

**THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND RESEARCH
THE "1st DECEMBER, 1918" THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBA IULIA
THE FACULTY OF HISTORY AND PHILOLOGY
THE DOCTORAL SCHOOL OF PHILOLOGY**



**DOCTOR'S DEGREE
SUMMARY**

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**Alba Iulia
2020**

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**THESIS – VIRGIL IERUNCA – MONOGRAPHIC STUDY
- SUMMARY -**

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Keywords: poems of exile, The Romanianism, the devil's laboratory, the communist re-education, diarism, controversy, the pamphlet essayist, the marginalized writers, the mirrors of criticism, the magazine founder, the Free Europe.

Summary

The pendant of our exegetical approach, entitled Virgil Ierunca – The Monographic study, is based on the desire to bring to light not only the true leaders of the Romanian exile, Eliade, Ionescu, Cioran, but also other creators of literature and magazine founders who deserve to be mentioned in the consciousness of today's reader. This is how I came to the complex personality of the writer from Vâlcea, Virgil Ierunca, and the commemoration of the centenary, this year, turns my doctoral work into a well deserved reward for everything he gave to the nation, pleading for pages of the Romanianism.

The exegesis which we propose is structured in six chapters and in its content we tried to trace the defining elements of the man, the critic, the essayist, the pamphlet, the diarist, the poet, the translator, the anthologist and the publicist from Vâlcea, outlining a synthetic literary portrait, by the dissociation of the information, the comparison and the insistence on those lesser known or marginalized facets of the writer in exile. Our monographic research is based on the finding that a writer's investigation is based on multiple researches, on the careful collection and on the processing of materials, on the research of all documents, in order to dispel prejudices, offering objective and detailed reconstructions, through the help of the punctiliousness and the balance of value.

We focused on emphasizing some unknown sides which were not sufficiently analyzed so far. It is not only about the Parisian literary world, but also about the activity carried out before he was forced to choose the path of the exile, as his work was still too little known by literature lovers. The purpose of the work is a recovering and an integrating one, to rectify erroneous data, to dispel

prejudices, to fill some information gaps, our material can be used in order to establish a future national fund of Romanian exile.

Firstly, we analyzed The Meaning of the author's existence and then we outlined the relevant stages which were very important axes in its development. He was exiled in 1947. Coming from a family of farmers from Vâlcea, he lived his childhood in his native village and graduated the school with very good grades, which means he was a great student. He knew the thrills of love, but also the sympathy or the admiration for his formative teachers, a good example in this sense being Lucian Bădescu, the teacher who instilled his love for French literature. The high school was related to the term giving up, because, although he entered a military high school, he gave up to choose a civilian high school where he could discover his vocation as a future man of letters. In the years before his departure, he enjoyed much appreciation for his fine and superior intellectualism. He received a scholarship from the French government and left the country, being on his way to freedom and trying to live his own life. In Paris, his destiny intertwined with Monica Lovinescu, following the same path of the fight against the communist imposture. The house in Paris is the clear proof of the constant and common preoccupations of the two spouses, dressed in volumes, writings and valuable records, which was repatriated and donated to the Romanian state as a valuable treasure. The urns of the famous critic were brought and deposited together with those of Lovinescu's family. Because he denounced the communist ideology and the uniformity of the way of thinking and of the existence, Virgil Ierunca became a targeted attention of the Security, registered under the name of operation Artur, the Flee legionary or Lădeșteanu's case.

Then I went on the less approached and the known path, that of a unique poet, in the chapter The Lyrical Refinement, a part that demonstrates a different attitude of the poet in relation to the world and the universe. Like Ovid, exiled at Pontus Euxinus, the poet Virgil Ierunca reveals the context, the hypostasis of the exile, with doubts, sensibilities, emotional turmoil, the inconstancy, the confusion, the returns to people and spaces of longing, the searches and the ecstatic feelings. The time in battle with the limit and exile, the space of rupture, are the two themes that absorb the poet's human being and load it with the fire of creation, appealing to the revealing metaphor, to symbols of extinction, to the feeling of alienation, the incurable melancholy and the endless wandering. In long or very short verses, I found a wandering poetic self, located on the winding roads, at locked doors, in the labyrinth of darkness, where only words illuminate and give meaning to existence.

