CHANGING IDENTITIES, DRIFTING INTELLECTUALS

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Abstract: Between the attachment to Romanianness and the virulently proclaimed rupture, the destiny of many intellectuals of the Generation '27, a representative generation for the Romanian cultural geography of the interwar period, is drawn. The ideological evolution of the three intellectuals we are dealing with in this study (Eliade, Cioran, Ionescu) was broadly similar, they had, as Marta Petreu observes, a "stereotypical or monotypical" identity trajectory. In fact, as stated above, the '27 Generation proposed, through its cultural initiatives and doctrinal manifestations, an alternative ideology to liberalism, in terms of the imperative of modernizing Romanian society. The problem for the three of them was their belonging to the ethnic - Romanian identity, as well as their political identity, because, after a period marked by apoliticism, they switched to criticizing the democratic system, and then (with the exception of Ionescu) converted to the ideology of right-wing totalitarianism.

Keywords: generation of '27, culture, identity, metaphysical establishment, ideological argument

Introduction

The interwar period is an era of the consolidation of modern Romania, but also of major ideological deviations. The critic and literary historian Z. Ornea has managed, in his books, to bring out of oblivion the figure of Romanian literary personalities or orientations ignored or misunderstood, but also to explore the social-political and historical image of the interwar period. In his radiography of the interwar landscape, the literary historian has abandoned the clichés and prejudices of communist ideology, restoring a balanced, fair, equidistant perspective on the period and its intellectuals: "From whatever perspective we contemplate the picture of the inter-war period, we have to note that the weight weighs heavily on this third decade (which lasted, in fact, twelve years, because it begins in November 1918 and ends in 1930 [...]. In the following decade, the intentions emphasized before were clarified, the emphases shifted. But the map remained, in its characteristic data, the same as that fixed by the upheavals of the third decade." The ideological slippages, the political upheavals appeared a few years after the 1918 Unification, with anti-Semitic student movements and the establishment of fascist-type organizations, Nicolae Manolescu observing that "Romanian liberal democracy resisted the extremist assaults in the third decade, and only lost the game at the end of the fourth." Zigu Ornea notes that in the twenties the signs of modernity are preponderant, through the influence of the idea of synchronization with the European spirit, so that in the thirties the dominant ideology is influenced by traditionalism, orthodoxy, and trăirism. Anti-Semitism grew in the following decades, especially in the 1930s, first as a social movement, then as an increasingly ideologically marked orientation. The literary historian reveals all these aspects in a remarkable analysis of extremist political discourse, perceived in all its diversity and with all its social-historical consequences, in a nuanced, balanced, anti-dogmatic spirit. Nicolae Manolescu rightly remarks that "Zigu Ornea's merit is to have balanced the perspective on the second important period in our modern history, after that of Carol I. Informed, endowed with professional common sense, objective and modest, Zigu Ornea should be consulted by all lovers of ideological hypotheses about the interwar period. And not only, of course." Z. Ornea is, it has been said many times, a spirit of Lovinescian extraction, rigorous and exact in his documentary incursions, provided with spectacular historical-literary connections and quilts, meticulous in the exploitation of

details, offering ethical examples extracted from scenes, events and cultural figures, always in search of truth, democracy and liberalism in expression and thought, so that the whole of Z. Ornea is nothing but "an act of deep and substantial patriotism" (Mircea Iorgulescu).

The '27 generation, as it was called by Dan C. Mihăilescu, was a large-scale intellectual phenomenon, with a coherent cultural project and well-coagulated public events. The two manifestos (Itinerar spiritual, by Mircea Eliade, and Manifestul Crinului Alb, written by Sorin Pavel, Ion Nestor and Petre Marcu-Balș/Pandrea) propose two possible ideological trajectories of the group. The characteristics of the generation, generally assumed by all its members, are linked to an anti-Juninist, apolitical tendency and, above all, to opposition to tradition, to previous generations, an attitude deriving from the imperative of removing Romanian culture from provincialism and synchronizing it with European values. Not by chance, Eugen Ionescu considered this generation to be "paricidal", a generation that harbored the ambition to devour its ancestors. The generation's project is defined, among others, in an insurgent spirit and tone, by its leader, Mircea Eliade, who, for example, in his article How Revolutions Begin, wrote: "I believe that one of the dramas that the Romanian intellectual suffers is to witness the popularization of the ideas and ideals in which he believed, which he experienced and made his own with toil. For the last ten years there has been talk of nationalism, of ethnicity and authentically Romanian creation, of the peasant state, of the organic state, of the mysticism of popular myth, of race, of orthodoxy, of heroism as the meaning of existence - and all, but absolutely all, of these formulas, which represented a certain spiritual effort, certain soul experiences, have found their way onto the political market."

