

ROMANIAN LITERARY CLASSICS: BETWEEN OBLIVION AND THE URGE TO MAKE THEM KNOWN

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ABSTRACT. This paper is an interrogation into the nature and final results of the national project which the Romanian cultural association “Junimea” intended to implement both culturally and socially through its aesthetic program and its outspoken leader Titu Maiorescu, in the context of their country staying well behind its possibilities in the second-half of the 19th century. Though there are quite a lot of studies already dealing with this phenomenon in the then Romanian culture, our endeavor will not ignore their contribution to this field, however it will challenge the idea that Maiorescu’s efforts towards a better art were in great consonance with the real need for a satisfactory politics and society. The title of the present study is itself questioning the accuracy of some traditional inquiries into the Junimea moment of Romanian culture, which are more that laudatory of the role of this association as represented by Maiorescu, but tend to leave untouched its failure to improve society or discredit such allegation all together. The purpose of this study is, quite the contrary, to ask if Junimea and its classical culture had a social impact whatsoever, and thus why should nowadays society keep its memory alive at a political level. An insight here will be offered by some younger critics inside and outside Romania whose thought, understandably lacking the old melancholy, may bring a fresh air into the picture, and also by a comparison between Maiorescu’s ideas and Hegel’s philosophy which it is believed inspired them. This is finally how this study attempts to offer a more objective answer as to why Maiorescu’s aesthetics stressed cultural progress and conservative politics, and thus why contemporary Romanians should know it outside its artistic boundaries.

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Introduction

In the last decade there have been many critical studies and essays written by various men of letters, sociologists, economists or politicians outside Romania who seem especially preoccupied with the literary and political phenomenon known as the “Junimea” (The Youth) cultural association founded by Titu Maiorescu in Iassy in mid 19th century Romania. Some of these studies are rather descriptive as they follow the 19th century Romanian cultural life against the background of other Balkanic and East-European such societies, noticing that Romania was not a unique place where cultural elites were in favor of political conservatism in times of otherwise social progress.¹ Nevertheless, since “Junimea” was the first of its kind in Romania we note that it is until now perceived as an association promoting a philosophical, oratoric, and critical spirit, as well as irony and a taste for everything classical and academical.²

- 1 See Joseph LeRoy Love, “Dependency Theories in Rumania”, in Jean Batou and Thomas David, eds., *Uneven Development in Europe* (Geneva: Librairie Droz, 1998), 87-88; J. L. Love, “Resisting Liberalism”, in Michales Psalidopoulos, ed., *Economic Thought and Policy in less Developed Europe* (London: Routledge, 2002), 108-123; J. L. Love, *Crafting the Third World: Theorizing Underdevelopment in Rumania and Brazil* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1996); Charles and Barbara Jelavich, *The Establishment of the Balkan National States, 1804-1920* (Seattle, WA: The University of Washington Press, 2000); Gerald Volkmer, „Außenpolitische Orientierungsmuster Rumäniens im europäischen Kontext 1866-1918“, in Edda Binder-Iijima, Heinz-Dietrich Löwe and Gerald Volkmer, eds., *Die Hohenzollern in Rumänien 1866-1947* (Köln: Böhlau Verlag, 2010), 18-30.
- 2 See Tudor Vianu, the Romanian aesthetician and literary theorist living in the first half of the 20th century, writing about “Junimea” and Maiorescu in “Junimea”, *Istoria literaturii române moderne/History of Modern Romanian Literature*, ed. by Șerban Cioculescu, Tudor Vianu, and Vladimir Streinu (București: EDP, 1971).

On the other hand, there are other studies very critical of the then situation, and while they do make inquiries about the existing relationships between culture and politics, they also try to discern on Junimea's nature and purpose. They ask whether it truly was an artistic event and why it lacked the spirit of enlightening Romanian people who developed unevenly as a nation compared to their neighboring countries.³ Alex Drace-Francis, for instance, mentions as ironical the fact that many contemporary critical works dedicated to the Junimea association in the mid 19th century are foreign and very suspicious of the great influence this cultural movement had within politics through its diverse interest groups. In what Maiorescu is concerned, the debate goes on many pages and is mindful of his personality as a mentor and his artistic patronage that would later develop in a symbolic tradition.

