

Orwell as Understood by East-Europeans

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Abstract: *In her article “Orwell as understood by East Europeans” Viorella Manolache discusses the relationship that East Europeans maintain with the works of George Orwell, being interested in the context and the dynamics of perception, in the effect that Panait Istrati’s 1930s preface had upon the reception of Orwell as a beginning writer, as well as the delayed, lethargic and atonic recognition Eastern Europe bestowed upon the discovery of Orwellian works. “A reading for the initiated” (Czeslaw Milosz) or a dangerous preference for readers “keen on dissident and contesting literature” (Vladimir Tismăneanu), Orwell is studied in depth in the post-1991 Romanian cultural space. Détente is configured here by Timothy Garton Ash and Ralf Dahrendorf, through a recourse to George Orwell as the ideal response offered to Eastern European revolutionary ideals of the 1989 moment.*

Keywords: *Czeslaw Milosz, Eastern European literature, literary reading.*

Czeslaw Milosz (*Gândirea captivă*) makes two punctual references to the possible relationships that East Europeans could maintain with the work of Orwell. The first, integral to the corpus of the text, reads as follows:

if many have read Koestler’s Darkness at noon, only a small number know Orwell’s 1984 (due to difficulties in buying the book and the danger of owning it; it is known only by some members of the Inner Party); Orwell fascinated them by a depth of detail which they know too well, and by the form of satire, in the spirit of Swift’s tradition; this form cannot be practiced in the countries of New Beliefs, as allegory, polysemantic by its own nature, would go beyond the boundaries of socialist realism and the limits of censorship. Even those who know Orwell just by hearsay wonder how a writer who never lived in Russia was able to gather and publish so many accurate observations. The opinion stating that there are writers in the West who understand the workings of an unusually complicated machine, whose parts they themselves are, gives them food for thought, taking into account the stupidity of the West (all translations are made by Ian Browne) (“mulți au citit Întuneric la amiază de Koestler, puțin cunosc 1984 al lui Orwell (din cauza dificultăților de a procura această carte și a pericolului de a o deține; ea este cunoscută doar de unii membri ai Inner Party); Orwell i-a fascinat prin surprinderea detaliilor, pe care ei le cunosc bine, și prin forma satirei în spiritul tradiției

lui Swift; această formă este imposibil de practicat în țările Noii Credențe, deoarece alegoria, polisemantică prin natura ei, ar trece dincolo de granițele realismului socialist și de limitele cenzurii. Chiar și aceia care îl cunosc pe Orwell doar din auzite se miră că un scriitor, care nu a locuit niciodată în Rusia, a putut aduna și publica atâtea observații exacte. Opinia că în Occident există scriitori care înțeleg funcționarea unei mașini neobișnuit de complicate, a cărei parte sunt ei înșiși, le dă de gândit, ținând seama de prostia Occidentului” [Gândirea [61-2]].

A second reference occurs against the background of Włodzimierz Bolecki’s afterword, opening a reporting application: “for several decades Milosz’s book has been *a reading for the initiate* in Poland—like other works of the great poet. Despite its inaccessibility in bookstores and libraries and the prohibitions of censorship, the title of this work functioned as a perfectly conveyed hint, as did the title of George Orwell’s most important book – *1984*” (“timp de mai multe decenii cartea lui Milosz a constituit în Polonia o lectură pentru cei inițiați – de altfel, ca și celelalte opere ale marelui poet. În pofida inaccesibilității în librării și în biblioteci și a interdicțiilor cenzurii, titlul ei a funcționat ca o aluzie perfect transmisă, ca și titlul celei mai cunoscute cărți a lui George Orwell – *1984*” [Gândirea [270-71]].

The above statements converge towards a duplicate analysis which is meant both to re-accredit the Orwellian work and to lay off the significance of its irrigating substrate, as a referential presence, albeit not explicitly named and unexamined, and also as a form of specifically addressing both the West and the East European, in particular.

Starting from such evidence and paying attention to the chapter “The West” from Milosz’s book, it may be stated that, Orwell’s option to have the East European “in sight” occurs amid “greater seriousness”, as Westerners and Americans are not sharing “the experiences which teach us about the relativity of judgments and skills of thought” (“experiențe care ne învață relativitatea judecăților și a deprinderilor de gândire” [Gândirea [49]]. What is missing from the West, in general, Milosz thinks, is precisely the acceptance of “everything that happens somewhere is going to happen everywhere” (“ce se întâmplă undeva se va întâmpla pretutindeni”)—the East-European’s consciousness being thus “far more advanced in understanding contemporary events than that of the inhabitants of those States which have not known anything particular” (“fiind astfel incomparabil mai avansată în înțelegerea evenimentelor contemporane decât aceea a locuitorilor din statele care nu au cunoscut nimic deosebit” (Gândirea 49-50).