The opposition between culture and politics, which was assumed and practiced, at least at the beginning, by the members of the '27 Generation and, especially, by Eliade (by proclaiming apoliticism as a firm ideological argument), seems to fade later, when the criterionist cultural project enters, after 1932, in another zodiac, in which the interference with the political sphere is more and more accentuated. In the autumn of 1932, the Criterion association organized a series of conferences on the profiles of leading personalities of the time, including prominent politicians such as Lenin, Mussolini and Gandhi. The idea of modernization through culture, through the appropriate and consistent promotion of spiritual values, increasingly took on an ideological or even political stamp. The '27 generation contains, in its rather heterogeneous structure, leading intellectuals such as Mircea Eliade, the group's leader, Emil Cioran, Mihail Sebastian, Constantin Noica, Mircea Vulcănescu, Petre Țuțea, but also other secondary figures (Traian Herseni, Anton Golopenția or Ernest Bernea, Petru Comarnescu, Ionel Jianu, Alexandru Elian, Dan Botta, I. Biberi, Petru Manoliu, Dan Petrașincu, George Matei Cantacuzino, Alexandru Cristian Tell, Mihail Polihroniade, Arșavir Acterian, etc.).

Close to spirituality, to the essence of the Romanian soul, to the values of the organic traditions of Orthodox origin, the exponents of traditionalism, among whom Nae Ionescu and his followers from the Criterion circle should be mentioned, emphasized the fundamental incompatibility between Romania and Western Europe. They considered that Romania's development should be based on "organic realities" and not on the assimilation of social or economic models or resources from abroad. A third way to solve this equation was represented by the peasants and especially by Virgil Madgearu, who sought a solution reconciling democracy and Western technology with "unique indigenous agrarian structures".

The cultural climate at Criterion is therefore the point of convergence of diverse, heterogeneous concepts, ideas, visions and attitudes. Petre Comarnescu summarizes it as follows: "Criterion began to signify not so much by the personal worth of its members, by their individualities, but above all by the new working method it established: collaboration, cooperation, discussing problems together, harmony between the different intellectual

professions". The abandonment of the principles of apoliticism and the integration of some of the group's members into different political orientations is observed, recognized and even incriminated by some of its representatives. Petru Comarnescu, for example, observes that "some of the members are switching to the right-wing movements, such as Mișu Polihroniade, who first tried to win the sympathy of Argetoianu and other politicians. We are in for many surprises, as positions are now beginning to be more clearly established - for those who understand active politics, on the left or the right. Our generation is divided into two sharply opposing and fiercely fighting camps". Mihail Sebastian's position on the involvement/non-involvement of the '27 generation in politics is even more clear-cut. Sebastian considers that, despite all the initial declarations of non-involvement, this generation had a political attitude from the very beginning, insofar as it took a firm stance on the concept of 'national specificity': 'It was 1927 when all my generation comrades started. Well, the groupings quickly identified themselves, and I am not exaggerating when I say that the criterion for division was none other than the attitude towards the idea of national specificity. In order to further emphasize their position, the new intellectual recruits grouped themselves around two opposing magazines: Duh and Slove and Kalende. As a result, one part of Criterion was oriented towards Legionary ideology (Mihail Polihroniade, Haig Acterian, Marietta Sadova, Alexandru Christian Tell), another part (Eliade, Noica, Mircea Vulcănescu, Cioran) rallied to the ideology and philosophy of Nae Ionescu, of the extreme right, while a last faction embraced the communist ideology (Al. Sahia, Bellu Zilber, etc.) In fact, from 1932-1933, the '27 Generation split between the extreme right and the extreme left, a fact noted by Emil Cioran, among others, a young thinker who at one point came very close to Nazi ideas: "Right and left build on the ruins of freedom". In fact, Cioran observes that opting for the two extremist doctrines means not only renouncing the articulations of the idea of freedom, but also abolishing ideological openness and dialog, which are typical premises of a democratic system.