We will here debate on how Romanian literary theorists nowadays, accompanied by the Romanian public, speak of and deal with the so called "cultural embarrassment" caused by the lack of interest, lack of devotion, and misunderstandings which happen every time one attempts to discuss the Romanian literary classics and their times. I have come to realize that the process of raising people's awareness of this strange situation related to the classics of Romanian literature and culture is not something that these theorists would simply carry on their own soil. Instead of trying to revive the passion for Romanian classical literature from within, they tend to blame young critics coming from Romania or abroad for not sharing in their vision of 19th century

3 Alex Drace-Francis, *The Making of Modern Roumanian Culture: Literacy and the Development of National Identity* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2006), 174-199; Lucian Boia, „Paradigmenwechsel dank der Junimea“, in Lucian Boia, *Geschichte und Mythos* (Köln: Böhlau Verlag, 2003), 68-71; Lynn Thiesmeyer, *Romantic Poetry (Discourse Approaches to Politics, Society, and Culture)* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2003); Dietmar Müller, *Staatsbürger aus Widerruf*, 2.3., „Die Schule Bărnăuți: Erster Syntheseversuch des Nationscodes“, and 2.4., „Forme ohne Inhalt“ (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 2005).

Romanian culture as a Balkanic trend and thus a dereliction of cultural and national duties turning literary diamonds into ashes. My point here is nonetheless that the real mishaps that really happened in this field have long ago crossed the authoritarian boundaries since the more one creates bridges between disciplines and cultures the less he/she is prone to get stuck into a given tradition of a “select” group of intellectuals.

On the other hand, Romanian studies on the 19th century literati such as T. Maiorescu or M. Eminescu, for instance, have the greatest chance to sink them into oblivion as long as some critics’ agenda is the only one deemed eligible to get the public’s respect and attention. This select group would not make the difference between, say, Maiorescu’s aesthetics and Hegel’s idealism, or establish the real impact of E. A. Poe’s aesthetics on both Maiorescu and Eminescu’s work. As this study will show, the fact is that a great deal of concepts, ideas, thinkers, and aesthetic models so far put in relation with the Romanian classics are still to be correctly examined in terms of their influence on the classics or the meaning the classics themselves gave them without paying enough attention to their proper context. On the long run, we conclude, the urge of contemporary scholars who deal with these classics should be the need to make them known worldwide when their heritage is rightly understood, and not necessarily for fear of oblivion.

Amongst other things, today’s critics admit that “it would be an exaggeration to reduce Junimea to the status of a mere organ of foreign political interests”, but, he adds, “it is certainly the case that Maiorescu and others were capable of using the ostensibly apolitical institution of a literary society as a cover for the activity of various (in fact conflicting) political interest groups.”⁴ The young critic especially envisages in this context the basic disagreements between Maiorescu’s theories about the state and common goods found in his famous essay *Contra Școalei*

4 Alex Drace-Francis, *The Making of Modern Romanian Culture: Literacy and the Development of National Identity* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2006), 184.

Bărnuțiu/Against Bărnuțiu's School (1868). These differences, although juridical in purpose, gradually come to reflect the antinomy between the two philosophers, as Maiorescu was educated in Germany at Giessen⁵, while Simion Bărnuțiu defended his PhD in Law studies at the University of Pavia in Northwest Italy.⁶ In the light of these differences, Maiorescu's opposition "gains a new logic", thus his access to Prince Carol's favors and the assistance he benefitted from this new situation literally changed the state of Romanian culture back in the days.⁷

Maiorescu and His *electi*. The Concept of "Cultural Hierachy" within Junimea

Drace-Francis speculates on the chronology of Maiorescu's essays, and he discovers he can easily make the passage from those essays dealing with law terminology to studies more preoccupied with art and its essence. It is, for instance, the case of Maiorescu's essay *O cercetare critică asupra poeziei române/A Critical Approach on the Romanian Poetry of 1967*. In his preface to the 1874 edition of

- 5 Concerning Maiorescu's PhD studies in Giessen and later on at the Sorbone as a score of his foremost philosophical upbringing, see, for instance, Liviu Cotrău, "Edgar Allan Poe in Romanian Translation", in Emron Esplin and Margarida Vale de Gato, eds., *Translated Poe* (Lanham, MD: Lehigh University Press, 2014), 76.
- 6 See Alexandru Marcu, *Simion Bărnuțiu, Al. Papiu Ilarian și Iosif Hodoș la studii în Italia: cu documente inedite/Simion Bărnuțiu, Al. Papiu Ilarian și Iosif Hodoș studying in Italy: with new documents* (București: Cartea Românească, 1935).
- 7 Drace-Francis, *The Making of Modern Romanian Culture: Literacy and the Development of National Identity* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2006), 184. The critic reminds us that as early as 1871, at the dawn of the Conservative Party, and later on, when Maiorescu was released from his service as Minister for the Public Instruction (1876), the position he acquired was used to launch members of Junimea such as Eminescu, Slavici, A. D. Xenopol, and Gh. Panu. These necessary, however unselective practices, can be easily associated with nowadays tendencies in Romanian politics.

