more, I can't stand injustice" (Barbu 44). Still, at this point he doesn't have a name for this way of seeing society: "I know nothing about communism, but I guess it's way better than this petty life made for the weak" (Barbu 59). This (very well mimicked) unconscious commitment to communism can only enforce his public image and bring him more favors. His socialist sympathies also reflect in his reading preferences: he gladly replaces Chekhov with Maxim Gorky, "maybe because I am more familiar with the world this great vagrant describes" (Barbu 35). This feeling is deepened by the poverty he had to endure in his youth, which he always talks about: "who would look at me when I dress in shabby, patched clothes?" (Barbu 10) and "I've always hated the rich" (Barbu 85). Fighting for the poor people's cause becomes a clear act of fidelity towards to regime: "I think it's rather late for these revolutionary measures, because I can still see around me people handling gold, which means that wealth hasn't been completely redistributed to *my beloved poor people*" (Barbu 187, emphasis added).

Eugen Barbu's relationship with his father is an important element in constructing his posture, because their misunderstandings seem to be rooted in their ideological incompatibilities. While his father (a carpenter working at the Railway Company) dreams of building his own house with his name engraved on it, Barbu despises his desire and allies himself with the neighbors, mocking his father's plans: "You, Barbu, are toiling away at your two houses, but the Bolsheviks will come and take them away from you" (Barbu 8).

Even though he confesses to his lack of interest in any of life's pleasures, devoted as he is to his ideological mission, Barbu can't deny the great lust he feels when he sees the symbols of the former aristocracy defiled by the new political order. With an obvious taste for demystification, Eugen Barbu recounts the episode when "a bunch of base football players washed their feet in the bath in which the King's mistress used to sprawl. I like these days of ours. I myself lay down in Lupescu's bed, dreaming for some time of the inconsistencies of life" (Barbu 266). He writes with equal delight about the downfall of the bourgeoisie, now compelled to sell all its possessions:

> What a pleasure to see simple Romanian carts leaving the Fairs full of sophisticated pieces of furniture, gramophones, cabinet pianos and oak beds. All these expensive goods will certainly be broken or put to bad use by their new owners, but I can see, I can already *see* and feel the revolution […]. For one who followed his dreams for justice, it's all a dream come true. (Barbu 279)

While Eugen Barbu's diary gives little space to honest confessions and intimate details, it is undoubtedly a useful tool for promoting the author's posture. Carefully monitoring what amount of personal information he delivers and offering frequent and precocious displays of commitment to socialist causes, Barbu turns his diary into an instantiation of what Norman Manea calls "fictionalization as deception." In other words, putting together the autobiographical pact, the fictional one his ideological obedience, Barbu constructs himself a posture which ensures him a central position in the ranks of the Romanian intelligentsia after the Second World War.

Maria Banuş's Diary

Published in 1978 and titled *Sub camuflaj*, Maria Banuş's diary is one of the most intimate diaries of the post-war era.[5] On the one hand, it presents the Romanian reality before the advent of communism (the anti-Semitic oppression and the writer's involvement with the outlawed communist party); on the other hand, it records the author's personal experiences, as they happen or at a later date, bringing about the autobiographical pact. Ov.S. Crohmălniceanu speaks about the "cruelty" of these notations, which he considers a proof of "realistic lucidity" (Crohmălniceanu 380). Still, this lucidity is also an instrument Maria Banuş uses strategically in order to create a specific public image,[6] a posture favorable to the regime (the communists were in power when the book was published). Thus, this diary, just like Barbu's, orients its author's identity towards the pragmatic pole (Lungu).

Even though it is not a chronicle of that period and it doesn't aim to teach and guide future generations, as it is mentioned in one of the forewords, *Sub camuflaj* contains several historical details about the years it focuses on. The most salient refer to the Jews' situation under Ion Antonescu's military dictatorship and to the communists' activities at the time the party was outside the law. Besides these, Maria Banuş also keeps an up-to-date report (incomplete, subjective, but still relevant) of the evolution of the war and the changes taking place at the level of international politics.