Of course, the similarities between the two major orientations do not stop there; they seek to assume, for example, a messianic meaning, which can be seen in the struggle to abolish democracy and establish a society purified of all foreign elements. The Legionaries, through Corneliu Zelea Codreanu and the other exponents of the extremist ideology, adopted a strategy of racial purification, to which the Jews in particular fell victim, while at the same time exposing a troubled ideology in which mysticism, discrimination and contempt for any democratic idea are evident. In fact, as stated above, the '27 Generation proposed, through its cultural initiatives and doctrinal manifestations, an alternative ideology to liberalism, in terms of the imperative of modernizing Romanian society. A key concept that recurs obsessively in the public writings of the representatives of this generation is that of 'revolution', a concept purged of any political connotation, which reveals the need for a new beginning, a firm opposition to the past and to tradition and a legitimization of identity that is, in a certain sense, timeless. Of course, it can be said that Eliade, like the other choirs of the generation, was confronted with an identity problem/ aporia. The ideological evolution of the three intellectuals we are dealing with in this study (Eliade, Cioran, Ionescu) was broadly similar, they had, as Marta Petreu observes, a "stereotypical or monotypical" identity trajectory. The problem for the three of them was their belonging to the ethnic - Romanian identity, as well as their political identity, because, after a period marked by apoliticism, they switched to criticizing the democratic system, and then (with the exception of Ionescu) converted to the ideology of right-wing totalitarianism. Marta Petreu thus observes a similar scenario, which could be inventoried for these intellectuals: "a spiritual apolitical moment, then a political conversion and an ambivalent passion for Romania, then a trauma with disappointment, and finally an apostasy from Romanianness, with a complementary adoption and construction of a fantasmatic identity".

The Eliade case

The stature of Mircea Eliade's personality can be subsumed under the double vocation of the author of the History of Religious Beliefs and Ideas, for whom scientific study, as well as literature, are ways of deciphering the signs of the world and of history, privileged hermeneutic ways. However, it must be emphasized that literature is not an easy, didactic, demonstrative illustration of the scientific idea; the two universes explain and illuminate each other's meanings and symbols. Thus we arrive at a generative, archetypal relationship for Eliade's creative effort: the hermeneutic relationship. On the other hand, Mircea Eliade's literature contains, as is well known, numerous elements of modernity in terms of epic construction, fictional representation of reality or formal expression: the insertion of the interior monologue, temporal ruptures and distortions, the use of confessional modes, the presence of essayistic elements, the well-balanced combination of narration of facts and commentary or interpretation of them, etc. On the other hand, the role of the symbol in Eliade's work is of prime importance, and its unifying and integrating function is what allows the disparate fragments to coagulate into a harmonious whole, to take on an organic form. Hermeneutics is, for Mircea Eliade, the methodological approach best suited to deciphering and interpreting the meanings of religious symbols, as the author himself observes: 'Hermeneutics is the search for the meaning, the significance or meanings which, over time, a particular idea or phenomenon has had. One can make the history of different religious expressions". Eliade's memoirs have the fluent form of a narrative of his own life and destiny, textually staged from the tutelary perspective of authenticity, a key concept of his literature. The author's "spiritual biography" (Mircea Handoca) is dominantly synthesized. While respecting the chronology of his own life, the author also proceeds with a series of intercalations, temporal interferences and shifts in the spatial dimension, which act as a context for the narrative. Memorable are some interior scenes, some descriptions of the author's familiar spaces (the famous attic, for example), but also the meticulous epic representation of events that marked the biographical and artistic destiny of the scholar and writer.

On the other hand, some portraits of personalities of the inter-war period are worthy of note, with their essential character traits, in more contrasted or more broadly drawn portrait lines, with exponential tics and gestures, with revealing features. Very significant is the portrait of Nae Ionescu, the professor of philosophy who marked the spiritual destiny of many intellectuals of the inter-war period. The portrait is accompanied by an introduction in "context", highly suggestive of Eliade's epic talent: "I will never forget the first metaphysics lesson I attended. He had announced a lecture on 'Faust and the problem of salvation'. The "Titu Maiorescu" auditorium was full and I found it hard to find a seat at the back, in the very last pew. A pale, dark-haired, bare-headed man came in, with dark, bushy, mephistophelian arched eyebrows and large, dark blue, steely, unusually glittering eyes; when he unexpectedly darted his gaze from one wall to another, it was as if he had flashed lightning in the auditorium. He was slender, rather tall, soberly dressed, but with an elegant carelessness; and he had the most beautiful and expressive hands I ever saw, with long, slender, nervous fingers. When he spoke, his hands shaped his thought, emphasized nuances, anticipated difficulties, question marks (...). He sat in his chair, rolled his eyes to the back of the auditorium and began to speak. Suddenly there was an unnatural silence, as if everyone was holding their breath. Nae Ionescu didn't speak like a professor, he wasn't giving a lecture or a lecture. He started a conversation and addressed us directly, to each of us individually, as if

he was telling us a story, presenting a series of facts, proposing an interpretation and then waiting for our comments. You had the impression that the whole lesson was just part of a dialog, that each of us was invited to take part in the discussion, to share our opinions at the end of the lesson. You had the feeling that what Nae Ionescu said you couldn't find in any book. It was something new, freshly thought out and organized there in front of you, on the desk. It was personal thinking and, if you were interested in this kind of thinking, you knew that you couldn't find it anywhere else, that you had to come here to get it from the source. The man on the desk would talk to you directly, he would open up problems and teach you how to solve them, he would make you think."

