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**THE FICTIONALISATION OF COMMUNISM IN
POSTCOMMUNISM
SUMMARY**

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The interest in Communism became significant, especially after the fall of the regime, given the numerous publications and the related critical approaches which appeared in the years following the Revolution of 1989. After almost five decades of censorship, subjugation and domination, the country regained its freedom. This led to great changes in the literary field, as more and more writers attempted to go back to the historical period that marked their existence and to depict it in various novels. There were, definitely, attempts to fictionalise the period during the totalitarian regime, but the new path of democracy and the absence of repressive measures determined a reform in terms of narrative strategies. Starting from this premise, this paper aims to analyse the evolution of fiction about Communism. Nevertheless, the current approach does not include all the novels which fictionalise the years of the totalitarian regime, by dint of space limits, but some of the major examples were selected in order to support our arguments. We took into consideration their aesthetic value, attempting as well to select other novels in addition to the ones that were previously discussed.

Before analysing the trends regarding the fictionalisation of communism, this study proposes a contextualisation of the main changes brought after the establishment of Communism in the first chapter in order to highlight the manner in which fiction transposes the historical reality. Thus, the political, economical, cultural and social changes are outlined, the focus being placed on the relationship between the historical period and literature. The status of the latter evolved along with the political changes, but the periods of liberalisation during the communist years were mostly propaganda. The Romanian literature published during Communism could not escape the directions imposed by the political party. However, there are some writers who managed to talk about the historical reality in their novels, by using some techniques that allowed them to publish their works, given the restrictions. Three such authors are brought into discussion in the current thesis: Marin Preda, Augustin Buzura and Constantin Ţoiu. The characters depicted in their novels highlight the conflict between individuals and historical reality. Although the denouncement is not made plainly, the presentation of the events in fragmentary discourses, the use of pluriperspectivism and the objectification of discourse represent, undoubtedly, subversive strategies, which are used to suggest a different face of Communism.

Subsequently, the thesis moves to the postcommunist period in the second chapter. After the presentation of the new economical, political, social and cultural reality which was installed in the years of transition to democracy and capitalism, the focus is placed on the literary changes. The restoration of freedom and rights represented something new for the individuals who were not accustomed to decide for themselves. The initial reaction was to mistrust the unknown and to blame the communist years for the traumatic experiences that made them incapable of adapting to the new manner of living. Therefore, numerous non-fictional pieces of writing were published in the period and the readers became more and more interested in them because they resonated with their own experiences. This led to the stagnation of fiction. The new preferences of the readers and the internal changes in the literary field influenced the restructuring of literature. Consequently, a new generation of writers emerged, promoting new discourse formulas, the defiance of norms and the lack of taboo subjects dealt with in fiction. The paper analyses the main characteristics of postcommunist literature, insisting on the evolving trajectory.

One of the main tendencies identified in this paper is the prominent interest in Communism, at a thematic level. The freedom of expression regained after the Revolution of 1989 needs to be taken into account in this respect, but there are also other arguments that support the preference for the theme. The subject intrigued the reader because it pointed out the dramatic confrontation between the political system and its victims. Thus, literature unveiled a world of the past through the effort of memory. New facets of the past are brought to the surface. Consequently, literature becomes an instrument of cultural memory. The *history wounds* can be alleviated through writing because it enhances the process of coming to terms with the past.

In addition, a few non-fictional works are considered in order to observe the manner in which the authors depict the past. What is remarkable is the new angle from which the facts are exposed. There is no dramatic direction in these works, as the writers focus more on highlighting how daily life went over in communism. People enjoyed their lives and managed to detach themselves from the limits imposed by the regime.

The third chapter marks the transition to the fictional pieces of writing published in Postcommunism. Two main directions are identified in a series of novels analysed subsequently in two distinct subchapters: the nostalgic approach of the Communist past and the traumatic remembrance of the past.

