

THE CLASSICIST VISION OF THE JOURNALIST MIHAI EMINESCU ON CULTURE

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Abstract

This paper explores Mihai Eminescu’s journalist work aiming to describe his conception on culture and on its importance in society. The methodology comprises the comparative method and procedures of the content analysis method.

Firstly, we make a classification of the articles published by the journalist Eminescu. Then we draft their taxonomy, on three categories: a) articles with a general character; b) articles in concentric circles, with a gradual assignation of literature, language and press inside culture, some kind of “pars pro toto”; c) “impure” articles, dealig with politics, national specificity and history.

From all articles, we extract and reveal Eminescu’s balanced conception on the act of culture, realizing perennial ideas of the classicism.

Giving them rightfully journalist effigy total, the shock of the nineteenth century Romanian journalist Mihai Eminescu, a culture devoted an amount of articles that are grouped into: a) general articles; b) articles in concentric circles, with staggered assignation of literature, language, folklore, media in the area of culture, a kind of "pars pro toto"; c) articles "impure" escalating political, national character and history. Method consists of verticalization of dozens of journalistic materials, significant clippings. We exegesis distanced somewhat impassive in cultural journalism Eminescu, although there explicit titles of some of the studies "about civilization", "culture", "culture and nationality". In essence, it reveals a healthy conception of culture act, drawing ideas perennial classicism.

Keywords: journalism, conception on culture, national specificity, Eminescu.

1. Introduction

A crucial theme in Eminescu's work, culture insures the rough material for a large number of articles, that we have divided like this:

a) some of them have a general character: "About civilization", "About culture", "Culture and nationality".

b) some others, more specific, which assign education, literature, language, press, reading, history, art, all in the macrodomain of culture: "Education and culture", "The role of of the national literature in the public spirit", "About press", "For a national history", "Arts, from the economic point of view";

c) a third group of "impure" articles, which report, in an unusual way, politics, students, studying as well as the academic forum to culture. More than

once, the incisive depart point is a pretense or an unusual hypothesis. Starting from a single case – only two or three copies of Alexandru Cihac’s “Lexicon” had been purchased by Romanians, and the other ones had gone to French, English, Germans – and the journalist acknowledges that people who don’t read, don’t learn and stay in a state of semi barbarity, a sad memory, an argument of the “intellectual misery” (Eminescu, 1970: 13, 15)

2. The lines of a balanced conception

The article “About civilization” is close to an essay by its bushy problem, its airy style and the logical and easy chaining of ideas. One of these is about the act of reading. One could accept the fact that common people do not adhere to linguistics, but it is shameful that they do not know and honor the great values of the moment.

If them, the 1848 and post 1848 leaders – Alecsandri, Hasdeu, Odobescu (Eminescu, 1970, p. 15), are not known, and this is an impiety, then any effective talk on this theme is useless.

Eminescu’s discernment is not to be found in the area of literary sociology, in the profound exploring of the causes of this unhappy social phenomenon. Eminescu, the “defender” of the conservatives, blames it on the superior layer of the society, of foreign origin. “For the superior layer of Greek and Bulgarian origin in our country there is no language, no science, no Romanian literature” (Eminescu, 1970, p. 13), the supporter of the change of hierarchies and generous in epithets and good appreciations for the mediocre people that make the right politics, so that “the reality is the complete ignorance and corruption at the higher level, black ignorance and deep misery at the lower level” (Eminescu, 1970, p. 14).

This way some men were named publicists, “like Carada, Fundescu, Bassarabescu”, “scientists (like) Cenătescu, Crăciunescu etc., generals like Cernat, national bank managers like Costinescu, ministry managers like S. Mihălescu, ministers like Giani, vice-chairmen like Sihleanu” (Eminescu, 1970, p.13).

The sociological and political shade is grown, exaggerated: the class of foreigners send – Eminescu said – the nation into semi barbarity -, pseudo-culture and pseudo-civilization and they also “altered what the people cherish most: their historical sense” (Eminescu, 1970, p. 14)

Thanks to the conservatives a step forward had been made from the deep obscurity – the acid tone is now a little softer, but not enough to crystallize the Romanian civilization, while in Europe they speak about the praised French, English, German and Italian civilizations (Eminescu, 1970, p.15)

The example with the acorn and the oak cannot be used here, as “semi-barbarism is something else, a disease that comes from a foreign environment (Eminescu,1970, p. 16) – is the firm conclusion of the author.