Writing represented for Eliade a permanent dedication, a fascinating involvement in the universal rhythms and in the rhythms of his own destiny, it meant tension of understanding and realization, fervor of rediscovering the thrill of authentic, uncontradicted living ("To feel how each written line tears you out of your life, it soaks your blood, it consumes your brain. To feel how writing squeezes all the substance out of your life. That's the only way it's worth writing"). Mircea Eliade's autobiographical texts, be it his diary, his memoirs or his book of interviews, are all revealing of the stature, methods, poetics and poetics of the writer and scholar. We find here, in a fragmentary, concise or, on the contrary, digressive style, the essential data of his spiritual portrait, his unmistakable physiognomy, the landmarks of his own destiny and, at the same time, the articulations of his work of overwhelming complexity and depth.

At the beginning, Mircea Eliade adopted an apolitical stance, but he supported the idea of national specificity, the valorization of indigenous resources, together with an appeal to the values of democracy, liberalism and individualism. Eliade's evolution towards legionnaireism (in November-December 1935) was slower than Cioran's more impulsive and impetuous one. In this respect, the appeal to the notion of the "new man", to the primacy of the spirit and to a major emphasis on the imperatives of the elite are recurrent themes in Eliade's public writings of this period. For Eliade, politics and culture are antinomic notions, his work being, until 1935-1936, circumscribed to an apolitical sphere. After 1936, Eliade believes that the involvement of intellectuals in politics can no longer be disavowed; on the contrary, it should be encouraged as a necessary part of civic intervention, apolitical activism becoming a "civil" imperative. The period January 1937-February 1938 is marked by firm pro-legionist stances, set out in the press of the time (15 articles). Eliade believes that the social classes that provide the foundation of a nation are in fact the peasantry and the intelligentsia, emphasizing that Romania's intellectual elite can lead to the redemption of the Romanian nation. Anti-Semitism is very transparent in Eliade's articles from this period: "Since the war onwards, the Jews have overrun the villages of Maramureș and Bucovina and have obtained an absolute majority in all the towns of Bessarabia... And if you say that on the Bucegi Mountains you no longer hear Romanian, that Yiddish is spoken in Maramureș, Bucovina and Bessarabia, that Romanian villages are perishing, that the face of the towns is changing, they count you as serving the Germans or assure you that they have made laws for the protection of national labor. (...) I know very well that the Jews will scream that I am anti-Semitic, and the democrats that I am a hooligan and a fascist... It would be absurd to expect the Jews to resign themselves to being a minority with certain rights and very many obligations - after having tasted the honey of power and having conquered so many commanding posts." Constantly concerned about Romania's destiny, Eliade believes, unlike Cioran (who believed that Romania's emergence from its state of minority and improvisation can only be ensured by a "historical leap" achieved by a far-right regime), that Romania's destiny can be reassessed and improved by a spiritual revolution realized under the leadership of a legionary elite. It can be observed that Mircea Eliade's closeness and even involvement in the Legionary movement, an anti-democratic, anti-Semitic and illiberal political

movement, was to a large extent favored by the philosophy to which the young leader of the generation adhered, a vitalist, existentialist philosophy that exalts irrationalist impulses; thus Eliade's xenophobic or anti-Semitic statements fall within the sphere of concessions made to the extremist Legionary ideology. Eliade's intellectual and emotional background was tolerant, marked by good faith, openness and tolerance, so that the deviations between 1937 and 1938 can only be regrettable. However, his universally recognized and legitimate creation is devoid of resentment towards the Romanian identity, Eliade always remained attached to his ethnic belonging, without any rest.

