

Summary of the doctoral thesis

## ***Feminine figures of the Romanian Literary exile***

Prof. coord. Prof. univ. dr. Alexandru Cistelecan

Drd. Cosmina-Adriana Nicoară (Popovici)

The themes related to exile have been treated in many studies and researches, they have been deeply analized by our greatest writers, starting from the memories of the directly involved, exiled or self-exiled, to the most secret documents found in national and internationla archives.

We can find a lot of studies made over the social, political, intelectual, conceptional reasons that determined the exilation of some of our greatest intelectual Romanians during the last century, but not only.

It is every day harder to identufy the number of titles that explain and investigate all the issues related to the exile and its consequences, there are many volumes of memories, journals, confessions, articles, scientific studies and so on. Nevertheless, this phenomenon conserves an enigmatic side which allows us to examinate and dig deeper, from an authentic theory recognized in the whole world, or proven definitions, to individualized details or politacaly and literarly adapted.

To clearly understand the most important senses of the exile, we explained in our research the political context which launched it, more precisely the whole context of the instauration of communism regime, with all that this instauration meant, that episode beyond example in the Romanian history, years described as apocalyptic by some of the refugees, when the Romanian intelectuals had to choose between two tragedies: staying in their country but silent or risking to be kiled, or cross the border and fight for freedom.

Our study underlines the ways that exile has reached an imnportant position in sustaining our culture, our literature which hadn't been politacaly absorbed, in maintaining our traditions, in shouting out loud for freedom, for the truth to be said and heard even inside our country.

The research also relates the remarkable contribution that our women writers have had during the communism in the process of growing, extending and admitind Romanian literature outside the border, in other countries, but moreover in developing the literature in those countries they had arrived which became their new home, at least for a period of time.

They have written in Romanian – a work dedicated also to the whole Romanian nation – but also in their new host language, even if less, and writing important translations.

## **Research objectives**

The main objective of our research is to catch in only one volume some of the most remarkable feminine figures of the Romanian literary exile, mainly under the tough communism regime, who became symbols of the literary force that artistically surprised the whole Romanian people's voice.

We chose four names from the long list of Romanian women writers during communism in exile, to create four typologies, four women that we believe and prove that have strongly imposed themselves in the Romanian literature from different perspectives, throughout different literary methods, each of them with a different character, but at the same time with some common elements that characterized that specific era.

Monica Lovinescu is, undoubtedly, the most prestigious name of this literary route, so her personality has entered deeply in the Romanian exile literature, just like it crossed the journalistic borders.

Gabriela Melinescu instantly creates, every time we say her name, the image of perfect sensuality, of the feminine beauty dominated by a sophisticated, always seductive intelligence.

Nina Cassian completes the painting with her nonconformism and bravery, depositing the social and literary prejudice, mixing her femininity with the masculine rationalism.

Doina Uricariu brings up in front of us an ideal femininity, dominated by elegance and gentility, she writes less but in a purely feminine way, with an aristocratic breath inspired from the royal manners.

We have studied the literary approach, firstly of the pages that our writers created, realising a unity system of criticising exile literature and presenting the analyses made over years of communism, with the common language, style differences and expressivity.

## **Secondary objectives**

One secondary objective of our research was sketching up a diagram of the movements in the exile literature, but also of the impact that all creations born in that period – even if we talk about poetry, prose, scientific articles, or extending our analysis on the critics written about these pages – have had over the history and even the way they influenced changes at a democratic-political level.

Moreover, we considered that a very important aspect in developing our theme is a review over the common language and expressivity in the exile literature and then also the interpretation of the message revealed depending on each character of the four studied women writers.

## **Methodology of our research**

In exploring our theme, we initially made a conventional study, firstly a brief presentation of the Romanian exile, with a general historical view over the phenomenon, the main periods and their characteristics, in order to develop later important aspects in the feminine literature.

Starting with collecting all the literary works of our four selected writers, to studying the critical articles around them, at the same time reflecting the interpretations of their journals and memory volumes, a selection of the interviews and media articles, we investigate each of our subjects in every creation levels.

Our research establishes inside the cultural and historical space the importance of the literary works and also the reactions they induced during a period of great challenges. Therefore, as a basic analyzing method in our study is precisely their own confessions, their voice concretely where possible, but then also the critical versions. We did not exclude the antagonists' opinions or simply the ones that showed themselves against the literary views of our subjects, which allowed us to investigate all the aspects related to their works, even when they were outside the literary frame of that certain period.