Just for this purpose, Milosz insists, the Easterner has a different sociological and historical type of reasoning, is responsive to predictions about “sudden changes in Western countries” (“schimbările bruște din țările occidentale” [Gândirea 50]), being both a simple man (without being a Stalinist), with access to dialectical materialism (becoming accessible through the use of simple language and in the light of experience), as well as the just observer of any odds of progress and correct placement in the historical frame (not inside the “convicted” part of history). The Easterner manifests confidence in propaganda, in “observation stripes provided for in advance” (“fâșii de observație dinainte prevăzute” [Gândirea 51]), but remains captive in a “ponderous mechanism of collective life” (“mecanism greoi al vieții colective” [Gândirea 52]), perceiving with difficulty what is new in the West (which does not come from the Center), and seriously tackles only those features of social life which are manifest on an organized scale, proving to be, conclusively, a sharply limited, slightly disappointed judge.

A reading of the novel *1984* in such a particularizing manner is highlighted by Winston Smith, who behaves like an exponent of East Europeans with a complicated attitude, which cannot be reduced to a range of sympathies and dislikes” (“atitudine complicată, imposibil de redus la o serie de simpatii și antipatii” [Gândirea 72]). A product of “love discrimination” (“iubire înșelată”) and a victim of the intellectual-emotional bad luck to be born into a specific epoch, he is vigilant in relation to the capital aspects of life: the temptation to measure his existence and to correct his “slips into the ravine” (“alunecările în prăpastie” [Gândirea 72]).

But more than that, the protagonists of *1984* integrate into the prophetic atmosphere launched by St. I. Witkiewicz’s 1932 novel *The Greed*, that Milosz considers to be a bizarre novel, made difficult by the new vocabulary created by the author himself, with shocking descriptions, involving a topic which seemed to be pure fantasy. The action is set in an unspecified time, in the past, but “could just as well be set in the present day” (or in the future, we note); instead, it is explicitly placed in a fixed, clearly determined space: in Eastern Europe, in Poland. Milosz presents Witkiewicz by outlining his destiny with the help of a few key words particularly suggestive for the conceptual description of a totalitarian society: “the wilderness” (“pustiul” [Gândirea 27]), the arid, hostile, destructive environment where there is no religion; “the absurd” (“absurdul” [Gândirea 29]), the existence of metaphysical reasons leading to a total change of political concepts, easily recognizable in “the more sensitive, more intelligent and more neurotic individuals” (“indivizii cei mai sensibili, mai inteligenți și

mai nevrotici" [*Gândirea* [29)]; "necessity" ("necesitatea" [*Gândirea* [31]), the fear, even the prohibition of thinking on their own ("he who says A must also say B" ("cine spune A trebuie să spună și B" [*Gândirea* [32)]; "the success", "the mystery of political appeals decided at the peak, in a distant Center" ("succesul", "taina demersurilor politice hotărâte la vârf, în îndepărtatul Centru" [*Gândirea* [36]), impregnated by a liturgical atmosphere, by unmeasured spaces (Eurasia), by the effectiveness of terror and the rigor of dispute, the ingenuity of deceit, disdain for philosophically-dialectic untrained opponents, but also by a permanent and systematic movement of boundaries.

Interpreted through such metaphorical approaches, *1984* proposes, in turn, a number of references that define: the anti-wilderness of the antique shop space, empty of meaning and devoid of utility. In fact, the wilderness corresponds to a space objectually reminiscent of a certain residual collection (tight, filled to the brim, although there is nothing inside: dusty painting frames, trays with screws and nuts, old chisels, penknives with stunted blades, blackened watches).

Worthless in themselves, but bearers of memories, these objects are displayed (on a small table, a pile of trinkets, from which Winston picks up a round shiny object fallen on the floor—a coral, "a heavy piece of glass, round on one side and flat on the other, which has almost the shape of a hemisphere. And the color and consistency of the glass have a special, distinctive smoothness, like rainwater; in its core, there is a strange object, a pink, twisted, enlarged round surface which resembles a rose or a sea anemone" ("o bucată grea de sticlă, rotundă pe o parte și dreaptă pe cealaltă, care are aproape formă de emisferă. Și culoarea și consistența sticlei au o netezime aparte, ca apa de ploaie, în miezul ei, se găsește un obiect ciudat, roz, răsucit, mărit de suprafața rotundă, care seamănă cu un trandafir sau cu o anemonă de mare" [*1984* [68]) and imbued with extra attraction, because beyond the futility of the object, it is also bizarre, compromising, suspect. The upper room represents the holographic space of a collection of simulacra, "as if someone lives there", with furniture, duvet, a picture or two, a "deep and shoddy armchair", an old-fashioned glass clock, a huge bed, a folding table, a bookcase with no value, an engraving of the Church of St. Clement the Dane, a pure, non-perverted space, in which politics has not arrived (without a panopticon!). The wilderness signifies here a space without memories, a past systematically changed and subjected to diversion towards other purposes, and intended for the appearance of propaganda ideas.

