

**'ALEXANDRU IOAN CUZA' UNIVERSITY OF IAȘI
THE FACULTY OF LETTERS
DOCTORAL SCHOOL OF PHILOLOGICAL STUDIES**

MONICA LOVINESCU, THE VOICE OF ROMANIAN EXILE

- DOCTORAL THESIS –

(ABSTRACT)

**SCIENTIFIC COORDINATOR,
PROF. UNIV. DR. LĂCRĂMIOARA PETRESCU**

**Ph.D CANDIDATE,
MIHAELA – NICOLETA GRIGORE (Căs. BURLACU)**

IAȘI, 2012

In the paper *Monica Lovinescu, The Voice of Romanian Exile*, we present the writings of the author mentioned in the title and her evolution on the stage of literary anticommunism. It is the reason why we analyze Monica Lovinescu's writings by the form of the discourse she uses: interpretative, memorialistic or fictional. Our analysis is situated on another scale than the widely accepted one, separating Monica Lovinescu's work from Virgil Ierunca's. Contemporary interpreters read them together, but they have distinct styles. Even their role at the 'Free Europe Radio' is different: Virgil Ierunca is taking care of poetry and philosophy, and Monica Lovinescu of prose and critic genre. Using texts from different periods, we emphasize Monica Lovinescu's merit in connecting the initial criticism domain with the issue of the totalitarianism. This is why, in the first chapter, we display the social, political and literary atmosphere during communism and the formation phases of the literary anticommunism in Romania and in exile. Starting from the premise that valuable literature had been written in communism, we compare the condition of the intellectuals forced to respect the terms of a strict regime with the one of the intellectuals free to express politically and artistically. Therefore, we display the context of the totalitarianism instauration and its consequences, the ideological terms with which communism debuts and the main political events that influence literature. We use the information from Monica Lovinescu's writings, being convinced by their truthfulness and objectivity especially because they were also used by The Presidential Committee for Analyzing Romanian Communist Dictatorship in its 'Final Report'. Also, it is necessary a descriptive classification of the main phenomena occurred in communism: workers' and students' riots, dissidence, resistance, emigration, cooptation, conformism, obedience. Monica Lovinescu joins with the dissident writers and together they defy the abusive authority. Being attracted by attitude changes, she follows the methods used in persuasion the people and the intellectuals.

Since hers chronics speaks about the Romanian intellectuals' condition, we synthesized the classes that existed in communism. So, we notice that, from the communism point of view, there are three categories: dissidents, resistances and obedient ones. Dissidents are inconvenient opponent that must be isolated and eliminated. Resistances, because they don't have political beliefs and can be convinced, are ignored. Obedient ones support the communist beliefs and participate at the propaganda actions. Contemporary analysts form the same triad,

but with different characteristics: the dissidents fight on political and social grounds for conserving the cultural integrity, the resistances try to neutralize the obedient writers work and in moments of liberalization to regain their status, the obedient ones obey the official orders. Monica Lovinescu observes the unique dissident's method in approaching the international lows and courts and the intellectuals' effort in resisting moral and material pressures. The forms of resistance are singular, there for without a serious echo outside the country, and consist in avoiding censorship, in evasion, in not obeying the rules, in subversive collaboration with the exile. The author speaks about the characteristics of the obedient intellectual: fear, the abandonment of aesthetic, the instability of their beliefs. Besides the discussed triad – dissidents, resistances and obedient ones-, we suggest another two categories identified in Monica Lovinescu's writings: ambitious and clandestine ones.

Throughout our paper, we try to keep a certain distance from the author's severity. Instead, we couldn't detach from the idea that the fight for the power, for the social status, for the leadership must be blamed. In our work, we notice the important role of the cult of the personality: the intellectuals write laudatory speeches in order to get accepted, promoted, rewarded, sometimes forgiven for some of their mistakes. Some of them form groups of challengers used to intervene where Security Service and its collaborators fails. Monica Lovinescu's discourses bothers. Useless, we may say, because contemporary exegesis already proved the objectivity of her opinions. Romanian public has the opportunity to choose, from several version, the one which pleases. While in the country is called state of emergency and all communications are blocked, her chronics are the only information source. Reading her diaries, we recover certain aspects that weren't exposed in the radio shows. The simultaneous reading media discourse and memorialistic discourse allowed us to find the author's complete opinion about the country's situation.

Because Monica Lovinescu's artistic achievement happens in exile, in the second chapter we expose the evolution of the immigration imposed political and we determine the characteristics of the generation that she belongs to. For this, we show the classification made by Eva Behring and we establish that Monica Lovinescu belongs to the first waves of exiles, determined by the process of reconfigured the culture and elimination of cosmopolitan elements. Being her self a character in a typology, Monica Lovinescu expresses her will to participate with her journals to the reconstitution of the events, to the project of a real history

and to a typology of the exile. She does it, more or less intentionally, exhaustive or scientific, placing several hundred portraits in the gallery of exile.