## **Presentation of the chapters**

**First chapter**, entitled *The exile – theoretical preliminary*, is meant to give the reader basic information about this phenomenon, helping to understand the following deep research, it is a brief presentation of what exile represented for the Romanian intelectuality, from the definitions analyzed in different languages, with the changes that the translations of the term implied, to the consequences manifested in time and space.

We chose to reflect also over some details within the definitions in Latin, French, German, English, mostly used in literary researches, to be aware of the evolution of the term and observing the experimental manifestations depending on each people, each person, each writer, but also conserving the similarities and the changes imposed by external conditions.

One of the most important theoretical aspects is related to the political and literary reasons that developed the three ages of Romanian exile, which are presented and explained in our research, in order to be able, later, to correctly describe the conditions in which our writers were psychologically forced to put down on paper the reality from a deep feeling of love for the truth, since inside the country they were forbidden.

Also we treated the suppression or prohibition they had been exposed to and the fight they had to take in order to obtain a certain freedom in exposing their own ideas, the mental freedom which the political system could not restrict anymore.

The constant connexion of our writers, even permanently growing, to their own country, beliefs, nation, culture, is in our study an important mark that belongs to all exiled writers, which we explain how, paradoxically, is growing simultaneously with getting far from Romania, so the physical distance actually connects and brings near the exiled writer to its own country.

We talk about a *far* that becomes *close*, independent of space. This is what helps them conserve their language, their culture, their national identity, throughout a powerful spiritual permanent attachment to Romania.

Therefore, we observed how the exile, considered to be the trauma of the involved, turns into a treatment they could use to remedy that specific trauma

**Second chapter** is a short transition from what we called a theory of the exile in space and time, to a restrained space of women writers that left Romania during communism and started to develop an intellectual work, fighting for democracy, for the truth to be revealed to all Romanian people, inside or outside the country.

**The third chapter** is a study about the warlike character of the Romanian woman writer during communism, perfectly represented by Monica Lovinescu, the most recent image of the intellectual woman, who becomes difficult to be settled inside the borders of theoretical femininity, since her bravery is reflected in all her literary activity.

A great symbol in this chapter is the title of her memories, *At Vavilon water*, extracted from a Psalm in the Bible, which brings an analogy between David crying far from his own country and the exiled who get far from Romania but instead of crying they start to fight for democracy, as a manifest of their love for truth, it is a war they have the duty to win against lies.

Our study also discovers Monica Lovinescu as a rational writer, who succeeds in creating her own balance between the inside patriot and philologist.

She creates an encyclopedic of all that meant relating the real outrages during the communism, the terror that the communists wielded over the people, her pages were to be published in the whole world, but mostly spoken from the microphone of *Free Europe* radio, where she has been for over 30 years. She builds a complex portrait of communist Romania from all points of view and most of all, assuming to be the voice of Romanian people, choosing to speak loud from Paris instead of being shut up in her country..

We bring arguments for her altruism, she writes not for herself, but in the interest of her conationalists, even in her memories creating a critical history of her country and of her people.

Monica Lovinescu becomes a stable spirit of sacrifice in the benefit of Romanian people, she chooses to be a moral intellectual mark and we inserted in our research critical studies that stand to prove her sense of justice throughout her entire life.

**The fourth chapter** is a brief assay of the evolution of the literary work that Gabriela Melinescu, one of the most read and valuable poets during the communism regime, created, building up through it the sensual figure of the intellectual Romanian women, as an idol of the other poets in this category. She treated love as a science, a guide-feeling for her life and profession, moreover being able to capsule her passion for this feeling in a pill in order to generate supranatural approach of the mechanism that totalitarism overused in her generation. We pass over her

creations, most of all over her poetry, proving its superiority perspective through criticism and scientific interpretations.

The literary evolution of Gabriela Melinescu during the years is appreciated by one the greatest critics, Aurel Martin, as an ascending slope of an organized and balanced mind, inwards a professional poetry, taking great advantage of a continuous process of enrichment with sentimental and emotional experience, achieved step by step along her career, in a complex harmony.