the said study, Maiorescu anticipated and summarized the catalyzing function of the then new generation of Romanian writers as compared to the convolute character of their culture. However, as Drace-Francis correctly assumes, Maiorescu's juxtaposition has its flaws, since the respective social background was indeed bumpy and Romanian literature lacked an aesthetic direction.⁸ Drace-Francis senses the situation as baffling given the moment Maiorescu chose, i.e., the year 1867, when the literary life was far from an *ars gratia artis* even within the Junimea circle. One may think there were at least two reasons for this precarious hour: first, the members of Junimea were using public funds to establish an aesthetic tradition (which was not necessarily unorthodox), and secondly, the direction/program created with the help of these funds generated a moral simulacre in art: the fancy aggregate represented by Maiorescu's aesthetics would soon receive subjective notes, which penetrated the then society.

The paradigm created in Romania by Maiorescu's idea of art and its purpose meets some discrepancies if one analyses its timetable and expansion. Though one can clearly see how a German mystical aesthetician like Baumgarten could influence Maiorescu as he also chose to employ the peculiar language of the Enlightenment to describe art within exclusive sensorial boundaries, there are some other facts to be mentioned here. What the philosophers of the Enlightenment had to face when they made

8 Here Drace-Francis makes reference to the following ideas in Maiorescu's preface: "The powers of a nation, whether moral or material, are at all times limited...; (Romanians') intellectual energy is also limited. Time, wealth, moral power, if used for useless ends... are forever lost in what the lasting, true purpose is concerned." And in his own words: "This at least is certain, that the worst ideas, the most decadent poetry we have seen lately, are those which contain political elements. And the cause is easy to grasp: politics is a product of reason; poetry is and must be a product of fantasy: one, thus, excludes the other", see *The Making*, 184.

their first assumptions about the artistic beauty had such political extensions as The Great Northern War (1700-1721), that is, an international territorial and colonialist dispute, whereas Maiorescu uttered his thoughts about beauty in an era that fully embraced the Industrial Revolution.

For the sake of comparison, however, he probably considered the 19th century Romanian poetry to be superior to other forms of art, because it required augmented creative efforts and transcendent inspiration. Once accomplished, it could subdue all the others, since it cannot be resisted.⁹ This is how poetry, one feels, can escape the inquisitive eye of philosophy and instead claim that the sublime resides in beauty and pleasure, that the sentiments it unleashes can be explored apart from their essence and tasted as formal hedonism. Drace-Francis follows Maiorescu's judgment and shows that the theoretician makes some methodical distinctions between aesthetical and logical notions, and that in so doing it is impossible for him not to be led into logical errors. Thus, in 1908 we see Maiorescu compelled to come with a few explanations after the 1892 edition of his *Critice/Critiques* was released, and he confesses: „In *Faust*, Goethe refers a lot to science, in *Horace* Corneille talks about Roman history, Scribe... about British politics: but all these only to reiterate on the occasion human feelings and passions.”¹⁰ Hence a logical assumption:

9 In his *Poetics* and *Metaphysics*, Aristotle is not eager to debate much on *poiësis*, although he agrees that creativity should be encouraged, in spite of Plato's idea that creativity equals the artist' madness rather than being a symbol of his craft (*technê* in ancient Greek philosophy would speak for the relationship between the artist' internal qualities and *mimesis*, and not for political utilitarianism). See Stephen Halliwell, *Aristotle's Poetics* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 82-108.