The Interpretations chapter of the volume of poems revealed to us the double preoccupation of Virgil Ierunca, that of translator, an expression that comes from the solid and increased attention to French and Romanian literature, from the attraction to the sensitive thrill of

the poetry. The translator of the poetry facilitated our access to the free verses of Pierre Emmanuel, in a Song of Hölderlin, using modern ways of expression, so that the beauty of creation meant to be a triumphant ascension in the sign of accents, and Hölderlin is a kind of demiurge who controls the sublime play on the words. Yves Bonnefoy or Pierre Oster capture the attention of the Romanian poet through the existential questions subtly transposed into lyrical discourses, through the uneasiness of people who think about what is happening around them or to artists who have lost their words, being a setback for the translator in his own existence. Being inspired by René Char writer he interpreted some thoughts, being attracted by their depth and morality, an exercise of sifting and sorting the values of existence and humanity. I detected a great admiration for the poems of Lucian Blaga that he wanted to make known in French literature, being aware of the huge personality of the author of the corolla of wonders of the world, verses in which the exercises of artistic procedures are so rigorously elaborated that they open a new horizon with therapeutic effect.

In the process of knowing the creation of the writer from Vâlcea, in the subchapter Literature of the Romanian gulag, I analyzed the volume Pitești Phenomenon, a document book, which, from a hermeneutical point of view, provides historical, legal, political and literary documents of a prison topos that seems to be an antechamber of death. Although it would seem in the realm of the fiction, the thing which shocked us was the implementation of the re-education program. Made up of documents received from the country, the book is so well done that the boundary between the reality and the fiction cannot be easily detected. The pen of subjectivity is identified when he tries to probe the mental state of the victims, the transformations that detainees felt, because the writer can only intuit their consequences, he is not a victim of imprisonment. It has not only got the quality of authenticity through first-hand documents, but it is also a parable of Procust's Bed imposed by the communists, a sadistic training to which the people of Romanian culture were subjected. Through this book, Ierunca had the courage to enter the laboratory of the communist devil, to become his historian and to be like a late revenge of the destiny of some detainees who lost their lives or were marked for the rest of their lives by the Romanian gulag concentration camp.

I also discovered in the Diaristics and self-confessional techniques section, another component which is responsible for the valorizing aspect of the writer, a form of marginalized expression, at the frontier of literature, being considered a mixture of ideas, of yesterday and today. Because it does not always have a literary mission, the diary gains interest if it is published and if its author has a subtle ability to capture the real, the flight of time, the inner struggle or the plans for the future. To drive away the longing for Romania, Virgil Ierunca resorted to the intimate

diary, keeping in only the years 1949, 1950, 1951 and 1960, in its yellowed pages. His diary has not only documentary qualities, but also cultural, formative and in accordance with the regime of the immediate note, a rather poet's diary. Considered by himself the work of a clerk, the notes from the diary were collected in the volume *The Past years ...*, Excerpts from the diary, Greetings and accents, Lost letters, like a shield against the forgetfulness, all the activities of the Parisian cultural and literary life, the atmosphere of the Romanian exile, the meetings between the people of culture, the living of the exiles loaded with many shortcomings, the pleasure of reading, important events and the irrepressible longing for Romania.

