

## ABSTRACT

In 2006, after I had won a grant sponsored by USR (The Writers' Union of Romania), I initiated a research project entitled "The Critics' Literature", which aimed, first and foremost, to inquire into the relationship between the author and his/her work. Among the second rank objectives, I could count the following: 1. the restoration and refinement of biographical approach; 2. the emphasis of irradiating ideological cores within fiction; 3. the identification of fictional cores reflected within ideology; 4. the establishment of a set of criteria and taxonomies from whose perspective an author's "personality" can be defined; 5. the conception of an "integrationist" approach founded on the concept of "personality". The first of this series was a book entitled *Ibrăileanu. Către o teorie a personalității (Ibrăileanu. Towards a Theory of Personality)*, which was published by "Cartea Românească" Publishers in 2007, among other highly esteemed studies authored by young literary critics, that were gathered into a collection named *Noua critică și istorie literară (The New Criticism and Literary History)*. Herewith I have proven that Ibrăileanu is actually a talented writer, gifted with manifold creative possibilities, which practically restrained him from calling on to up-to-date criticism (as Lovinescu did, setting himself the goal to launch the modernisation process in our literature) and from getting the lead of Romanian inter-bellum literary criticism. The hasty scholars have dissociated among facets such as "the cultural journalist", "the literary critic", and "the novelist", by bringing out two or three hypostasis of Ibrăileanu's creative personality; in the first place, the socialist preacher and the theorist of "scientific literary criticism"; then, the cultural mentor from the "Viața Românească" circle (formed around "Viața Românească" literary review), and the supporter of "poporanism" and "national traits"; eventually, the fine artist, the impressionist critic and the aesthetes from the late works. However, in *Ibrăileanu. Towards a Theory of Personality*, my endeavour aims to devise a new method of "integrative" literary analysis, an approach counting in all the creator's facets and underlying the full circuit of "signs" between the poles of art and living, and taking into account rather the continuities than the gaps between literature and life. At the same time, the critical interpretation focuses on the "personality" irradiating principle, while restoring the biographical approach in a manner which is, I daresay, original and challenging.

In the following volumes – *Fragmentarium* ("Timpul" Publishers, Iași, 2006) and *Literatură și biografie. În căutarea omului din carte (Literature and Biography: Searching for the Man in the Book)*, "Timpul" Publishers, Iași, 2011) – I have tried to prove, by choosing a cluster of case studies, which assembled together according thematic criteria, the relevance of the biographical element in the particular outset of literary products. In these interpretations, the originality resides especially in the method of inquiry, that is, an essayist's approach whose main target is to make a point and articulate the tremendous importance of ethical values in the process of moulding both the artist's personality and its aesthetical expression. All the same, departing from the example of contemporary Romanian literature, I did my best to bring in front those texts labelled as "marginal" or "failed", and which have arrested our critics' attention in a lesser degree. My method of text reading draws much from the tradition of classical hermeneutics, yet with the reserve that the prevalent research focus rests – taking on Virgil Nemoianu's inspired phrase – literature as "secondary".

Insisting on the aesthetic principle's sheer lack of autonomy and on its perplexing bonds with a solid ethic foundation, in both my books I had rather searched the man behind the his/her work, by drawing the artist's portrait so as to synthesize, in the "physiognomies" manner (an approach quite trendy during the 19<sup>th</sup> century), both the personality's inner traits and the fundamental data of the artistic output. From a conceptual point of view, the "personality" goes beyond the "human models" framed in the vein of classical typologies. In my opinion, which is largely influenced by the individualist and skeptical liberal ideology and by the laic neo-humanism, derived from enlightenment philosophy, the "personality" is not the sum of its contents, i.e. of its component "qualities". Hence, in these collections of critical studies, as well as in my monographic books, I have tried to define the concept of "personality" as process, as evolving matter, by that also suggesting to the reader a necessary change of perspective, through dropping off the dogmatic prejudices of canonical criticism and, contrariwise, bringing forward the "marginal" texts, usually avoided for their lack of aesthetical promises, but nonetheless precious for that researcher who is determined to discover in the literary text more than its expressive features.