The severe cultural analyst has a feud with the main publication of the liberals, “The Pseudo-Romanian”, accused for the coverage of the poor cultural status, so that it could shock Matei Basarab and Cantemir. “[The people] cannot be recognized. Not even Basarab or Cantemir could recognize them, if they came back from their tombs” (Eminescu, 1970, p. 14).

The anti-liberal journalist offers a solution. The remedy could be named setting cultivated, illuminated men in key positions, as it is said in “About culture” (Eminescu, 1970, pp. 16-17). If the wish could be turned real at once, then “the really many men that lead the society (the journalist anticipates Camil Petrescu’s theory of noocracy) would be able “to acquire the amount of knowledge gathered by the parents” (Eminescu 1970, p. 17), removing “the

malefic blind crowd” from the towns. The antithesis culture-illiteracy is joined by a new one: village-town (Ali Taha, Sirková & Ferencová, 2016; Siminică, Motoi & Dumitru, 2017) .

As usual, the town alters the character (Pierce, 2016; Jarvis, 2016; Hill, 2016), perpetuates illiteracy (the journalist’s subjectivism, his pro-traditionalism orientation is easy to understand) and there is a danger to sink the Romanian society into “barbarism”, unlike the village (Much later, between the two wars, the poet and philosopher L. Blaga (2010) would write many books about the rural civilization, after his phrase “Eternity was born in a village”. An important book (“Spațiul mioritic”, protector of traditions and habits, as we know that the peasant has “a neat and healthy mind” (Eminescu, 1970, p. 17), which the half-learned responsible for the economic and cultural regress lack.

After the correct definition of culture – “the gathering of an intellectual and moral capital” (M. Eminescu, 1970, p. 16) the publicist claims to be the defender of the rural culture, with the motive that the man who was formed in the spirit of traditions and habits will be physically strong, as compared with the men form the cities, who “have raised stunted from the physical and intellectual point of view” (Eminescu, 1970, p. 17).

Radical, the cultural commentator offers in “Civilization and nationality” (Eminescu, 1970, pp. 17-19) another variant to escape from the impasse: the people itself, not the foreigners are entitled to fix its rights, its laws (the juridical system). The more the code of laws is perfected and stable, the more that people is “more civilized” (Eminescu, 1970, p. 10). Then comes a surprising turn towards the theory of language, to anticipate a thesis still in force today: “The measure of the civilization of a people nowadays is: a sound language, able to express by its sounds notions, by its chain and logical accent thoughts, by its etic accent feelings”. Can anybody say that Eminescu did not

have linguistic revelations? A component of culture is education. A healthy education must be based on the classical languages (Călinescu, 1978; Husar, 2001). To educate is to master one's impulses, to master wishes, while having a culture means to educate one's mind, to use it for noble purposes: "Education is the culture of the character, culture is the education of the mind" (Eminescu, 1970, p. 19).

In "Civilization and nationality" the wordplay persists beyond the twilight of the truth: "Education must cultivate the heart and the manners, culture must educate the mind" (M. Eminescu, 1970, p. 19). A change of attitude is seen in connection with the foreigners, who are forgiven here for some faults, now a tolerant position, honorable for a flexible, not dogmatic, rigid journalist. "The foreign culture cannot ruin a man" (Eminescu, 1970, p. 21). The publicist from "Federațiunea" (through "Civilization and nationality"), "Timpul" (through "About civilization", "Curierul de Iași" (through "Students' Club") predicts a future possible fall of the arts, more and more dependent on the crowd's taste, on the financial side: "About the economy we can tell that, in time, arts become a necessity for the people. But this necessity must be paid – and it is paid with money ..." (Eminescu, 1970, p. 21)

We deduce that art in an ivory tower is not accepted, the analyst works with romantic terms/categories, validating the national art. "So, only the national art has a reason to exist, only the national art creates in the people's hearts the strength and intensity of that subjective feeling which makes everybody feel as a member of the same body" (Eminescu, 1970, p. 21). With "The role of the national literature in the public spirit" (Eminescu, 1970, pp. 22-23) the importance of the language in the culture act is reiterated: the spoken or written exposure is a crucial element, even a criterion of culture. The interconditioning culture-language and literature makes that the maturity of

language is synchronized with that of literature, and this leads to the emancipation of culture. The end is situated over the incipit: each national literature is the center of the national spirit, where all the rays converge from all directions of spiritual life.