Gabriela Melinescu restores the balance of femininity in Romanian literature during the totalitarianism domination. She brings a spirit not less strong considering her status in a world of men intellectuality, but concentrated on healing throughout art, that art provided by an internal fight in which the main target is not transforming the society, but surviving while perpetuating emotions.

Gabriela Melinescu is a lesson of a different type of independence, being far from the revolutionary ways of reflecting it in her creations. She chooses, in a bright intelligent way, most elegant literary manners to compress her emotions considered to be superior to the masculine ones and, at the same time, aware of the reality that if human mind and body cannot succeed in discrowning a system as the communism used to be, the soul influenced by divine forces becomes able to get anywhere and that the infinite is the defined space of human existance created by God, mantained by God, Who is reveled to be the only one able to change or annihilate the entire existance in one second. She is a believer and so she consigns herself in God's hands.

A strong difference between other women writers in communism ages and Gabriela Melinescu is, above all, that although considered naive, she seems more realistic in the way she treats this political regime, she doesn't expect making miracles out of her words, she raises the human misery at an overwhelming aesthetic concern.

The same human drama that other poets tried hard to solve, becomes an universal drama in the poetry of now studied poet; her poems build up a superiour drama, of a rebelle soul situated between the terrestrial life and the eternal one, reached by death, death being considered a step from the illusionary living to a real one, with no ending.

The poetess has got an out of order talent, even though she treats the whole complex life with serenity, purity, modesty and honesty, all these raising her to a human that possesses the benefits of a rare validation from outside, being able to transmit the reader her entire globe of imperfeccions and having no fear of dissapointing the reader, neither the will to being overclassified by the reader. Another choice she makes is not to hide her vulnerabilities, but give them an aesthetic value which transform them in art, but a perfect literary scientific art.

The evolution of her poetry is natural, from simple to difficult, she writes both prose and poems from her own perspective, at the same time sometimes hard enough to be understood by any reader, method not very appreciated by some of the literary reviewers who described it as a nonsense complication of mentality.

Sensuality is the main feature that characterizes Gabriela Melinescu, both her personality and her profession, that dominates her thoughts, her career, her decisions. She falls many times in such deep emotions that almost seems vulnerable, but all her actions reveled in poems are

controlled and premeditated, every relation she binds with other people is described in artistic combinations of words and symbolic expressions.

Mystery and perfection are requisite terms in the comprehension of her pages, which are also connected since her tendency for perfection brings her in a sphere of something mysterious, beyond the normal and usual, the optimism is leveled up to the life after ordinary death, being the only space where one can feel happiness, so any word can be her best friend, because she is so efficient in using the words to create the ideal world, or, on the contrary, to humble the real tough one. Gabriela Melinescu has abilities that she uses to detrone the borders of theoretical literature between men and women, if talking about gender classification.

In manners of the most exquisite ones, the poetess finds the feeling of love in everything around her, in all the forms, and has the capacity to discompound that certain feeling in elegant peculiar drops that sit at the origins of it. Therefore, she presents love under all its significations, from the simple one, natural, childish love, which is more like an attachment to vital things, to the real love that shows up as the most precious inheritance from God, divided equally to all human beings. Love becomes a science and the poetess treats it in both her theological approaches:

Gabriela Melinescu has a tendency to perfection which all critics see in her entire work, but she chooses a variety of motives, themes, words, expressions, elements, supranatural forms to create that wanted perfection, having the certitude that perfection does not exist in real life, she plays its existence in lyrics, and so she generates illusory satisfaction to her heart, and optimism to her soul, while her mind stays rational and lives the imperfections.

**Nina Cassian** represents the nonconformist poetess, she is the image of the strong woman that succeeded in braking the rules imposed by a full of prejudice society, throughout her freedom in thinking, in writing, in acting, her stunning intelligence and ability to rationalize the way she lived her life without depending on society's expectations and judgement, but her own.

She is remarkable as regards the ability of justifying her actions, and moreover her such called detachment from the traditional laws, assuming to be criticised for her dare which at that time was considered out of order.

We analyzed also her frustration born from what she called an ugly face, she admitted having been an ugly woman with out of beauty face features, but she proves a brilliant capacity of using the ugly in order to show her inside beauty, getting to be considered the most seductive poetess of Romanian literature.

Love is something that she can't relate to eroticism only, while attraction is not something coming from external aspect. She is able to make men fall in love with her, despite of her face features, showing how inside beauty wins the external one.