10 Titu Maiorescu, *Critice* 1:11 (București: E. P. L., 1967), 32.

There is, then, a connection – politics and science do arouse sentiments. How are they separated? Maiorescu doesn't explain. He tries on several occasions to distinguish between ideas and sentiments, but he also recommends a definition of beauty as 'a production which gives us the greatest number of ideas in the shortest time.'¹¹

These references to Goethe and Corneille are indeed considered by Maiorescu to be revelatory examples of the idea of beauty as it surfaces in poetry. However, the fact that Maiorescu voids them of their original intention, which he afterwards replaces with personal impressions about the anti-political role of these poems sounds exaggerated. Commenting on the contrast Maiorescu sensed, when writing about Alecsandri, between national sentiment and political idea, Paul Georgescu shows that Maiorescu defended the first as homegrown and pure, natural that is, while the latter was considered liberal and alien, foreign. Regarding this particular contrast, Georgescu advises that Maiorescu's poetics is abundant with ambiguous terms and rather undecided about the relationship between ideas and poetry.¹²

That Maiorescu defended aesthetics against politics at Junimea is a problem also considered by Vlad Georgescu and Matei Călinescu, who reckon that the need to crown and preserve a cultural hierarchy was perceived in this circle differently by A. D. Xenopol, for instance. Within the literary wing of Junimea the idea of progress was conceived artistically, whereas its liberal, more scientific counterpart, represented by historians, economists, physicists, etc., progress was not denying tradition, but instead promoted it in an analogous spirit:

11 Alex Drace-Francis, *The Making of Modern Romanian Culture: Literacy and the Development of National Identity* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2006), 185.

12 See Paul Georgescu in preface to Maiorescu's *Critice* 1: XIV-LV (București: E. P. L., 1967).

In a reply to Maiorescu in 1869 [Xenopol] argued that the present (economical, our note) problems were inevitable in a country undergoing the kind of profound changes Romania had experienced in less than half a century, and they in no way showed that Romanian society was unprepared for progress. Rather, he concluded, progress must be made even faster, since there was no choice but to adopt unhesitatingly the model of Western development.¹³

If progress as a modernizing element was a major reason for the two wings of Junimea to argue on a regular basis, although both parties were directed by people with similar cultural upbringing (both Maiorescu and Xenopol defended their PhDs in Giessen, Germany), the conservatives' anxiety over political and social progress matched their fright for literary traditionalism. Said turning point is only explainable by their fear of losing cultural and social leverage as a privileged stratum. The situation, however, is not deemed as serious enough by other critics, to whom Maiorescu and Junimea have had in the 19th century a „profound good influence on Romanian society... Junimea represents freedom, the ‘critical spirit’, rational authority, and tolerance... the memory of Junimea has been a rallying-point for responsible freedom throughout the 20th century against Fascism, Marxism, and today’s value-free postmodernism.”¹⁴

13 A. D. Xenopol, in Vlad Georgescu and Matei Călinescu, *The Romanians: a History* (Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Press, 1991), 184. See also page 183.

14 Magdalena Dumitrana, ed., *Romanian cultural identity and education for civil society V* (Washington, DC: Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 2004), 6. In chapter IX called “Paradigms of Junimea in Education for a Civil Society”, Carmen-Maria Mecu and Nicolae Mecu are rather laudatory writing about Maiorescu. Although their attitude is understandable up to a point, given his praise-worthy activity of reinvigorating various political and cultural fields (Law studies, linguistics, journalism and literary theory opposed to retaliation), they ignore particular debates around his activity, mainly the applicability of Junimea’s ideas to all social and political strata and its questionable cultural elit-

Unfortunately, those writers from Junimea who continue to enjoy worldly esteem have suffered a great deal because of this aesthetic confinement supported by Maiorescu. Thus overshadowed, they have been widely misunderstood in the last decades by literati and historians especially from abroad.¹⁵ In this context, Junimea itself is being reconsidered lately by some Romanian critics who at some point lived the excruciating experience of learning from harsh tutors for whom Junimea in its times was not a pressure group in the best possible sense.¹⁶

Liviu Papadima debates on the evasive nature of all these national attempts of being consonant with the European spirit or, as preferred by Junimea's circle, to synchronize with the events in Europe, a failure which comes from the fact that we still don't know which Europe we talk about.¹⁷ Being interdisciplinary

ism. Moreover, we cannot ignore their remark that Junimea was a bulwark against Fascism, a political and military ideology not easy to tell from the Nazi antisemitism embraced by many members of Junimea, such as Alecsandri, Hasdeu, Goga, Slavici (with his Nazi eulogy *Soll and Haben/Debit and Credit: The Problem of Romanian Jews*, 1878, where the writer soundly presents Romanians with some ways to rid themselves of this semitic nation). See, for details, Elie Wiesel, *Final Report of the International Commission on the Holocaust in Romania*, 2004 (United States Center for Advanced Holocaust Studies), www.ushmm.org. For the dissemination of German National-Socialist Party ideas through the European cultural elites, see Franz Neumann, *Behemoth: The Structure and Practice of National Socialism, 1933-1944*, introductory note by Peter Hayes (New York, NY: Harper and Row, 1942, 1944, 1948, 1966, 1983).