In *1984* the "absurd" and the "necessity" expounded by Milosz become a homogeneous category, fit to be measurable by absurd reintegration and necessity subsumed by O'Brien to three essential steps: "learning",

“understanding” and “acceptance” (“reintegrarea ta, Winston, zice O'Brien, cunoaște trei etape: învățarea, înțelegerea și acceptarea” [1984 [186]).

The solved mental scheme is reduced to two directions: “I understand how; I don't understand why” (“înțeleg cum; nu înțeleg de ce” [1984 [187]), invalidated by imposing controlled certainties: the proletarians will never mutiny, and the Party may not be overturned or destroyed in any way. The precepts of a new programmatic religion are being propagated, the ingenious, diabolical creation of the Party (“We are the priests of power”; “Our God is strength” (“Noi suntem preoții puterii. Dumnezeu nostru este puterea” [1984 [189]), and O'Brien explains the religious hermeneutics of power from the word to the idea that denotes both the collective meaning of religiousness, and matter manipulation by controlling the mind/consciousness, both with a precise purpose: the deletion of the world from the maps.

The sole stake consists in circumventing the laws of nature deciphered in the nineteenth century, often labeled as “simple custom contrivances” (“before man there was nothing. After man, assuming he would get to lapse, there will not be anything; outside of man, there is nothing” (“înaintea omului nu a existat nimic. După om, presupunând că el ar ajunge să se stingă, nu va exista nimic, în afara omului, nu există nimic” [1984 [190]) and in the supply of a particular metaphysics stating that solipsism is not appropriate, but a concept which expresses the opposite of digression, being a method which proves that “what matters is not power over things, but power over people” (“puterea—puterea reală, cea pentru care trebuie să luptăm zi și noapte—nu este puterea asupra lucrurilor, ci asupra oamenilor” [1984 [191]). The world-that-will-come is the opposite of Utopias imagined by ancient hedonistic reformers: a less humane world, in which human life is an arbitrary construct, reinforced generation after generation by increasingly subtle and sophisticated formulas.

“Anti-success” profiles, in an Orwellian manner, a Winston very much alike to the last of the humans, alone, profoundly alienated, thrown out of history and, as such, almost nonexistent, close to the image of Christ, “the guardian of the human spirit” (“Tu ești păzitorul spiritului uman” [1984 [194]), exhibited and judged. Furthermore, O'Brien is the replacement of the Witkiewiczian merchant of Murti-Bing pills, by which “man became less sensitive to the metaphysical elements” (“omul devenea mai puțin sensibil la elementele metafizice” [Gândirea [24]), the problems confronting him becoming delusional and suddenly insignificant. Witkiewicz's epilogue immortalizes his heroes as adepts of murti-bingism: schizophrenics, doubled, prone to detect improper

thoughts and deviations, preserving inside both their new condition, as well as traces of ancient structures.

For Orwell's protagonists, normality is a state and a statistical reality; in the end, Winston dreams long, pleasant, happy dreams; surrendering, lacking malevolence and lust, giving up the fight and any intellectual effort. The intersection of old-new stages and oneiric-trance-reality overlays are sketchy, and leading, by analogy, to the standard image of daring chess move, which suggests a sequence of reconciliation with the past. The final Orwellian passage contains the entire repertoire of themes of interest in the writer's palette: hunger, misery, gloom and crowding, momentary happiness, sacrifice.

The final frame is placed under the sign of the game—a piece on the chess board triggers the memory of scenes from childhood, of playful excitement re-enabling the authenticity of a world gone by. The wooden box dice sends him back into empty reality, to the wilderness of remembrance (maybe the same kind of room Mr. Charrington has, with antiques that preserve memories; in the ludic sequence, each participant wins four games—the old items bought by Winston cost \$4). Under the appearance of dissimulation and of false memories, the innocent game (Snakes and Ladders) becomes a strategic game (chess), once again confirming the unreality (resulting from the process of depersonalization and dematerialization) of the individual-in-the-system, but also the visionary, “imaginative sense of prophecy” (1984 211): “some things happened, others did not happen” (“Unele lucruri s-au întâmplat, altele nu s-au întâmplat” [1984 [212]]).