Nina Cassian confesses all her beliefs, all her experiences, she dares to be transparent and offers the reader her entire inside feelings. We must be impressed by her argument to multiple loving, even if there was only one great love in the person of her husband, Ali, who she loved and stayed with until she died. The poetess said she had too much love to offer for one only recipient,

so she afforded to have more lovers which she didn't need to hide, ut providing a feminine absolute freedom to love and show that love.

In our research web ring argumentes of her totally open mind, she cannot obbey unnecesary rules and she rejects every unproductive way of livng. She offers a lesson of consciousnessn of the shortness of live which requires a necesity of being lived at the highest step, in a constant evolution, never choosing to limitate the mind or heart.

Her poetry reveals a literary honesty, just as her personality, and therefore she attracts desputed attitudes from critics.

Nina Cassian is probably the most disputed writer in Romanian Literature and she created a prototype hard to touch.

Her memories complete our study with intimate details of some of the greatest writers in communism, which we consider complementary necesary to our advancing in knowing all aspects of Romanian intelectualty during communism. That is why we entitled one of our chapters here *The world beyound*, because this i show far her confessions go, to the most intimate actions and feelings of her lovers, great personalities of that society.

Nina Cassian dominates the passing beauty, as a shadow she has been living in, and transpasses it to an endless beauty reflected in tha power of freedom that women have the right to. Her reader must be an inteligent open minded, with o limits, able to accept any challenge to understad the uncommon state.

**Chapter VI** is dedicated to Doina Uricariu, the rigurous poetess of Romanian exile literature, sophisticated, with a high sprit of elegance, discretion, grace, as a powerful mark of feminity in our literature.

She desirves a space in our research since she comes to complete the poetry picture with originality, modernism and rational expressions, in opposition with Nina Cassian, Doina Uricariu being an example in obbeying the rules, respecting the laws and not conceiving moving things from their established place.

Her memories come to fill an empty spac in our colección, descrbing the royal world, seen from inside, with the experience she had lived with king Michael and queen Ana, where she inherited also an aristocratic way of thinking. Growing up in a disciplined family, her father had been army officer, she grows up with a healthy mind and beautiful conceptions of life.

Her journal gets an unusual title *The inferiour maxilar*, inspired by the war bomb attack that destroyed her father's face, who then had suffered many surgeries to recover, but most of all, gaining a great respect for the monarchy since it was king Michael wo saved her mother in a certain conjuncture, by proposing her to marry officer George, recentlty hurt in the war.

We analize the literary work of a poetess that always wanted to research and dig for precise information about anything around her.

Her poetry is described by literary critics as a fully elegance and courtliness, with an exelent vocabulary, eposing reality in a disciplinary lyrical way. Her poems are almost

mathematicaly written, showing extreme apreciation for moral values, for corect ways of living, for untouchable truth, proven and understood deeply.

Her inheritance is seen in her entire work, poems of critics, a rigurous mind with a strong tendency for perfection, dignity and clean character, she gives Romanian exile literature a pure and different dimension, illustrated in concrete facts written corectly.

Is not to be ignored from our research her sensibility and feminine behaviour reflected both in her poems and literary critical articles.

If Nina Cassian is an example of freedom in feminine space, Doina Uricariu is the exelent grace woman, who crosses pain in feminine pretntions to the smallest detail and uses pain to create, to write, to live better.

Doina Uricariu creates a poetry meant to illustrate highly sophisticated the reality we live in, and not to create ilussions.

## **Conclusions**

For all our four studied Romanian writers during the exile, Monica Lovinscu, Gabriela Melinescu, Nina Cassian and Doina Uricariu, the exile was a desease whith the sme treatment, which was writing the truth. And the importance of our reserch is the complementary ways that these intelectual women made it happen.

They built four different ways of living the same communism, of writing about the same terror, of fighting for the same freedom, completing each other and all together completing Romanian literature with a very important inheritance.

They all became managers of the words reflecting the forbidden truth.

What Monica Lovinescu could transmit throughout her revolutionary way of expressing is the same reality that Gabriela Melinescu surprised in a seductive way, raised over the human mind, that Nina Cassian disputed daring to disobey orders and that, later, Doina Uricariu explained in an elegant precise manner.

The four subjects of our research represent clear figures, tees of Romanian exile literature, they are proven to be bridges between a painfull history and a brilliant democratical present.