Of the many abuses of the system, we noted several aspects concerning Security Service, detention and attempts on life. These are important because they influence Monica Lovinescu's work. We reconstructed the story of the attempt on her life in 1977 with the help of informative notes, of Ion Mihai Pacepa's confession and of the author's confessions from several books: *La apa Vavilonului*, *Seismograme. Unde scurte II*, the conversations with Doina Jela reproduced in *Această dragoste care ne leagă. Reconstituirea unui asasinat*. The attempt on her life is felt like a compensation of freedom and of the quilt for her mother that dies into prison. Her mother's sacrifice defines her personality, the impossibility of saving her returning obsessively. After she leaves Romania, between mother and daughter takes place an impressive, as volume and mixture of feelings and ideas, exchange of letters. Hope and despair, joy and sadness define their letters. This paper identifies the source of her obsessive need to reclaim biography and history, to constantly renew the ties with the past. Occasionally appear in her diaries, not pages, but lines about Ecaterina Bălăcioiu. With exacerbated restraint and sadness, Monica Lovinescu feels the need to confess. First to the diaries then to the microphone.

Monica Lovinescu's comments, notes, reviews display the notion of cultural identity. The examples from the diaries and the first informative notes of the Security Service show the easiness with which she attends artistic French groups. After the intellectuals leave the country, they transmit the ideas in the name of which they left. They may deny their identity, but they can not detach from it. Forgetting about them selves has psychic implications. Based on this idea, we summarize the diseases of the contemporary spirit formulated by Constantin Noica and we discovered them to the exile representatives. The spirit's diseases are not related with the body, but with the soul. Classifying the exile after Noica's made up diseases, is an innovation of the thesis and in the same time, an assumed risk.

And because we started our classification from Noica's theory, we consider to be necessary a review of the triad Eva Behring accomplished, a triad of the cultural identity in exile. First category includes writers who have doubts about the integration process, which is why they write in Romanian language. Intellectuals in the second category adopt the new culture without rejecting their own system of beliefs, accept bilingualism and write because

they have to, regardless of the nationality of the reader. The last is defined by the rejection of the native identity and by reorientation to the culture, language, tradition and reader of the host country. Monica Lovinescu is placed in the second category, as she adapts to the conditions of exile and perfectly integrates into the culture, politics and Parisian society. Living from day to day and shortcomings do not sustain Romanian intellectuals in exercising their profession and vocation.

In the third chapter, we talk about ethical and aesthetic justification of the writing process in exile and about the care for preserving Romanian cultural forms or the attempts to promote Romanian authors. Monica Lovinescu's moral attitude, and of course of all writers regardless of time and place they live in, is very important, because the pressure of politics transforms literary principles into ethics. To determine the influence that her father's work has over her style, we used Harold Bloom's theory regarding the anxiety of influence. So, we found a certain influence in criticism and in memorialistic discourse. Her interpretative methods are a unique hybrid between Eugen Lovinescu's influence and Camil Petrescu's to whom she goes to find approval after her father's death. From Camil Petrescu learns about the world of theatre that she enjoys and she tries, founding the company called 'Masques et légendes'. Actually, life in Paris starts with her passion for theater, transformed, over time, in passion for cinema. The reason why she chooses the name *Teze și antiteze la Paris*, based on one of the titles signed by Camil Petrescu, comes from the desire to pay an homage to the literary critic and from the intention to suggest that the shows are about and for Romanian culture. Moreover, Camil Petrescu's texts are first published in various magazines and then in volume. Monica Lovinescu chooses the relevant allocutions from over a thousand shows and publishes them in *Unde scurte* series. This paper aims to find out in what measure the Camil Petrescu's exegesis, an unique and authentic work, influence her later activity.

Following Monica Lovinescu's writings, we observe, of course, that literature is in the center of attention. Her first attempts to promote Romanian literature are in the literary agency founded in the early years in Paris. Next are the translations in French: the novel *Ora 25* by C.V. Gheorghiu, Adriana Georgescu's memoirs, Carageale's theatre, M.R. Paraschivescu's journal. Some of them has success, some just an echo in the French press. But the success of a book does not lie into the act of translation, but into a number of factors: author's reputation,

the publicity, the reader's expectations, socio/political and cultural context of the book, availability to opening to a new culture.