George Orwell's first novel, *Down and Out in Paris and London* (January 1933, Victor Gollancz, London), published in French translation (the first in a series of translations devoted to Orwellian works) by Gallimard, Paris [*La Vache enragée* (May 2, 1935), “traduit de l' anglais par R.N. Raimbault et Gwen Gilbert”], with a preface by Istrati (“préface de Panaït Istrati”) creates a doubly defining connection: the first relationship of connectedness certifies a continuing before-after: George Orwell debuts, and Istrati signs his last text; the second correlation establishes a lineage relationship, a (reciprocal) instinctual-temperamental recognition-endorsement of the (then) unknown Orwell and a reaffirmation of the last Istratian “resurrection act” (Istrati, *Amintiri* 277). Both relationships validate an evident mutual conditioning: Istrati prophesizes (feeling/intuiting) Orwell's destiny, but denounces any diversions and historical horrors to come, demonstrating its anticipatory force.

Panaït Istrati decides to preface the first book published by Orwell, in the rigid context of the 1930s, aware of the minimal effect that could (by his

publishing activities) be raised by an anonymous, unknown author, who (at the time) did not mean anything to anyone. The preface is labeled either a freak text (in line with a long series of Istratian 'exotics'), or a literary accolade in a Romain Rollandian style, and Istrati's option for prefacing Orwell's text may be considered an appropriate reflex of useful involvement in the European literary space. Moreover, Orwell's book gives Panait Istrati the (mature) pretext for a revalorization of the marginal and the vagabond (a typology to which both Panait Istrati and Orwell belong), and for a matrix accreditation of a particular type of literature and, thereby, delivering concepts and literary-artistic creeds with regard to the essential role of authenticity and of originality in the literary disputes of the 1930s, by issuing a firm position relating to social reality, but also to the repercussions of the degradation of literature.

The Orwellian text offers Istrati a double freedom; on the one hand, he returns to the Gorky-like model (Orwell is appreciated and imagined as an English Gorky), outlining the status of "great man", structurally tragically, with an interesting and sincere figure, genuine and impressive, in the plan of literary creation, which he delineates by formulating objections about political reaction and familiar attitude (*Trei decenii* 424); on the other hand, Panait Istrati replenishes his vocation of discoverer/prefacer of books that, "in blatant defiance of their own failures" ("în ciuda lipsurilor flagrante" [*Trei decenii* [425]) would become bestsellers, and in favor of the beginner author (Panait Istrati's note to Petre Belu) he launches, Istrati pathetically pleads for an establishment of Justice and pledges to defend their cause (*Trei decenii* 425).

Belatedly published in the Romanian space (the preface dated Bucharest, March 1935, appeared posthumously in the *Viața Românească* magazine no. 2 in February 1982, in the translation of Marin Bucur), and missing the rating of "famous preface", the Istratian text is still essential for a number of intersections (confirmed over time) validating two spirits similar in structure (adventurers, vagabonds and exotic temperaments), whose biographies can be placed under the sign of loitering with specific accents, with obscurant experiences and marginal, to-the-limit feelings. Excluded from the normal patterns of society, both authors will have a fulfilled literary destiny and will react politically, through resolute positioning, being both "dogmatic-without-adhering-to-anything" (*Trei decenii* 154) and immune to any ideologizing-final regimentations.

Panait Istrati is recognized as "revolutionary" ("staying on the same barricade") ("revoluționar"; „stau pe aceeași baricadă" [*Trei decenii* [48]), "not quarreling with Bolshevism", but with "bad Bolsheviks" ("necertat cu

bolșevismul”, ci cu „răii bolșevici” [*Trei decenii* 48]), a constant follower of the idea of revolutionary thought concepts (with the hope that bad Russian Bolshevism will make room for another type of Bolshevism (*Trei decenii* 50). Opinionated, supporter of textual doctrines created for the people, a declared enemy of infamous theories which make use of, and abuse man, a non-Trotskyist (although he had maintained a long correspondence with Trotsky and met him personally, without becoming friends, though feeling sincere admiration for him), deceived by Stalin (“he gave me the impression of a genuine force of nature” (“mi-a dat impresia unei autentice forțe a naturii”) [*Trei decenii* 225]), Istrati declared himself to be an “individualistic altruist”. On a critical tone, Istrati amends the tricks by which free nations pervert their constitutional regimes, resorting to mutilations/violation subsumed to false laws whereby they asphyxiate and abolish “the holy liberties”/citizen rights (*Trei decenii* 224-26).