On adoptive lands he discovers the intense feeling of the friendship, so in many pages I found indirect mini-portraits of prominent personalities of exile: Mircea Eliade, Emil Cioran, Eugen Ionesco, Paul Celan, Mihai Fărcășanu, Lucian Bădescu, Ion Pârvulescu, Basil Munteanu, Alexandru Busuioc, Horia Ventilation and the list goes on. In addition to recording books as full of the soul, ordinary days when the seasons, the sun, Sundays, all seem different from those in Bucharest, I noticed that his diary, , reconstitutes the superhuman attempts of writers to publish the cultural magazines in the West, to preserve Romanianism and to fight against the evil established by communism. True workshops of Romanian culture, creation and diaspora, through their content, the newspaper pages try to appeal to forgetfulness, truth and authentic testimony, a just and unforgiving mirror of Romania seen in Romanian literary circles, bringing the lost landscape of exile.

In the fourth chapter, I best exposed the orientation of the author of literary criticism, dedicated to the fiery , polemical, solemn and ironic circle, and for this reason his writings go beyond the idea of simple review or chronicle, becoming Romanian cultural events through detailed analysis, well-motivated. The volume *On the contrary* combines controversial texts which were transmitted to *The Free Europe*, having as characters important writers who fell under the clutches of the party opportunism, falsifying the history, bowing to the power. Producing true literary justice, the critic discovers the weaknesses of the works, of the authors and also he comments on them and educates the writers.

Writers such as Șerban Cioculescu, Vladimir Streinu and Adrian Maniu, who he says they should have chosen the silence, young writers or the plagiarism case of Eugen Barbu, are passed through his critics.

A classification of writers by characteristic phrases does not escape its critical magnifying glass: Thee Stalinists, the pseudo-writers, the new people, the corrupt juniors, the right-wing extremists and the patriotic communism.

The chapter ends with the analysis of the lines from the work *The Anthology of Shame*, a column held by Virgil Ierunca during the exile that followed the slips and compromises of the Romanian intellectuals, edited by two researchers from the National Institute for the Memory of Romanian Exile. The author identified several categories of actors: the servile members of the regime in the field of literature, theater and art; the category of praises brought to the Romanian Communist Party and to Nicolae Ceaușescu; speeches dedicated to Ceausescu leader; the praise of the achievements of Elena Ceausescu, the Red Army and Lenin; the definitions of the Golden Age, and the last classification concerns the school and the youth. The hypostasis of an anthologist emphasizes the offensive and polemical spirit, the criticism being for him a duty, an attempt to develop with an exact address, in the name of the holy Romanian truth.

The fifth chapter is complex, because the essay writings are the pieces of resistance of the writer from Vâlcea. Considered by many theorists as an intellectual adventure, the essay is a way of expression extremely present in the writers in exile. Barometers of turbulent times, the essays of the critic from Valcea are cultural and literary approaches from the postwar period, in the content of which I noticed the side of the wise moralist, with ironic accents, built on lucidity, erudition and common sense that start from a recovering motivation. He turns his sentences into a play on words in which the trophy is just the truth. The volume *The Subject and the predicate* blended essay texts, dated between 1960 and 1991, proposing literary chronicles, obituaries, evocations, studies on Romanian writers in exile and in the country, portrait sketches that invite a re-evaluation of the shadows of the past. Reference names are mentioned such as: Mircea Vulcănescu, Constantin Noica, Alexandru Busuioceanu, Mircea Eliade, Lucian Bădescu, Dinu Pillat, Ioan Cușa, Mihai Cismărescu, Mihai Fărcășanu, Paul Sterian, Virgil Mazilescu, Ștefan Augustin Doinaș, Ana Blandiana, Mihai Ursachi Ana Tăușan, Gabriel Liiceanu, Sașa Pană, Mircea Grigorescu, Gheorghe Grigurcu, Nicolae Manolescu, Mircea Zăciu, N. Steihardt, Paul Celan and the examples can continue, mini-portraits and literary destinies fractured by the cloak of history, without which a literature of exile cannot be possible, the role of the critic is to illuminate some unknown or marginalized aspects of their creation.