For Monica Lovinescu, criticism is art and science, a systematic study of literature, occasion to guide listeners and readers. Addressing to the author's hermeneutic exercise, we separate interpretative discourse of the general discourse's polyphony. On this direction, we studied emblematic chronics. The chronics for the literary products are valid and valuable and they verify the narrative techniques, the subjects, the characters, the narrative perspective, the distance from the reader, the originality, the synchronism with European culture. She summarizes the text quoting and commenting important fragments. The quotes allow listeners and readers to know the original text, to understand the mentality of the writer upon whom she already provided information. All the chronics contain references to critical reception and to reviews. Next in line is the ethical prove that is the relation between the literary discourse and the reality from Romania. The end consists in an conclusion, an invitation to read the book.

Throughout our research, we approach Monica Lovinescu's work according to the three types of discourse: interpretative, memorialistic and fictional. Interpretative discourse define the shows transcribed in *Unde scurte*. Only one tenth of the radio activity is founded in the six volumes. The principle that guides her in selecting them is repetition and relevance. From the archive, the shows seems to be excessive. But in every day life, they respond to public needs. Of course, in four decades the ideas and subjects repeat themselves because history repeats. Placed in their normal flow, the programs display real life situation. Major themes that we identified in the *Unde scurte* series are political novel, the traitor, subversion, rehabilitation and recovery of generations, the gap between generations, censorship, dissidence, retrospectives, the image of communism, totalitarianism, exile, intellectual condition, the originality of the Romanian case. Currently, her programs are no longer listened. In stead, we read the result of conversion the audio into printed text. For this reason, there are two stages of perception: the first is occurring during her life time, the second is post-factual and occurs due to printing the media discourse.

Reading the *Jurnal* alongside the *La apa Vavilonului*, we found and recorded in the fourth chapter that the memorialistic discourse is dichotomous. *La apa Vavilonului* reflects a different style than the one specific to memoirs, because fiction works by remembering and interpreting memories, suggesting both a biographical statement and a self- analysis. The texts

are not spontaneously written, close to the events, but a reconstitution of the time, based on notes, letters, random pages, now submitted to a new analysis.

We couldn't ignore Monica Lovinescu's gesture to eliminate some of her programs and journals. The author destroys her notebooks written during adolescence, because she finds them to be too pathetic. Self censorship is as important as the urge to write in the journal. Because of the pact with the authenticity, the text from *The Jurnal* does not need interpretation, reading it leads to simple understanding. The information is characterized by authenticity and likelihood, not by beautiful words. The quality and the clarity are a result of the way the message is constructed, of the grammatical rules, of the semantic constrains, of the urgency of confession, of the degree of involvement and affectivity. Her diaries testify the agitation and the nervousness of the outside world. The autobiographical pact is canceled and replaced by the pact with history. The urgency of writing down the events is found in every page about the shows, telephones, meetings, correspondence, talks, and visits. The purpose of diaries is to help memory, to render ideas and how they are lived, to be an instrument of introspection, a chronicle of the world without containing references to personal experience.

Monica Lovinescu's fictional discourse can be accused of too much coding. It is the reason why we try to prove in the last chapter that through its instrumental characteristic, the language from the novel expresses knowledge, opinions about the communist doctrine and produces meaning. The word games are an option of the author that says things in a certain way, being aware of the excessive encryption's risk. The novel *Cuvântul din cuvinte* has some reviews, but nobody dares to a major interpretative exercise. In this thesis, we expose the genesis of the novel, its compositional unity and its allegorical stories. The sibylline novel, even if it is not quiet a success, it has importance for the author's biography in the context of exile literature. The novel illustrates the beginning of communism and speaks about the entire society, constituting itself as a reflexive discourse consisting of confessions and thoughts that intensifies to each lamentation and question mark. It can not be interpreted outside the historic context, because it describes the utopia of a proverbial country with references to the real totalitarian regime. Monica Lovinescu uses a fragmentary and serious style. The semantic content of words doesn't emerge simultaneous with the reading, because they can not be separated from the multivalent meanings. The novel, even if it is ambiguous and apparently not finished, contains a meaning. Recurring structures, along with the sporadic ones, configure

the imagistic of the text, generated by author's attraction for surrealism. The compositional unity of the novel is determined from the whole to each part and has as foundation the utopia. The formative principle of the novel isn't the plot, and the characters aren't created as functions of the plot. The author never disappears from the text and he keeps a connection with the real world. The pronoun 'we' appears in the whole text and allows the author to remain in contact with the reader till the last lines. Each direct advise, each commandment or question strengthen the relation between the instance of the author and the reader. Beyond the text, the narrative substance permanently accompanies the message of the text. Fiction remains in the foreground, but only to allow the writer's mentality to reach the reader. The organization of the composition, based on the fluctuation between the two narrative voices, one female, the other male, is a source of narrative energy, next to the implausible dramatic events and the dialog.

The thing that most interested us in this paper is the way Monica Lovinescu is concerned with literature. For the author of the novel *Cuvântul din cuvinte*, literature is a world with its own laws, a fictive world in a real one.