In the preface to the novel *La Vache enragée*, Istrati (*Trei decenii* 424-25) places beginner Orwell in the (consecrated) neighborhood of A.M. de Jong and (controversial) Petru Bellu, a correlation with double meaning, drawn either from a direct meeting of the Dutch novelist with a genuine thief (who writes to him from jail, anticipating the discovery that the tramp was an honest man, a genuine poet), or of Istrati’s deliberate involvement in defending Petre Bellu (discovered by Panait Istrati, who writes the preface to his book *Apărarea are cuvântul/ Defense may speak now*, 1936—which, despite its obvious shortcomings, has sold over 65 000 copies).

Thus, Istrati’s injunction of placing beginner Orwell in proximity to de Jong is not too hazardous, considering the future of Orwell. He had the mission of an observer and author, a loudspeaker, a campaigner for the cause of those at a disadvantage; he respected his choice of discreet living, assuming a simple existence in the countryside; he studied topics of interest and intersection between literary issues and the effects of politics, as well as their involvement in the measure and measurement of the literary and artistic productions of the time; compared to these, Orwell assumes a position of both criticism and political (unbiased) analysis. With reference to Petre Bellu, Istrati appreciates his debut of a “totally anonymous writer”, devoid of any “sleek godfather” (featuring the ability to “insinuate himself” in the literary environments of the time), tolerated/accepted by Marton Hertz—a so-called “bad” editor (the local counterpart of Victor Gollancz, we note), whom he meets in 1925 (*Trei decenii* 253). An “authentic Hobo” (vagrancy means “the only way of life worth living”), Bellu literally “breaks out” from a literary point of view, “misery,

isolation, illness and neglect” being unable to stop him from delivering his literary credo (compared by Istrati with the style of *Le Grand Meaulnes* by Alain-Fournier [*Trei decenii* 255) as a beginner author, at the same time “lesser and greater than Remarque” (“mult mai mititel și mult mai mare decât Remarque” [*Trei decenii* [281]), “good hearted and with a generous disposition” (“are un suflet bun, o inimă generoasă” [*Trei decenii* [281]), integrated into the professional typology of the “sentimental rebel” (“revoltat sentimental” [*Trei decenii* [281]).

Much more than a generous gesture (in the manner of Rolland), or clue which translates into a sympathetic, empathic relationship report of lineages and synchronicities, Panait Istrati’s preface opens and anticipates the importance of Orwell’s writing and its significance in the literary, cultural and political space of the time. The value of Istrati’s approach lies not only in his endorsement of Orwell inside the French literary space, but also in the description and release of his works in the East European space, even if Eastern Europe is recognizably delayed, lethargic and atonic in exploring (and not in discovering) the Orwellian body of literary works.

Timothy Garton Ash’s “Introduction” to *Orwell and Politics* (2001), argues that Orwell remains one of the most important political authors of the twentieth century; an inspiring model, radical, dedicated, intelligent, with a fertile imagination; but also the involuntary originator of an unusual movement and a particular dynamics, as Orwellianism is considered to be an ubiquitously (in excess), used concept, a “pejorative adjective” of totalitarian terror, of falsification of history by State structures, or a personal manner of euphemistic usage of language in order to camouflage morally outrageous ideas and actions; or, even more, a “complementary adjective” which denotes the attachment to/display of an open intellectual attitude (“Introduction” xvi-vii).

Even in the foreword to his evocative record of the anti-communist revolutions sweeping Eastern Europe in 1989, in *The Magic Lantern*, Ash reproduces, reveals and comments upon Isherwood’s assertion—“I am a camera”—(“Sunt un aparat de fotografiat” [*Lanterna* [297]) a subjective metamorphosis he rewrites, clarifies and reframes by the statement “I am a lantern”; he claims to be therefore, a direct witness to the events, a scrutinizing object, belonging to the category that has one position and a single, correct and critical observation capacity, but also the ability to collect information from all sides, in one container. Although disadvantaged in relation to the historic plane or the consumed past (the witness can be effectively present in only one place, at one time, and has a tendency to over-value solid things and/or events that he