Emil Cioran and the "face change"

Considering that Cioran's work "presents a surprising homogeneity of themes and attitudes", Sorin Alexandrescu does nothing else, in a chapter of Looking Back, Modernity, than to state the essential feature of the philosopher: the constancy in scriptural reactions, the ever-renewed assiduity in designating the same themes of meditation, the relevance of a style that is equal to itself, recurrent, refusing any avatar, a monadic style and, to the same extent, open to a plurality of readings. It is known, then, that Cioran's work is nothing more than a sum of fragments, freed from any will to construct, fragments "constructed" deliberately in this way, out of the philosopher's horror of any system, of any ontological or epistemological authority, whether this manifests itself in the real world or is materialized in a space of ideas. The freedom of associations, the very subtle taste of paradox, the ideation stripped from the morgue, give Cioran's phrase its inner tension, the dynamism of living and speaking. It can also be said that between Cioran's biography and writing there are numerous bridges, filiations, connections either subtle, implicit or more apparent. Hence, from this biography/writing parallelism, the thematic dichotomy that has always followed Cioran results; history and utopia are the dichotomous ambivalences that feed, with increased energy, the philosopher's substance. Always ruined in the face of a hysterical history, utopia is, in turn, acclaimed and denigrated. Its signs are inverted, as history is ignored or rejected with hostility. The text is itself the scene of such a confrontation, not without pathos, between history and utopia, a fact clearly expressed by Sorin Alexandrescu. Between the active involvement in history (or messianism) in The Transfiguration of Romania and the ignorance of history, the destiny of the thinker is circumscribed, who will be faced with two decisive options, which will mark him definitively. A first option is that of exile, this "non-place", as Sorin Alexandrescu calls it. The second choice is fixation in the canons of another language; uprooting is followed by a stubborn search for a new identity. Or perhaps we are dealing here with a camouflage maneuver, with a sort of pseudonym technique subtly slipped into the linguistic strategies offered by the new idiom? Exile undoubtedly represented, for Cioran, in equal measure, inner tearing and liberation, refuge and damnation, resignation and clamoring for an uprooted destiny. The lack of national determinations, which is the condition of the exile, the loss of identity that the stateless person feels are compensated, in a certain way, by finding himself in a space of universality, of a generic humanity, freed from the grip of national landmarks. Cioran's exile therefore becomes more and more an exile with metaphysical connotations, so that the terms here or elsewhere lose their strictly geographical determinations, acquiring rather symbolic contours. Melancholy is, as Sorin Alexandrescu observes, a recurring topos in Cioran's philosophical fragments. This state of mind of undoubted ambiguity, with fluctuating contours, is made up of boredom, of the absence of the beloved being or of a spiritual principle with an integrative character, of nostalgia for something undefined and a propensity towards a barely glimpsed absolute, of hatred and longing. The consciousness of the exile, the consciousness of a marginal, in essence, is thus dominated, decisively marked by the impact with the contradictory flow of melancholy, a

state that installs the being in a space – both ontological and scriptural – of overwhelming uncertainty.

No matter how many psychoanalytic or psychoanalyzable sources one might attribute to it, it is certain that melancholy is the product of an aggression on the consciousness, a trauma that will persist in the abysmal ego of the thinker and will mark his writing, his destiny, his way of relating to the world or to his fellow men. The emblematic metaphor for this postulation of melancholy as a generating element of Cioran's being and writing seems to Sorin Alexandrescu to be the image of a "lone man behind a window, inactive, looking, motionless, at the moving, slippery, ephemeral world outside". It is the metaphor of absolute solitude, of the presence of the self in front of an alterity that it seeks to abolish through unrealization, through forgetting, through the dissolving exercise, this time, of the gaze. Cioran's condition as a marginal being, as a being who vehemently refuses any institutionalization, outlined by Sorin Alexandrescu in his study of Cioran the day after the revolution, is, without a doubt, one that also implies a refusal of modernity. Cioran is a thinker at the crossroads of his century, a century of all pluralisms and simulacra. It is clear that Cioran is aware of the relativity of his own discourse, oscillating between marginality and universality. From this angle, the comparison between Cioran and Diogenes the Cynic is not at all without foundation. Both Cioran and Diogenes are beings who refuse any social commitment, who stand in the penumbra of the social, even if Diogenes, unlike Cioran, also has spectacular gestures. Cioran is, one might say, an anti-modern by definition, who perceives the world of modernity as a world of devalued signs, of simulacra, of appearances without content, in which discourses, of disconcerting plurality and overwhelming polysemanticism, can no longer be heard, perceived, understood. Hence Cioran's nihilistic vocation, hence his anti-modern radicalism which, however, does not propose a compensatory program, a clear alternative, as Sorin Alexandrescu well specifies.