- 15 Mihai Eminescu, in Marcel Corniș-Pope and John Neubauer, eds., *History of the Literary Cultures of East-Central Europe: Junctures and Disjunctures in the 19th and 20th centuries*, vol. 4 (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2010), 86-92.
- 16 See, for instance, Gabriel Liiceanu, *The Păltiniș Diary: a Paideic Model in Humanist Culture* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2000), 182-183. Also, Sorin Alexandrescu, *Privind înapoi, modernitatea/Looking back, Modernism* (Bucharest: Univers, 1999), 46.
- 17 Liviu Papadima, ed., *The Canonical Debate Today: Crossing Disciplinary and Cultural Boundaries* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2005), 314.

seems more fitting today as a coagulant of intellectual programmes than back in the mid 19th century. In those times, Romanian literature was still wanting and not even remotely connected with other foreign literatures. This can only mean that Romanians were not yet sharing in the European cultural dynamics.¹⁸ If we were to talk about dynamism within European cultural relationships and see Romania present at that round table, it should at least have had its ostracized writers by then; however the truth is that by those times Romanian writers were mainly refugees. From there up to building the cultural conscience of a *literati* exiled is way too long a distance. The same process of eluding the composite nature of being European is noticed by Adrian Marino with reference to 19th century Romanian culture¹⁹, in whose case the strife to have a national, unique culture meant turning back to its folklore more often than not at the expense of Romanian's social progress.

Maiorescu's *Vorstellung*. The Dividing Wall between Spirit and Matter in His Aesthetics

Resuming the central problem of Maiorescu's aesthetics, namely the fact that he disassociated between what gaining access to beauty and to the truth means, it does not seem to encourage a definite opening towards the people, although this was Junimea's motto when it first started its meetings, and on this basis anyone was allowed free entrance in Casa Pogor/Pogor House.²⁰ This strategy is interesting for an intellectual and politician who came to terms with the tennets of Hegel's philosophy

18 The Romanian intellectual movement that announced the real cultural dynamism in the country was conceived between the Two World Wars as a movement whose tradition is still alive in the 21st century not only locally, but world-wide.

19 Adrian Marino, *Biografia Ideii de Literatură/Biography of the Idea of Literature*, vol. V (Cluj-Napoca: Dacia, 1998), 29.

20 Also known as Junimea's headquarters in Iassy ever since 1864, though it was not uncommon for its sessions to also take place in Maiorescu's

and, apparently, with the Enlightenment's attempts to free access to information, i.e., to the truth, thus providing the individual with culture (beauty) and civilization (ideas, science) in a unity expected to enhance political responsibility.

Hegel did not detach beauty from the scientific truth, because the very act of making philosophy was for him a human strive which will only lead to human products, given that we work with human methods. Consequently, for Hegel the spirit lays within the reach of matter, and its sole objectifier is truth (reason), not beauty. In what his thought is concerned, Hegel was repeatedly accused that because they are strongly correlated with methods pertaining to human reason, the aspects involved in his "phenomenology of spirit" lost their power to represent (*Vorstellung*) a reality different than human reality.²¹ Thus, Hegel's phenomenology is in fact a "philosophy from below", i.e., it lays in the contingency of Hölderlin's literature and Schleiermacher's theology, a medium called absolute idealism.²² Hegel did not dismantle the possibility of a direct communication or coincidence between the internal (spiritual) universe and the external (scientific, political) universe.

Hegel's convictions about the collaboration between these two concepts are clear-cut in his *Phenomenology of Spirit*, for instance,

house in this city, see http://www.liquisearch.com/vasile_pogor/-biography/junimea_creation, retrieved May 2016.