saw/heard through direct participation), the witness finds and distinguishes the truth, through ad hoc observation. Moreover, in addition to documents, he has access to records of sequences, through attention given to revelatory details of on-site research facts and spontaneous events, and has the ability to recover the meaning of “what was not known about the future” (*Lanterna* 297-98). The quality of witness can be compared to the viable instance of a presence able to know reality directly, and then filter it (“I have not described the events in Bulgaria and Romania because I was not present there”—(“n-am descris evenimentele din Bulgaria și România întrucât n-am fost prezent la ele [*Lanterna* 297]), suggested as a counterweight to the depiction of “the guest from the United Kingdom”, “independent observer” or “spontaneously-called speaker of an election speech in the Polish language in a Silesian coal mine” (“vorbitor numit spontan al unui discurs electoral în limba poloneză într-o mină de cărbuni din Silezia” [*Lanterna* 289]). Witness powers are subject to the mandatory requirement not to omit essential landmarks, details or major issues and to appeal, in a directory manner, to the method of logging and classification of various dates, observing the temporal criterion—the first, belonging to contemporary events, and the second, at the beginning of the nineties—both, however, being landmarks which incorporate the opinion of the lecturer, considered a *plus-witness* who overlaps his own framing over attached nodes (*Lanterna* 299). Ash considers visible data to be of interest (the elections in Poland), events with symbolic value (Hungary, Imre Nagy's funeral), pointing to the two fundamental landmarks, with unpredictable consequences—the fall of the Wall (Berlin) and the “year of truth” (1989).

In *După 1989*, Ralf Dahrendorf re-potentates the status of the witness with a look upon the present (“we are in November 1990”) (*După 1989* 10) setting the rhetorical question “must revolutions fail?”, inside a *conceptual music score* presented at the George Orwell Conference held at Birkbeck College, University of London, on November 15th, 1990. Considering the formal aspect of revolutions to be just one of the narrative threads of a story about fundamental change, Dahrendorf uses Orwell as the ideal response offered to any revolutionary ideals ready to build a new world, a proofreading mediated by the particular context of the Conference, through a re-reading of the stages of revolution blockers, as they are illustrated in the fiction *Homage to Catalonia*. Dahrendorf does not consider Orwell a “revolution enthusiast”, but adheres to his desire to tell the truth, “in an exemplary manner, quiet, simple and honest” (“într-un mod exemplar, liniștit, simplu și cinstit” [*După 1989* [12]). Like Orwell, considers Dahrendorf, distanced from sentimentality and a follower of truth,

Ash punctuates in his turn the revolutionary idea of building a constitutional order, close to the precepts of the American Revolution, valuing the spirit of democracy. But, as Dahrendorf states, democracy advertises two different nuances: the first, of a constitutional nature, considers democracy an arrangement whereby governments can be removed without revolution, through elections or through parliaments; the second, “much more fundamental”, allusively transposed into practice by Orwell and Ash (calling on the workers’ councils and professional organizations), through the development of authentic democracy, returning governance to the people and the transformation of equality into real fact (*După 1989* 13). In the footsteps of Orwell, Dahrendorf considers war and revolutions as not essentially different in practical terms: “war is often a matter of domination and self-assertion, while a revolution is a matter of hope” (“războiul este de multe ori o chestiune de dominație și întotdeauna de autoafirmare, în timp ce revoluția este o chestiune de speranță” [*După 1989* [15]]), although the story of the revolution preserves and deploys its own logic (both of narrative and of private narration).

Vladimir Tismăneanu signs the prefatory note to the 2002 Romanian edition of *1984*, an approach which, beyond reassessing Orwell’s status as an exemplary standard author of the “literature of awakening and apostasy” (“literaturii trezirii și a apostaziei”) [Tismăneanu also indicates this opinion in the preface to *Homage to Catalonia*, 1997—“A Staggering Book: George Orwell, *Homage to Catalonia*” <<https://tismaneanu.wordpress.com/2009/06/01/o-carte-memorabila-george-orwell-omagiul-cataloniei-in-top-polirom/>>], where he revalues the ideatic-thematic rapprochement between Orwell and Koestler, through monitoring and investigating stages of conversion which lead to equating Orwell with “a true unbeliever”, gradually unveiling myths, critical of the inability of the left to disentangle itself from Bolshevik propaganda directives, and of his final positioning against “ideological narcosis”], and imprints with a sense of direction the two essential nodes of the present article.

The former aims at making direct contact between East Europeans and the Orwellian body of works, even if such access depend solely on the predisposition (opening) of a philosophy student in the Bucharest of the seventies, able to assert, in a rebellious, nonconformist but also non-conforming key which rejected all indications (and study requirements) coming from the center, the status of “avid reader of dissident and protest literature” (“lector avid de literatură disidentă și contestatară” <<https://tismaneanu.wordpress.com/2010/08/27/george-orwell-si-noaptea-totalitara/>>).

Tismăneanu's confession certifies the effect of a text in circulation, even though reading Orwell was done in an underground fashion, through (superficially) thawed breaks of the system and amid a limited liberalization (the idea of being able to contextually sort, in the communist Romania of the seventies, through "the formidable capacity of anticipation" and the "extraordinary premonitory strength of the British writer" ("formidabila capacitate de anticipație", "extraordinara forță premonitoare a scriitorului britanic" <<https://tismaneanu.wordpress.com/2010/08/27/george-orwell-si-noaptea-totalitara/>>), contains in itself a reflex and an anticipatory predisposition).