In the subchapter *The Essay as an identity digression* we found that the Romanian volume is the confession of an intellectual in which he makes a documentary about the Turkishization of some Romanian writers, but also the profile of others who kept their conscience with dignity, preferring the coldness of prisons or penance of silence. The essayist justifies his process and divides the writers into several categories: the sinners out of frivolity, the sinners out of so-called revolutionary inertia, the sinners out of fear of upset their past, the collaborators with shyness and distance, the professional opportunists and the system officials. He analyzes the activity of some

people of culture, such as Constantin Brâncuși or George Enescu, but also the political situation of the time, starting with Russia and continuing with Western Europe.

The subchapter entitled The essay as fidelity to oblivion exposes with competence and professional meticulousness other important portraits from the Romanian literary and cultural landscape, which the essayist inspects with his objective eyes: Dan Botta, Father Dumitru Stăniloae, Alexandru Busuioceanu, Vlad Georgescu, Mircea Eliade, Daniel Barbu, Alexandru George, Mihai Zamfir, Ion Vinea, Octav Șuluțiu, Margareta Sterian, N. Steinhardt, Ion Biberi, Pericle Martinescu or Petre Stoica. I noticed that, on the same line of reconsidering the works of some marginalized writers, Virgil Ierunca made a deep analysis of their creations, proving a real knowledge of the literary creativity.

I forgot mentioning the side of the publications before his leaving for Paris, through the intervention in the chapter The Publication pages, The Romanian publishing itinerary, and I noticed the writer's tendency towards polemical iridescence, towards the practice of parallelism, the convergences, the interferences, the relations, the affinities for French writers or other immersions in the francophone space, in articles that attracted his fair appreciation, but also the disgrace of others.

In his rich journalistic activity it can be also mentioned the periodicals in which he was either employed or only a collaborator: Albatross, The Time, The Weather, The Royal Foundation Magazine, Victoria, The World, Agora, The Spark of Youth, The Social Life CFR or The Youth. We took care to rummage through the corners of the time and to analyze some of these articles, some fragments of the past, discovering the bibliophile Virgil Ierunca, in whose field is consolidated his entire solid cultural personality. The Publicist approach from exile presented Virgil Ierunca as an editor, an editorial secretary or an essayist who promotes the values and makes radiographs of the collaborationism of intellectuals from the country and from exile, through the contribution to Romanian language magazines from abroad, publications published by most of the times, from own sources: The Evening Star, The Book of the longing ,The word in exile, The Destiny ,The Romanian human being ,The Romanian Union ,The Magazine of Romanian Writers, The Limits.

The title of the articles after the fall of the communist regime synthesizes the entire dimension of the critic from the pioneering period to the fully formed one, through which he finds the essential that individualizes a work and analyzes it from this perspective. An important aspect is the side of the interviews offered, which reveals the defining signals of his critical ideas and comments. We should mention the considerations he makes regarding the philosopher Emmanuel Lévinas, Petre Țuțea, for whom the risk was the color of the existence, the file of the conviction

of Dinu Pillat, the sociologist political scientist living far from Romania, the diary pages of Florence Albu, who did not enjoy the appreciation of the critics, the destiny of Albatros magazine, which he worked with the help of Geo Bogza and whose works face time. From the interviews offered after '89 we find other aspects: he confessed to Octavian Paler that he missed Romania's absence, and her reunion after 40 years was a therapeutic journey; Elena Ștefoi had the idea that we should not forget the past; he told Alexandru Cisteleanu that notoriety is beyond his wishes; Gabriel Liiceanu stressed the importance of art and creation to serve the truth; he explained to Liviu Aionesei the important role of the intellectuals of all times in the smooth running of the society, and he reminded Vasile Gogea about the internal and external exile to which the writers were subjected.