One of the aporias that have become almost commonplace in the reception of Cioran's work is the relationship between integration and alienation, between the communicable and the incommunicable, between identity and rupture in the thinker's work. The great loner and the great skeptic of our time, Cioran expressed, in his aphorisms, the fundamental inability to attach himself to a firm national identity, in a disillusioned affective projection, in which the refusal to fixate translates into a fundamental need to search for one's own roots, even if these are often identified with ontological nothingness: "When you think of the other small countries, which have done nothing and indulge in unconsciousness or in an empty, unjustified pride, then you cannot hold back your admiration for the lucidity of Romania, which is not ashamed to make fun of itself, to shake off its nothingness in self-contempt or to compromise itself in a dissolving skepticism." Very illustrative of this dialectic of identification and distancing from the identity image of his homeland is the volume Mon pays (My Country), published in a bilingual edition by Ed. Humanitas, in 1996. "A specialist in obsessions", as he is acknowledged, Cioran confesses, in Mon pays, the Romanian identity obsession, the passion he nurtured, at that time, for his own country, with its marginal destiny, with its historical geography damaged by the ravages of an atemporal and metaphysical hubris: "I was far from turning thirty when I happened to develop a passion for my country; a desperate, aggressive passion, from which there was no escape and which harassed me for years. My country! I wanted to cling to it at all costs – and I had nothing to cling to. I could find no reality for it, neither in its present nor in its past. Full of rage, I attributed a future to it, I invented it, I embellished it, without believing in it for a moment. I ended up attacking it, this future, by hating it: I spat on my utopia. My loving and delirious hatred was, so to speak, devoid of object; my country was turning into dust upon meeting my gaze". Attachment to one's own country is, for Cioran, one of those paradoxical, contradictory and oxymoronic feelings, in which love and hate, attraction and repulsion

intertwine to the point of indistinction. His often denigrating passion has as its only purpose the assumption by one's own country of a destiny that would emerge from the shadow cone of historical anonymity. The strength, vitality, grandeur are rather projections of a will to historically legitimize one's own nation: "I wanted it strong, immeasurable, crazy, like an evil force, a fatality that would have made the world tremble, and it was small, modest, lacking the attributes that make up a destiny."

There is a considerable distance between the visionary and transforming pride of the young philosopher and the mediocre destiny of the country to which he belongs. In fact, Cioran does nothing more than outline, in his early books, an ideal image of Romania, rather an ideal projection, a utopian geography, maintained and sustained by his visionary drive. The attachment to Romania is perceived as an epistemological sanction, as a form of quixoticism and illusory prophetism. A country without destiny, Romania is no less an ideological product of consciousnesses that seek their own ontological legitimation by assuming the indissoluble bond with their country ("And this love became a punishment that I claimed against myself and a ferocious quixoticism. I discussed endlessly the fate of a country without fate: I became, in the true sense of the word, a prophet in the wilderness"). The philosopher's identity is linked to the matrix space that legitimizes his fervors and despairs to the point of exasperation. Referring, in Mon pays, to the Transfiguration of Romania, Cioran lucidly x-rays his obsessions and excessive feelings that the destiny of his own country has provoked in him. The "thirst for the inexorable" from which the philosopher's passionate passions began, his tortures and vigils, which increasingly resemble, as it is specified, "someone else's", from the angle of temporal and affective distance, transpose Cioran into a space of rationality that discerns, in the mirrors of the past, the troubled face of the teenager thirsting for the absolute and disgusted with certainties.

The aporias of communication that give relief to Cioran's writings have a fluctuating content, being born from the undulations of paradox and the baroque formations of oxymoron. Love also presupposes revolt or hatred, just as attachment has as its necessary corollary repulsion or passionate, resentful involvement: "I loved being put to the test: and the supreme test seemed to me to be precisely the fact of having been born in my country. But the truth is that at that time I had an insatiable need for madness, madness twinned with action. I felt the need to destroy. I spent my days preferring images of total annihilation in my mind." From compensatory hatred towards the minor destiny of the country of his birth, Cioran moves on to hatred towards himself, which is clearly evident in almost all of his aphorisms. His broken, illegitimate identity is legitimized precisely through this fortuitous duality of passion/detachment, which gives originality to Cioran's entire work, just as the revelations of hatred and exasperation of being represent the binder of a resentful and, at the same time, ruthlessly lucid philosophy.