The latter directory node reconfirms Orwell's belonging to the group portrait of thinkers who "dared" to de-conspire "out loud" the truths of the system, a gallery to which Tismăneanu adds Orwell (as first author in the series) to the same Koestler we mentioned above, to Albert Camus (naturally, by the way), to Istrati, to André Gide, Stephen Spender, Ignazio Silone, Hannah Arendt or Manès Sperber. Tismăneanu recalls the presentations deferred to Orwellian literature by Monica Lovinescu at the *Free Europe* radio station, as an act of familiarizing East Europeans with antitotalitarian literature, but also showing him the skills of an alternative arrangement to sorted, sealed and dictated narrations and bibliographies. Moreover, Lovinescu (*La apa*, 2010 ebook) cross-checks the Gallimard publisher's policy to integrate *1984* in its "holiday and beach" collection, with the effect of dark, nightmarish, intolerable despair felt by any East European who came in contact with Orwell's novel (Lovinescu reads the text in the context of the "dreadful" summer of the year 1950 in the Boulevard Raspail attic); a book which "any refugee from the East did not read, but lived" ("refugiatul din Est nu o citea, ci o trăia"). Against the backdrop of the failure of the Hungarian revolution, Eastern Europeans will recognize in Orwell the exact description of the state of facts at that given moment, of complete dehumanization, and an accurate description of the Apocalypse of the century. In fact, considers Lovinescu, Orwell's originality consists in the ability to stretch fiction beyond the landmarks of veracity, responding to questions about how "our daily world will look".

Though Tismăneanu's prefatory approach self-acknowledges its status of "complicated act" by reactivating the inventory of a "culture under totalitarianism", the proffered links are arranged by the formula of "enlightenment and explanation of the essence of the totalitarian world, its secrets, the logic of the phenomena of strangulation of freedom and, above all, the genesis of the alarming voluntary process of enslavement" ("să lumineze și

să explice esența lumii totalitare, logica ei secretă, fenomenele de strangulare a libertății și, mai ales, geneza alarmantului proces al înrobirii voluntare” [Tismănean “Răscrucile însângerate”, <<https://tismaneanu.wordpress.com/2010/08/27/george-orwell-si-noaptea-totalitara/>>]). His diagnosis of Orwell is perceived as an ongoing mode, placed in the extension of Spinoza and Hobbes, resonating to the Popperian descriptions of a “closed society”, an “organic reflex”, a “dislike of totalitarianism in any form” (“detestare a totalitarismul în oricare dintre ipostazele sale” [Tismănean “Răscrucile însângerate”, <<https://tismaneanu.wordpress.com/2010/08/27/george-orwell-si-noaptea-totalitara/>>]), and a way of anticipating what both Hannah Arendt and Solzhenitsyn will recognize and analyze as “patterns in the operation and survival of a totalitarian formation” (“legitățile de funcționare și de supraviețuire ale formațiunii totalitare” [Tismănean “Răscrucile însângerate”, <<https://tismaneanu.wordpress.com/2010/08/27/george-orwell-si-noaptea-totalitara/>>]).

The Romanian publishing and editorial space actively resonates with the translation of Orwell’s work, feeling, since 1991 (with Mihnea Gafița’s translation of *1984* at the Univers Publishing House, Bucharest) both the signs and signals of the opening (hinted at by the dismantling of the Soviet Union), but also the need to recover a certain dynamic insight, prohibited by censorship up to that point.

As part of a structured plan (started by the Univers Publishing House), Orwell is also integrated into the translation approach of the Polirom Publishing House in Iasi, the Library Collection stating that the Orwellian body of work justifies both the status of essential, as well as the format of pocket edition, and agreeing that Orwell requires to be studied in depth and at leisure, but also maintained close to the bearer. Well-dosed, the Polirom translation policy insists on a return to Orwell, imbuing him with a specific publishing dynamic: 2002, 2012 and 2017, *Ferma animalelor (Animal Farm)*, translated by Mihnea Gafița; 2002 and 2016, *O mie nouă sute optzeci și patru (Nineteen Eighty-Four)*, translated by Mihnea Gafița; 2003 and 2016, *Zile birmaneze (Burmese Days)*, translated by Gabriela Abăluță; 2009, *Omagiu Cataloniei (Homage to Catalonia)*, translated by Radu Lupan; 2009, *Aspidistra să trăiască! (Keep the Aspidistra Flying)*, translated by Mihnea Gafița; 2010, *Jurnale (Journals)*, translated by Vali Florescu; 2010, *O gură de aer (Coming Up for Air)*, translated by Ciprian Șiulea; 2011, *O fată de preot (A Clergyman’s Daughter)*, translated by Vali Florescu; 2011, *Cărți sau țișări (Books v.*

Cigarettes), translated by Ciprian Șiulea; 2017, *Fără un sfanț prin Paris și prin Londra* (*Down and Out in Paris and London*), translated by Vali Florescu.