The passages Maria Banuş chose for publication reflect her re-socialization process, which was not only successful, but also anticipated and explained, so that nobody could cast doubt on her commitment. A telling episode is the one about her attitude towards her Jewishness. Born into a Jewish family, Maria Banuş finds that her communist beliefs are more important for her present life and her posterity than her ethnic origins. She even constructs a complex confession of her unsparing devotion to communism. The first step is denying any Jewish legacy whatsoever: "From the old matrix of Jewish culture, I only kept a certain sensitivity, sharp and shaped by skepticism and humor […]. In the emptiness of my disinterest in religion, I can feel the breeze of the rationalism championed by the

Enlightenment or the gentle wind of the messianic revolutionary spirit" (Banuş 183). The next step is confessing an aversion to Yiddish: "I'm ashamed by the repulsion I feel towards the old language of the Diaspora" (Banuş 184). Later on, she emphasizes the idea in a dramatic tone: "My God, why did you have me born among these brothers?" (Banuş 185). All these lead up to the final step, a passionate confession of the new religion of popular democracy: "I slowly understood that my thirst for something to believe in had merged into my need of sharing my faith with a collectivity, into my desire of being a necessary and useful part of a whole" (Banuş 250).

Just like Eugen Barbu, Maria Banuş arranges her entries so as to express her commitment to the pure communist ideology, untouched by the heresies of one leader or another. Defending the Marxist-Leninist principles can only bring Maria Banuş plenty of advantages in a society governed by Ceauşescu's national-communism. In this context, she speaks about her efforts to acquire funds for assisting imprisoned communists and for sustaining the communist movement. In addition to this, her diary builds the image of her active propaganda for the Bolshevik ideology: she used to distribute flyers and brochures, defying Antonescu's interdictions: "I shouldn't take on this kind of risk when I know that my house is full of propaganda materials and that the slightest gesture can lead to a house search" (Banuş 129). Unaware of the fact that her revolution was an artificial process, since it was fighting against the people she was asking help from (the representatives of the bourgeoisie), against the social class she was part of, Maria Banuş reaches her maximum level of commitment: "I had no father. He died when I was a child. But I have one now. […] My Father holds the Tablets of Law. I am learning them now. *The Manifesto*, *Capital*, *Anti-Dühring*. […] This is my truth" (Banuş 258). With such a deposition, Banuş's privileged position in the postwar Romanian cultural field is secured.

The diary's intimate tone is given by the conflicts described in its pages (especially inner conflicts). Her obsession with Dionisie (pseudonym for Zaharia Stancu), her relationship with her professor Hari, her reaction towards her mother's behavior, her desire to have a baby are all hot spots in Banuş's diary, but one of the most striking sources of fear is her class origin. Although she stood against the class she was born into (the bourgeoisie)— "We shall reject the class we, the greater part of the intellectuals, had the misfortune to be born into and we shall stand on the side of the class which represents the future" (Banuş 255)—, the fear kept coming back: "I'm ashamed of my anxiety. It's because of my education, my formation. In the end, it's bourgeois" (Banuş 204).

"Cruelty," introspection, relevant portraits, details of the postwar era and confessions of socialist commitment—all are elements which enabled Maria Banuş to publish her diary and which make the book attractive for today's reader as well (the proof is in the 2014 publication of the diary in two volumes). Taking part in the Bolshevik revolution right from its dawn in Romania, Maria Banuş obtained institutionalized privileges, as well as the freedom to keep the intimate notations of her diary. In this way, by adding an ideological pact to the autobiographical one and carefully choosing the tonality of her diary entries, she managed to enforce her position inside the politically controlled literary field and to publish a text which maintained its literariness outside the political and sociological context in which it was produced.

Taking into account the reliance of autobiographical literature on the context to which it refers, I applied a sociological approach in analyzing the two diaries. I considered that a concentric arrangement of my instruments of analysis (starting with Berger and Luckamann's theory on the social construction of reality and passing through the methods writers use to negotiate their position in the literary field) is best suited for highlighting the characteristics of the texts I have chosen and the postures embraced by the authors in the public sphere.

NOTES

1 It was a time of improvement for the bilateral relationship between Romania and the USA, during which Ceaușescu welcomed US presidents Nixon and Gerald R. Ford to Bucharest.

2 Since "it is relatively easier to invent things that never happened than to forget those that actually did, the individual may fabricate and insert events wherever they are needed to harmonize the remembered with the reinterpreted past" (Berger and Luckmann 180).

3 My translation. All subsequent translations are mine.

4 He starts writing this diary at the age of eighteen, but, as he himself confesses, there were previous attempts: "I tore to pieces the notebooks I had written two years ago and I burnt them. Youth transforms even the most insignificant facts into big events" (Barbu 5-6).

5 According to Alain Girad's theory, it is the closest to the standard meaning of the concept, as it shows "a […] desire to escape from literature as well as from the study of the external world, so as to attempt to grasp individuality, an individual in his most specific and distinguishing traits" (Girard 102).

6 A comparison with the complete edition of the diary published in 2014 is useful in detecting the voluntary mystifications.

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