- 21 In his philosophy, Hegel is not looking for symbols, but instead insists on the precise meaning (the "meaning of meaning", one might say), thus he proceeds almost mathematically to clear it up, leaving aside his creative skills. See Malcolm Clark, "Meaning and Language in Hegel's Philosophy", *Revue Philosophique de Louvain* 58.60 (1960): 560-561 (557-558).
- 22 It is true that this concept stirred a havoc's nest along decades of talk about Hegel: nevertheless, there are scholars who imply that it is unnecessary to force Hegel's idealism into dualistic schemes, since his definition of everything ideal is quite loose, see Robert B. Pippin, *Hegel's Idealism. The Satisfactions of Self-Consciousness* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 6 fwd.

where in the chapter about the Spirit he adds meaningful content to this concept, exemplified by such subtitles as “*Objective Spirit*”, “*The Ethical Order*” or “*Spirit in the Condition of Being Certain of Itself: Morality*”.²³ Or, if morality has an objective base²⁴ and does not adhere to Romantic impressions about ethics as being relative to the individual and subject to social dynamics, it cannot be inferred that Hegel is to be blamed for Maiorescu’s emphasis on the dichotomy between spirit and matter or what Maiorescu calls the “ideal condition” as opposed to the “material condition” of poetry, for instance. This is even more so as in his *Elements of the Philosophy of Right* Hegel continues to add clarifying meanings to his concepts of spirit (in Maiorescu, sensibility, beauty) and truth (in Maiorescu, idea, concrete), thus proving the logical, if not sentimental impossibility of dividing them into separate fields.²⁵ At the same time, we should bare in mid that Hegel refers to these concepts in his writings on Law, *i.e.*, dealing with institutional and political matters:

It has been already remarked that both the sanctity of marriage, and also the institutions, in which the ethical character of the civic community makes its appearance, constitute the stability of the whole... Everything depends on the law of reason being thoroughly incorporated with the law of particular freedom. My particular end

23 Hegel, *The Phenomenology of Mind*, https://ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/h/hegel/phenomenology_of_mind/contents.html. Retrieved on 15 May, 2016. See also G. W. F. Hegel, *Fenomenologia spiritului*, translated by Virgil Bogdan (Bucharest: IRI, 1995), 253-270; 344-353.

24 For an explanation on Hegel’s idea of objective relationship between ethics and society through reason, see Kenneth R. Westphal, “Mutual Recognition and Rational Justification in Hegel’s Phenomenology of Spirit”, *Dialogue* 48 (2009): 754 (753-799).

25 As a human method, for Hegel the concept of beauty equals morality, otherwise it is but a myth. Hegel would reject this as he also rejected the idea of meta-categories. See David James, “The Transition from Art to Religion in Hegel’s Theory of Absolute Spirit”, *Dialogue* XLVI (2007): 266 (265-286).

thus becomes identical with the universal. In any other case the state is a mere castle in the air... The state is real. Its reality consists in its realizing the interest of the whole in particular ends. Universality exists piecemeal in particularity. Each side appears as if self-sufficient, although it is upheld and sustained only in the whole. In so far as this unity is absent, the thing is unrealized, even though existence may be predicated of it. A bad state is one which merely exists... The state is certainly in its essence of the world and finite, having particular ends and functions. But its being worldly is only one side of it... The state has a vital soul, and this vitalizing power is subjectivity, which both creates distinctions and yet preserves their unity.²⁶

It is actually a common error to credit Hegel with such operational dissensions (even though he was the architect of the thesis of “mutual recognition” (the idea that any conflict is appeased as we recognize in ourselves the self-consciousness of the other)²⁷, and not to identify them in Kant’s philosophy for a change, who clearly stated that there are writings that comply with science and others that can only be understood on a priori philosophical grounds.²⁸ When compared with Hegel, Măiorescu was right to

26 See *Hegel’s Philosophy of Right*, translated by S. W. Dyde (London: George Bell and Sons, 1896), 254; 270-271. See also Hegel, *Principiile filozofiei dreptului*, translated by Virgil Bogdan and Constantin Floru (București: IRI, 1996), 250-251.

27 Kenneth R. Westphal, “Mutual Recognition and Rational Justification in Hegel’s Phenomenology of Spirit”, *Dialogue* 48 (2009): 756-759 (753-799).

28 We think that Werner Krauss in *Opera și cuvântul/Work and Word* (Bucharest: Univers, 1976) makes such errors when he fails to see the swings in Kant’s philosophy. On the other hand, Allen Wood in *Kant (Blackwell Great Minds)* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2005) follows the dysfunctional arguments promoted by Kant in relation to art and the human spirit, which in his opinion is the only one capable of knowledge. When his *Critique of Pure Reason* was published, Kant’s ideas were borrowed by Romantic writers and ideologists such as his sympathizer Rousseau, who would also place some limits upon reason understood as potentially oppressive.

support the need for decisive principles in art; however seen from the outside, the results of his idea were postponed probably due to the dualism of his aesthetic program and the failure to implement those principles he stood by. The art for an elite, a show performed by Junimea, won't bring morality into society, because its principles aim too high and ultimately they are but words. Contrary to Hegel's philosophy, and perhaps the only common ground between Maiorescu and Hegel, these principles lost their power to represent true reality (*Vorstellung*) at Junimea. Hegel stumbled because he amply materialized the concept of spirit, while Maiorescu failed because he overspiritualized (through his elitism and aesthetics) the concept of matter.