To these adds (using just the year 2016) a series of interrelations designed to restore the paternity of a certain vision of projected political analogies (a return to center stage of Ion Pena, as an anticipatory author of *Animal Farm*—see Roland Cătălin Pena “The Romanian writer, born in the village of Belitori, who surpassed George Orwell, the author of the novel *Animal Farm*” [EVZ special, June 15, 2016, <<http://evz.ro/scriitorul-roman-nascut-in-comuna-belitori-care-i-a-luat-fata-lui-george-orwell-autorul-romanului-ferma-animalelor.html>>]); and explicit references—selective—(A. Pătrușcă “Orwell 2016. The EU establishes the Internet Police. Censor Teams will notice Political Misconceptions” [EVZ special, June 8, 2016, <<http://evz.ro/orwell-2016-ue-infiinteaza-politia-internetului-echipe-de-cenzori-vor-sesiza-derapajele-incorecte-politic.html>>]; Ana Ilie “An idea worthy of Orwell: the rich country that set up the Ministry of Happiness” [Ziare.com, <<http://www.ziare.com/international/stiri-internationale/idee-demna-de-orwell-tara-bogata-care-a-infiintat-ministerul-fericirii-1408220>>]; Vlad Barza “Why the world of terminals connected to the Internet must make us think about the similarities with the famous novel *1984* by George Orwell” [HotNews, 29 September 2016, <<http://economie.hotnews.ro/stiri-it-21320145-lumea-plina-terminale-conectate-internet-trebuie-puna-ganduri-cum-exista-asemanari-celebrul-roman-1984-george-orwell.htm>>]; Alin Ciubotariu “A campaign as in Orwell’s manual” [<<http://alegericluj.ro/>>, December 3, 2016]; “Those who vote corrupt, impostors, thieves and traitors are not a victim! They are an accomplice!—George Orwell” [Gazeta Cluj, 8 February 2016, <<http://gazetadecluj.ro/un-popor-care-voteaza-corupti-impostori-hoti-si-tradatori-nu-este-victima-este-complice-george-orwell/>>]; Edmond Constantinescu “Caragiale (Trump)—Orwell (Hillary)” [September 2016 <<https://oxigen2.net/2016/09/28/curat-caragialetrump-curat-orwellhillary/>>]).

There are also some extensive studies also require to be mentioned: Clementina Alexandra Mihăilescu “An Approach to George Orwell’s *1984* via Lacan and Soja’s Thirdspacing”, *Journal of Romanian Literary Studies*, no. 9, 2016, 123-27; Rodica Grigore “George Orwell. The Dystopic Discourse and the XXth century novel, *Saeculum*, year XV (XVII) 1, no. 2 (42)/2016, 53-65 or Toma Sava “From Plato to Swift and Orwell, from Utopia to Dystopia”, *JHSS, Journal of Humanistic and Social Studies*, Vol. VII, No. 1 (13)/2016, 9-17). To these one could add Constantin Roman’s “Book Review” (Constantin Roman “Book Review: Orwell behind the Iron Curtain”, Centre for Romanian Studies, 26 February

2016), as well as a host of cinematographic restitutions and reinterpretations (Horia Dumitru Oprea "George Orwell. A Biography I-III", 30 March 2016, or, in the same *blog* spirit, decreeing *Animal Farm* as "Book of the Month", August 2016; Monica Stoica "From Big Brother to TV series. The man, surrounded by screens. Technology and life in the near future", 23 November 2016 or "Snowden 2016—on Citizens` Surveillance at the 10th Orwell Scale") and artistic transpositions (C'Art Fest, "The Farm, after George Orwell", 17 August 2016; rethinking about David Bowie's Orwellian inflexion album).

All of them converge towards a register of reassessments, of reporting and of interpretations, in fact, empowering the author's name and turning it into a brand, into worship, into *-ism*, wearing the quality of visionary or landmark author of a forewarning literature, adapted and adaptable to both the appetite of an affective/affected reader of dark literature, and to the requests of an engaged/approved reader, interested in a political substrate dosing the literal with/by default political reasons.

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