The social and political ideology to which Cioran adheres in the interwar period, under the influence of his mentor, Professor Nae Ionescu, is based on several firmly supported principles: the criticism of social injustice, but also of the democratic regime, the rejection of the idea of historical progress, the valorization of irrational forces, of the collective unconscious, the exaltation of fascist-type totalitarianism, the promotion of anti-Semitic ideas and attitudes, etc. It is known that, if, until the 1920s, the Jewish problem was treated in a social and economic key, in the 1930s it is valorized in a metaphysical framework. A proof of the controversies of the interwar period on the subject of the Jewish issue is the dispute around Nae Ionescu's preface to Mihail Sebastian's novel De doua mii de ani, where "Jewishness" is blamed with the help of religious-metaphysical arguments. For Nae Ionescu, the Jew is "substantially ill", his illness being one related to his foundations of ontological substance, and not to the relations with otherness. In this way, a hiatus is created between Jews and other people, so that the Jew is something other than us, he can even be

eliminated, without fear of sanction. If, before the 1930s, anti-Semitism was theoretically grounded in the idea of economic competition, during the interwar period, that part of the Generation of '27 that turned to the extreme right legitimized a metaphysical foundation: the Jew is no longer perceived only as an economic "competitor", he embodies pure evil, which can be removed through religious support (in the case of the Legionary doctrine) or by appealing to metaphysics, as Emil Cioran notes. Having left for Munich on a scholarship, Cioran, in his articles from this period, praises Hitler and Nazism, from the angle of a vitalist and irrational "philosophy", which exalts action and fervent involvement in history. Nae Ionescu's influence is what determined the great young intellectuals of the Generation of '27 to get involved in the extreme right-wing orientations of the interwar period: Cioran, from 1933, Eliade from 1934, Noica from 1938. In this spirit, Cioran, during this Munich period, gave unreserved praise of Hitler: "There is no politician in today's world who inspires me with greater sympathy and admiration than Hitler. There is something irresistible in the destiny of this man for whom every act of life gains significance only through symbolic participation in the historical destiny of a nation." Capitalizing on an aggressive, shocking rhetoric of nationalist and, often, anti-Semitic fervor, using exaggerations and inflamations with existentialist philosophical support, Cioran creates, in The Transfiguration of Romania, a synthesis of the anti-Semitic theories up to that time, in a vigorous and intolerant style. The essential idea that structures this book is that of the necessity of founding a totalitarian state, which would "save" the destiny of Romania from its minor, insignificant status. In Cioran's conception, Jews are fundamentally distinguished from other people, so that solving the "Jewish problem" is necessary and desirable: "The Jew is not our fellow man, our neighbor, and no matter how much intimacy we allow ourselves with him, a chasm separates us, whether we want it or not." The conclusion that Cioran draws from these radical assertions is that "we must ultimately acknowledge with melancholy that anti-Semitism is the greatest praise paid to the Jews." Cioran's ambivalent feeling towards Romanian belonging (attachment/denial) is thus combined with the assumption of a paradoxical, ambivalent vision, in which ideas and conceptions of different origins dispute their primacy in the thinker's ideological repertoire, in this period of extreme historical convulsions.

Eugen Ionescu – a defender of democracy

Promoter of the theater of the absurd, literary theorist, prose writer and memoirist, Ionesco did not escape, shortly after his disappearance, the negative passion of some and others. Let us recall at least the book by Alexandra Laignel Lavastine Cioran, Eliade, Ionesco – l'oubli du fascisme, a "model" of bad faith and inadequate interpretation of a creation and an existence put entirely at the service of the values of democracy. Beyond this, the work and creative destiny of Eugène Ionesco aroused, after 1989, the interest of some critics, Romanian and foreign, who valued the meanings of his texts in their authentic spirit and in their polymorphic relief. The frequently unfair view of Eugen Ionescu considered that he had turned to the right, and even to the extreme right, an improbable fact, which honest researchers of his work have not hesitated to attest. One of them, Gelu Ionescu, rightly considers that Eugen Ionescu is an "unconditional and uncompromising defender of democracy": "Some see in him – even Alexandra Lavastine – a leaning towards the right; I think it is a distorted optical effect: for me, he remains – as a political position – an unconditional and uncompromising defender of democracy, a radical anti-totalitarian." Rereading Ionescu's journalism is instructive for several reasons. First of all, we can imagine, by reading these articles, essays, notes, diary pages published in various publications of the interwar era, the profile of an intellectual with an acute sensitivity to literary current events, to the problems of his time. In Ionescu's alert, fragmentary and stringent writing we find the