Maiorescu emphasizes and pleads for a Romantic style in art when he speaks about poetry and its means/channels, a characteristic we see in his relation with this important literary movement in 19th century Europe. This statement might sound shocking if one considers Maiorescu's call to earnestness and formal correctness, two aspects that he thought defined all poets from Junimea, regardless of their character or propensity. Nevertheless, Maiorescu used twice the same poem of Goethe to first note that the public may benefit from the simplest words in order to perceive meanings, feelings, and deep psychologies kept hidden, and secondly to underline the power of diminutives to connote. But in so doing, Maiorescu himself makes this unexpected suggestion, as to complement Goethe's poem: "A whole perspective on the beautiful harmony of nature opens with these words, but the wise poet only gave a hint to our minds, and left loose the myriad of images (representations) so that they can take shape in the reader's conscience according to his/her own individuality."²⁹

29 In Maiorescu's Romanian translation, this stanza says: De sub pământ/
Un ghiocel/ De-abia ieşise/ Tinerel. Veni o albină,/ Gustă din el: Să ştii
că natura/ Când i-a creat/ Pentru olaltă/ I-a destinat. Vezi Maiorescu,
„O cercetare critică”, *Critice* 1 (Bucureşti: E. P. L., 1967), 35. See the
English version of Goethe's 1814 poem *Like and Like* ("A fair bell-flower/

Was this an example unfortunately chosen by Maiorescu? It would be otherwise difficult to explain why a Goethean poem is here considered mysterious, when generally Goethe's art is clear and direct. Contrary to what is thought of him, Goethe always insisted on revealing the most accurate meaning of his poems so that no alien words are put on his lips and he is not taken for someone else. Goethe would not have willfully written anything that gave way to misinterpretations, at least this is what he says in his mature work *Dichtung und Wahrheit* (*Poetry and Truth*) where he expands on the link between phantasy and truth. Even as Goethe debated on the "Werther moment" in German literature, which culminated with the publication of his novel *Die Leiden des jungen Werthers* (considered in 1774 a real prologue to Romanticism)—as compared with what it later meant for the 80 year old Goethe—he refutes the idea that a gap could come between fiction/phantasy/poetry/creation (*Dichtung*) and truth/reality (*Wahrheit*), much more so as he thinks that past experiences are intertwined with the poet's identity here and now. Thus, he states, "poetry as reflected in this novel should not be understood in the sense of fabrication or a collection of factual details, but a disclosure of higher truths. He intended to present and use his ability to express real truths which led his life as he understood them."³⁰

Sprang up from the ground;/ And early its fragrance/ It shed all around;/ A bee came thighter/ And sipped from its bell; - /That they for each other/ Were made, we see well") in Goethe, *The Works of J. W. Von Goethe in Fourteen Volumes*, vol. 9, translated by Sir Walter Scott, Thomas Carlyle (London and Boston: Francis A. Niccolls, 1901-1902), 16.

- 30 Goethe, *Aus Meinem Leben: Dichtung und Wahrheit*, XII-XIII, trans. by Catherine Hutter (New York, NY: New American Library, 1960), 636; also Goethe, *From My Life. Poetry and Truth*, trans. by Catherine Hutter (New York, NY: Penguin, 1960), 132, as cited in Ramona Simut, *Elements of Cultural Continuity in Modern German Literature. A Study of Goethe, Nietzsche and Mann* (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2011), 98.