Another aspect that had to be imperatively detailed was that of the literary critic, at the radio microphone of the Free Europe, which was very important for the Romanian cultural heritage, because the literature in the country lived in the cult of the word spoken and written by him, because his chronicle literary raises or abolishes a writer. In these radio shows, Virgil Ierunca captures a difficult period of Romania, from 1949 to 1989, and presents "the metaphorical democracy" and the great names of writers who adhered to the communist ideology. At the same time, the life of both the Parisian circles and the Romanian exile is closely followed, because it gave birth to some first-rate personalities: Mircea Eliade, Emil Cioran, Vintilă Horea, Al. Busuioceanu, who tries to tell the truth far from the country and to create a national literature of great aesthetic quality.

The group of Romanian intellectuals around Virgil Ierunca lived the exile as a borderline situation, of some people trapped in the net of the destiny, divided between the homeland left behind as a hope and the unforeseen existential present. In the subchapter Epistolary writing as a deistic and symbolic cut-out, we presented the content of several letters received by Virgil Ierunca from Mihai Fărcășanu, Alexandru Busuioceanu, Constantin Vișoianu, Gabriel Liiceanu, HRPatapievici, Mircea Eliade, Lucian Bădescu, Mihail Andricu, Horia Stamatu , all having as subject the good collaboration between them and the attempts to bring real services to the Romanian culture. The correspondence between Professor Mircea Popa and the Parisian critic underlines the increased interest of the two writers in laying the foundations of the literature of the generation of anti-communist resistance.

Presented in the country as subversive, Virgil Ierunca adopted the technique of stabbing the opponent in words, managing to withstand a totalitarian regime based on lies and terror, so In the mirrors of criticism, Virgil Ierunca appears different. Some contemporaries praised him, others considered him a partisan and dependent on the options of a small literary group in Bucharest.

What is certain is the fact that through his efforts he signed an appeal for the freedom of cultural life in Romania. He made the pamphlet a favorite space of aesthetics, and the controversy of ideas an existential urgency. His daily voice made the Romanians not to lose hope and to survive a troubled historical time.

The conclusions we reached were that Virgil Ierunca's writings are summarized in several attributes: the reality, the utility, the value, the recovery, the dignity, the gravity and the uniqueness. All the works signed by the critic from Vâlcea have an indisputable value, because they followed the tragedy of post-war Romania, tried to coagulate the Romanian exile and sign a file for the archives of the future, a file that must always remain open in the consciousness of those who will follow, broadening dissidents' horizons and internationalizing Romania's problems. The innovative character of the thesis consists in approaching the creative personality of the poet, critic and writer Virgil Ierunca, identifying the cultural imaginary in his works, illustrating the writer's conception of the importance of writing as an artistic act, but also outlining the defining elements of his style.

We conclude that in this exegetical work we followed the way in which the biographical approach to exile paved the way for the discovery of the poetic, the essayistic, the pamphlet vocation in a controlled political and a literary climate, in a recuperative approach of everything that meant the meaning of existence, the avatars exile, the birth, the schooling, childhood, the first journalistic attempts, life in Paris, in a profile of the intellectual here and there, but also the pursuit under the watchful eye of the Securitiy. Being structured in six chapters, the thesis develops a systematic and comparative analysis of the way in which the work of the writer was reflected in the Romanian literature and in the critical consciousness in order to detach the coherent elements.

Approaching almost all levels, we managed to systematize these hypostases of Virgil Ierunca's personality, having in the back, the connection to a vast bibliographic and documentary materials. Demonstrating a vast knowledge of the ancient and modern literature, betraying his broad vision of the French and Romanian postwar literary world, having a correct perception of the events and phenomena of the era in such diverse fields, managing to maintain the names of forbidden intellectuals, for the understanding of the destiny of culture and of Romania, in which he took part, Virgil Ierunca remains a book always open for new research, and what he writes urges us to read, but especially to meditate. We can certainly place him in the status of an important post-war critic of Romanian literature and culture, a moral landmark for those around him, the knowledgeable and uncompromising voice of the Radio Free Europe that offered a purifying grid and a sword of value.

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