writer's need to assume his own condition, in all his defining data, we find the disturbing interrogations of an unhappy conscience tortured by doubts and anxieties, his need for certainties and, above all, for authentication of his own being. Virgil Ierunca observes, in this sense, among other things, that "Eugen Ionescu makes literature, despite the fact that God exists, creates - indirectly paying homage to decreation - thus answering his initial and essential question. Sometimes he doubts what he does. But to do means, for him, to be." Sensing all the disharmony and cracks in the world's order, the writer finds himself in the condition of a creature thrown into the world and in time, in the condition of a puppet manipulated by divinity. "I accept my state of being a puppet. "I accept the metaphysical ridiculousness of my human condition," Ionescu writes in a prose piece from 1933. Summing up his existence to the state of a mechanical-looking creature, with a completely relative autonomy, the writer never stopped trying to explain the springs of his own destiny, marked by the agonizing imprint of time and the pallor of a delirious history. On the other hand, the essayist acutely feels the fatality of his own organic composition, a composition that submits to tyrannical forms and pre-established patterns. The inability to be in an absolute state of individuality, the affiliation to the tics, myths and taboos of the sociocultural context, the serialization in a forma mentis that exerts an almost dictatorial pressure, all these limitations are inventoried and disavowed by the young publicist.

Eugen Ionescu's Romanian-language journalism is quite heterogeneous; it includes articles and essays, literary reviews, interviews, responses to surveys, drama reviews, art reviews, but also diary entries. One of the concerns of a revealing constancy for the young Ionescu is related to the condition of literature, to the act of writing and to the very subtle mechanisms of creation. Ionescu's effort is mainly to release the specificity of literature, of art in general, by outlining the opposition between the sphere of aesthetics and the referential universe, in all its primary concreteness. In the young Ionescu's vision, the aesthetic has an undeniable capacity for liberation, for purification of the being, for articulating a harmony of the individual with his deep self. This dichotomy social universe/aesthetic universe is one with fruitful consequences in the field of meditation on poetry, for example. Ionescu's observations on poetic form and content, on the technique of expression, on cultured and naive poets, on the implications of lyrical revelation or on the benefits of rational motivation of the poetic state stem from a nuanced understanding of the poetic phenomenon and of the mechanism of creating the literary effect. On the other hand, in an article entitled Contra literaturii, Eugen Ionescu makes the apology of vitalism and the spirit of spontaneity, in opposition to litera(ture), which has the gift of mortifying the avatars of the existent in all its plenitude. The moments of maximum communion of the self are achieved only through intense, pathetic living, by resorting to the exercise of uncensored affectivity.

The tone of many of Eugen Ionescu's articles from the interwar period is polemical, the accents are vehement and the replies are cutting. The publicist is blunt, sometimes to the point of questioning the very existence of Romanian culture, or of a Romanian literary tradition. Obviously, such statements are made not only from a spirit of rebellion, but rather from an impulse of urgency, which the essayist feels, from the need to improve a state of affairs felt as deplorable. The exaggeration is obvious. In his articles scattered in the press of the interwar period, the young Ionescu stages verve, spontaneity, an iconoclastic and dubious spirit, but also the fascination of an incisive phrasing, not devoid of lyrical thrill or metaphysical iridescence. These articles are, above all, testimonies of a consciousness for which literature is destiny and redemption, dramatic deposition and document of interiority. It is clear that, in the case of Eugen Ionescu, the identity crisis is closely linked to Jewishness, to the anti-Semitic “father figure” and to the anti-Semitic excesses of the interwar period. Ionescu's criticism of democracy does not fail in its adherence to extremism, because the author of Nu defines himself first and foremost by his fundamentally democratic stance. In

the alchemy of Eugen Ionescu's personality, Romania is identified with the odious and anti-Semitic "father's country" and France with the "beloved mother's country" (Marta Petreu). Relevant in this regard is the overcoming of the national sphere and of feelings, more or less inflamed, and the integration into the perimeter of universality, through work, thought and attitude. Fascinated, at a certain point, by totalitarian ideology, Eliade, Cioran, or Noica, to mention only the cases of exemplary intellectuals of the era, later renounced these "errands" of youth. The ghosts of the past did not cease, however, to haunt the reception of works of remarkable philosophical or scientific stance. The case of Eugen Ionescu is that of an intellectual attracted to the values of democracy, but also to the values of liberalism, from which he never renounced. Of course, one can perceive, following the analysis of the identity trajectory of the three exponents of the Generation '27 who were the subject of our research, a similarity of reaction, attitude and vision, from the fervor of assuming a passionate attachment to the Romanian identity, to the vehement denial of it. Between the attachment to Romanianness and the virulently proclaimed rupture, the destiny of many intellectuals of the Generation '27, a representative generation for the Romanian cultural geography of the interwar period, is drawn.

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