That being said, although in Goethe's view poetry presupposes deduction, rather than intuition, it is created by sight and by unmediated contact with reality, with science; Goethe's poetry never parted with physics, and this is clearly noticeable in his *Theory of Colours* and *Metamorphosis of Plants*. In Goethe, the way to beauty is indeed a path to the truth.³¹ The unmediated contact between poetry and truth saves Goethe's art from suspicions of exclusivism, which in turn cannot be said about Maiorescu's essays *A Critical Approach on the Romanian Poetry of 1967* or *Against Bărnăuțiu's School*. The foremost danger coming out of the idea that culture should serve intuitive people only (elitism) or that it can spread so much as to comprise all meanings emerging from all minds, sentiments, and moods (relativism) is that they yield an artistic and social realm divided between culture as a static element and culture as something we are both yearning for and wanting all the same; as Francis Mulhern put it, it is the peril of being divided between culture and metaculture, which brings a scent of something counterfeit and imported.³²

Conclusions

In the 1860s Romania, the import of external politics had undoubtedly a noble purpose. Its outcome, however, and its impact on the future of Romanian cultural life was far from what it proposed. The social reforms that Maiorescu hoped to implement through them, such as the intended plans to help emancipate workers and farmers, for instance, failed to show up like they have in Germany, where Maiorescu was educated. This unfortu-

31 See Goethe's *The Metamorphosis of Plants* from 1797 with its precise, almost visual poetic language.

32 Francis Mulhern, *Culture/Metaculture* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2000), where notions like *cultural theory* (see page 83) or *cultural politics* (page 169 and fwd.) are seemingly poignant to both Marxism and democratic ideology, while *cultural studies* is a concept *en vogue* today as it was during Romanticism.

nate outcome should have been obvious, since the social and cultural realities of the time were very different in essence from what the members of Junimea witnessed outside their country.

Traditionally, this sense of untimely was an idiosyncrasy of Romanian politics, as shown by its failure to implement reforms and laws not only in the 19th and 20th centuries, but also in earlier Phanariot times. The parade represented by the then Romanian politics was not the consequence of Hegel's ideas regarding internal and external laws and regulations; quite the contrary, they are more likely to have sprung from Schopenhauer's though applied to the moral and doctrinary relativism of the time³³ or, as Lucian Boia sums this up, it was a serious contradiction between history (truth) and myth (which is prefabricated and presumably of Romantic stock).³⁴ For Maiorescu to have clearly borrowed from Hegel's philosophy on this point he would have had to make a difference between the concept of artistic beauty and scientific truth. However, Hegel stated that making philosophy, which could be perceived as an artistic endeavor, was for him a human strive which, based on human methods, and which leads to human goods, a reality that Maiorescu was not convinced of.

33 Lucian Boia, *Romania: Borderland of Europe* (London: Reaktion Books, 2004), 86. The author questions Maiorescu's hasteful efforts and their aftermath, his superfluous attempts of implementing European politics in a fragile Romanian context, his persistent move towards this Europe already divided by mass revolts: "Was a contradiction not emerging between the real country... and an 'ideal country' imagined by a small elite?" For the European context, see Edgar Feuchtwagner, *From Weimar to Hitler: Germany* (London: Macmillan, 1994), and Peter Gay, *Weimar Culture: The Outsider as Insider* (New York, NY: Harper and Row, 1968). Maiorescu's fascination with Schopenhauer's philosophy and the latter's definition of art are reflected in his translation of Schopenhauer's *Aphorisms on the Wisdom of Life* from 1872, a time when Maiorescu also brought to light Eminescu's poetical talent.

34 Lucian Boia, *History and Myth in Romanian Consciousness* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2001), 3, 29, 205, 210.

Even if Maiorescu's many references to Goethe and Corneille are considered by him to best exemplify the idea of beauty as it surfaces in poetry, the fact that this Romanian art critic cannot see their original intention is a problem. This step he ignores makes it easier for him to replace these poems' intention with his personal impressions on the anti-political role of poetry, which leads to exaggerations. Consequently, for Hegel the spirit lays within the reach of matter, and its sole objectifier is truth (reason), not beauty, as in Maiorescu's thought.

It is, however, a fact that Junimea did not mean Maiorescu only, therefore it should not be identified with Maiorescu, otherwise diverse voices from Junimea, such as Simion Mehedinți, C. Rădulescu-Motru, Eugen Lovinescu, Mihail Dragomirescu, Ioan Petrovici, Dumitru Micu would be inexplicable to their nowadays readers. Although one can cheer Maiorescu's methodological intentions used to explain his *ars gratia artis* principle in a country that sold political servilism as a role model even to poets, many critics today are also troubled by Maiorescu's preferential moods and utilitarian airs which he apparently made use of for political benefits. His major misshape was not to diagnose correctly the state of social decline his country faced, or if he did he went on thinking that art and culture could afford being comfortable within the general situation.

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