Very inventive, the journalist uses a pretext in “The national character”: a discussion in the parliament between Mihai Sturdza’s son and a proprietor from Moldavia, who wanted to warn his superior about the bad influence of the foreigners in history. Still, there is hope: the official language of the parliament is Romanian, not that un-musical, speckled language (Voinea, Negrea & Teodorescu, 2016; Smarandache, Teodorescu & Teodorescu, 2016).

In the appropriate papers we saw that language, literature and history were sequencing culture. Excluding the cult for the heroes, the patriotism, the romanianism, history was connected to ethos, to the national specificity, to the people’s feelings: “history must take into account the nation’s soul movements” (Eminescu, 1970, p. 25), Eminescu writes in “For a national history”.

The press is mean, but Eminescu gives this track up for the sake of the newspapers taxonomy, a bold movement through some criticism and an occasion for a synthesis, which seems to be the first at that moment:

- a) non-intelligent, but of good faith newspapers: “Telegraful”;
- b) intelligent papers, but of bad faith (no examples – n.n.);
- c) non-intelligent, but of bad faith: “Trompeta”, “Poporul”;
- d) intelligent and of good faith: the newspapers from Austria: “Albina”, “Federațiunea”.

“About press” is the first systemic approach of the vaudeville phenomenon during the second half of the bourgeois century (Nimigean, 2012; Tinca, 2014; Bitoleanu, 2016).

The six socio-political papers “Old icons and new icons” satirized, among others, the imposture, the form without content, the lack of professionalism of the university professors and members of the Academy (Vlăduțescu, Negrea & Voinea, 2017).

The article “On the occasion of the award” can also be enlisted here; according to some rumors, the great award in the amount of 4000 francs will be awarded to a member of the Academy (maybe “Pseudo-Ear”, thinks Eminescu), which anguishes the journalist twice: firstly, because that university professor does not deserve the award, secondly because the award ceremony should have been open to the public, not only for an elitist group (Voinea & Negrea, 2017).

This skilled writer considers the supposition that such a reference work does not exist. If so, the prize would not be awarded, which would mean saving the big amount of money or spending it for more effective purposes. Giving the impression that he knows everything, that he is an excellent master of the argument, the publicist opens Pandora’s Box for the predictable “subscribers” to undeserved prizes, giving a probation from the inside (he recommends judging on more relaxed criteria, based strictly on value, not on subjective reasons – only for the members of the Academy) and a European type argumentation (in civilized countries that was the procedure) (Ilie, 2014; Sauvageau, 2017).

Culture is made by young, exuberant people, often by students. All the students are not like the one who had attended the universities from Vienna and Berlin and who found the leisure to take part in patriotic actions at Putna or folk activities (at Bolintineanu’s “Oriental”). But the Epicureanism of the uninstructed people who participated at intellectual activities abroad could be discerned, like the political ambitions and the lack of interest for the national specificity. The sterility of the activity of the students from Bucharest could not

stay unobserved by the smart publicist. As the conferences were not interesting for him (“Où sont les neiges d’antan?”), he recommends orderly, responsible work: for instance, he advises the philologists to collect proverbs and sayings, the legal counselors to study the history of the Romanian law, the Latinists and the linguists to establish a scientific terminology (Eminescu, 1970, pp. 28-33)

For sure, the journalist had a vocation of a visionary. It was less important that culture was examined globally or in parts. The journalist’s state of mind wasn’t constant all the time. Sometimes his optimism puts him in a platonic space, in “the ideal, utopic citadel (the political system imagined by Tamasso Campanella (2007) in his “Citadel of the Sun”), hoping that the time will come when the officials were erudite men and, in another article – the energetic people had creative skills to forge a just legislation; for the rest, the pessimism and the realism sharpen his perception of “the intellectual misery”, of the “lower social layer misery”, of the infiltration of the foreign element in the structure of the romanianism (Andriescu, 1979; Goci, 2002; Del Conte, 2003), without taking into account the theory of the superposed layer, the “semi-barbarism”, the interference of the politics with the press, the literature, the art.

3. Conclusion

Eminescu is the greatest Romanian journalist of the 19th century. He proves to be in journalism also a visionary, a spirit that is attentive to construction, to the incandescent ideas regarding the Romanian culture and civilization, betting on meritocracy and on the European evolution of the Romanian elite, in the name of a classicist ideal.

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