Regarding the first category of novels, their analysis is preceded by a theoretical framework meant to be used in the interpretation of each novel. In spite of the beneficial

changes traceable in Eastern Europe after the fall of Communism, the differences between the East and the West were still considerable. The population found it difficult to adapt to the new reality and this determined the citizens to frequently go back to the past, which was perceived as stable and normal. The studies of Daphne Berdhal, Svetlana Boym, Boris Buden and others were considered, in the attempt to demonstrate the postcommunist nostalgia phenomenon. Taking into consideration their works, the thesis points out how the restorative, reflexive and reversed nostalgia (oriented towards the future) are depicted in a series of novels: *Sînt o babă comunistă!* (Dan Lungu), *Băiușeii* (Filip și Matei Florian), *Inocenții* (Ioana Pârvulescu), *Iepurii nu mor* (Savatie Baștovoi) și *Simion liftnicul* (Petru Cimpoeșu). The first novel brings Emilia Apostoaie into focus. The woman meditates on the stable past, unlike the unstable postrevolutionary present, dominated by changes and turmoil. The next three novels deal with the idyllic period of childhood during Communism. The children of the past know how to enjoy every day of their existence in spite of the toughest adversities. The tragical pattern of the events is mitigated because they are perceived through the eyes of the child. Hence, the trauma is overcome in these novels.

The second subchapter analyses the traumatic remembrance of the past. Following the same strategy, a theoretical framework is pointed out, starting from the studies of Cathy Caruth, Jeffrey Alexander, Neil Smelser, Judith Herman, Slavoj Žižek or Mircea Martin. In Postcommunism a wide range of authors focus on the trauma of the past, which emerges at present. Thus, they fictionalize the anger and the regrets that persist in the collective memory. The painful events and the repressed thoughts are brought to the surface. Thus, literature orchestrates the confrontation between individuals and history. By revisiting the past, LaCapra's process of *working through* is fulfilled. The awareness of the trauma allows the liberation from the past's shadows. *O telenovelă socialistă* (Doru Pop), *Un singur cer deasupra lor* (Ruxandra Cesereanu), *Degete mici* (Filip Florian), *Matei Brunul* (Lucian Dan Teodorovici) *Noapte bună, copii!* and *Disco Titanic* (Radu Pavel Gheo) are discussed in this section, which focuses on the traumatic experiences of a series of characters. Opting for different strategies of approaching the past (reflexive, experiential, satirical), the authors intend to outline the confrontation between individuals and history.

In the last section, another type of fiction is emphasized, that is cinematography. Thus, the last chapter represents an attempt to observe whether the directions identified in fiction can be applied to this type of representation. After a brief outline of the changes that occurred in the case of movies in Postcommunism, the thesis includes an analysis of five eloquent movies. Three of them, *Sunt o babă comunistă!*, *Amintiri din Epoca de Aur* și *Cum mi-am petrecut*

sfârșitul lumii, are placed in the nostalgic category. The first one outlines the shortcomings of capitalism and democracy, while the others represent a humorous approach of Communism. The individuals managed to live their lives in the period, enjoying the small pleasures, in spite of the limitations imposed by the totalitarian regime.

The traumatic representation of the confrontation between individuals and history is highlighted in the last two movies, *4 luni, trei săptămâni și 2 zile* and *Nunta mută*. While the first movie presents the trauma of a young woman, physically and mentally mutilated after an abortion during the Communist regime, which was against this type of procedures, the second movie depicts the trauma of a community. Despite the efforts of the individuals to disguise the holding of the wedding, the Soviets discover the event and punish them for disobeying the rules. Hence, the movie points out the intervention of Communism in the idyllic life of the village.

This thesis presented, therefore, the manner in which Communism has been fictionalised. The postcommunist period was dominated by pieces of writing that depicted the previous period. This enhanced the interest of the critics in the relationship between literature and history, influencing as well the development of the present study, which outlines the manner in which the attempts to fictionalise Communism have evolved. Given the fact that the theme seems inexhaustible after almost three decades since the fall of Communism, the current study is open to additions.