Another crucial moment for figuring out my theory on "personality", as well as the never-ending debate on the criticism-creation intercourse, was the plunge into E. Lovinescu's life and work; the famous Romanian critic appears to have had a large and inclusive understanding of psychological values, nevertheless assigning them key roles within his work (which exposes itself, needless to say, as a system of communicating vessels), and a strong deciphering potential in some other unyielding issues: 1. *criticism* as a method to uncover chiefly the writer's psychology (the so called psychologist-"interpretative" approach); 2. *memoirs* as an elected genre, able to unveil the critic's own personality (a discourse on the "*persona*", that is, the creative critic's public image) and fiction as a similar way of disclosure (as discourse on the critic's "person", which is glimpsed at when located within the space of intimacy and sentimental intercourse); 3. *identity* of the modern Romanian civilisation, defined through the particularities of its genesis, as an expression of the dynamical rapport between form (the imitated model, be it a society or a civilisation) and contents (the psychic predispositions of the imitating race); 4. *aesthetical value*, which is not everlasting, but results as a redundant reverberation of individual taste.

Developing on all these observations, I have pointed not only the origin of critical ideas, but also the chiselling process underwent by the figure of the "creative spirit" (according to my approach, the critic's "personality"), by confronting the hard core of the artistic work, i.e. the "canonical" references, with journalism pieces and second-shelf writings, still lesser visited by the scholars. Among my research goals, I should mention the following: 1. the identification of implicit and explicit Western sources implied in the formation of the critical system; 2. the highlight of specific features, and of theoretic-ideological influences; 3. the elaboration of an analysis model which suits the dynamic genesis of critical thinking; 4. the emphasis of a bourgeois ideology and ethos that configures Lovinescu's views on literature. Beyond E. Lovinescu's individual case and the specialized bibliography of this research theme, my main point was to inquire into the status (socio-cultural, psychological, and aesthetic) of criticism among the chorus of humanist sciences, and, subsequently, the endurance of its pedagogic and aesthetical ranking role.

Coming after my work on *E. Lovinescu and the Romanian and European Models of Inter-bellum Literary Criticism* (“Romanian Literature National Museum” Publishing House, Bucharest, 2013), the following two studies focused the modernist critic’s literature: *Scriitorul și umbra sa. Geneza formei în literatura lui E. Lovinescu (The Writer and His Shadow. The Genesis of Form in E. Lovinescu’s Literature)*, vol. I-II, “Institutul European” Publishing House, 2013. This way I have tried to confront Lovinescu’s views on literature with his own literature (an interesting instance of creative employment, undertaken by the critic in order to illustrate his “theories”). As I had done in my book on Ibraileanu, I intended to get a grip on the work’s organic conception, more to the point, on the configuration of a “critical model” coming from the humanist and bourgeois kind (related to Thibaudet’s, to French impressionists’ or to Anglo-Saxon essayists’), self-evident, once ascertained the leading role of psychology (see the theory of imitation, and the subordination of creative individual to the ethnic coordinates, and so on), as well as the wide accessibility of critical discourse (usually practiced in “installment” manner) and of melodramatic novel (the melodramatic genre being the less elitist of all, counting on emotion and sensibility, wherefrom its great openness towards the public). Therefore, I underlined the importance of Lovinescu’s “model”, having in mind a virtual re-humanisation of literary studies (see the trend in the post-structuralist theories and the pleadings for “the return of the author”).

The present dissertation also includes a few smaller case-studies that hopefully will be developed and worked upon in my following researches (on G. Călinescu, Ion Negoitescu, Marin Mincu, Virgil Nemoianu, Matei Călinescu, Eugen Ionescu, Adrian Marino and others).

In my view, the biographical approach may have within the contemporary Romanian culture the same role that pragmatics had played once in Western research. Thus, my theoretical interest directed towards the investigation of those complex “figures”, who were critics and equally writers, by surpassing the order of common expression analysis (bringing in mainly a rhetorical and aesthetically-focused perspective). For me, the “personality” (multifariously defined, from psychological, historical and sociological angles) becomes a sort of supra-segmental “figure” whose line can be guessed within the art product. Moreover, far from being a remake of old positivist approaches, the biographical method channelled a real avant-garde movement in the field of new literary studies from Romania. Consequently the reflection on proper critical methods and approaches becomes a necessary act; its aim is to make us, Romanians, even more competitive on the Western market of literary ideas.