

*Vasile LICA*

## ALEXANDER THE GREAT: A LITERARY INTERPRETATION

The posterity<sup>1</sup> of the great Macedonian in the Romanian culture<sup>2</sup> is a doubtless presence<sup>3</sup>, and so is the Alexandermotive in the Romanian literature<sup>4</sup>. If the important presence of Alexander with Mihail Sadoveanu<sup>5</sup>, the founder of the Romanian historic novel, does not come as a surprise, the presence of the Macedonian king is quite strange with Mihail Sebastian, a writer significantly different in terms of background, ideas and style.

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Before proceeding to the analysis of the play *Ultima oră* (*Stop News/Breaking News*), which is, after all, the purpose of the present study, I consider it useful to make a brief presentation of Mihail Sebastian's personality and work and of course, a presentation of the historical period he lived in.

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<sup>2</sup> The first version of this study is published in **ΦΙΛΙΑ**. *Festschrift für Gerhard Wirth zum 80. Geburtstag*, hrsg. von Vasile Lica unter Mitarbeit von Decebal Nedu, Galați, 2006, 237-290. The present version has many *Addenda et Corrigenda*.

<sup>3</sup> Between 1991-1992 when I was Research Fellow of *Alexander von Humboldt-Foundation* at Bonn University, my *Meister*, Prof. Dr. Gerhard Wirth, hold in his inimitable manner an *Oberseminar*, which had among its main themes, precisely the posterity of Antiquity. This great scholar, who wrote many studies on Alexander, stressed the importance of Alexander the Great's posterity.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. V. Lica, *Alexander in Rumänien*, in *Diorthoseis. Beiträge zur Geschichte des Hellenismus und zum Nachleben Alexanders des Großen*, Hrsg. R. Kinsky, K. G. Saur-Verlag, München-Leipzig, 2004, 51-73.

<sup>5</sup> Mihail Sadoveanu wrote a refined Romanian version of Alexander's Romance: *Alexandria*, Bucarest, 1922. Another refined version of the same Alexander's Romance is owed to the poet Ion Pillat, *Alexandria*, Bucarest, 1937.

**Mihail Sebastian (Iosef Hechter)** was born in 1907 in Brăila, where he attended the elementary and secondary school which he graduated in 1926<sup>6</sup>. The year 1926 is worth mentioning because of his first encounter with Nae Ionescu<sup>7</sup>, Professor of Philosophy at the University of Bucharest and his

<sup>6</sup> Mihail Sebastian, *Jurnal. 1933-1945*, Ed. Gabriela Omăt & Leon Volovici, Bucarest, 1996, 63, n. 21: 'Hechter was the writer's surname. Since 1935 his penname *Mihail Sebastian* became his usual name'. The Omăt-Volovici edition deserves the high appreciation of the intellectual community who, this way, had the opportunity to be acquainted with a complex literary and historical document. In my opinion, special emphasis is deserved by Volovici's scholarly *Preface* which – not only throws light on Sebastian's time – but also proves a deep understanding of the spirit of the *Journal*. Volovici noted that Sebastian had never been vindictive and that he had never forsaken his innate humanism. However, I must note that, unfortunately, this outstanding historical source of Romanian between-war times is accompanied by no technical *apparatus*, as Sebastian's work would have deserved, because the one attached to the present edition is not of much use. I cannot tell for certain who is to blame for this flaw: either the *Humanitas* Publishing House which overlooked this editorial-scientific aspect, or the publishers Omăt and Volovici, who, perhaps, having rushed to offer the public a long expected for document, considered themselves exonerated of any scientific rigour and only offered this poor *Index*. In this respect, I find it necessary to make some comparative remarks, occasioned by the study of the English and German editions of Sebastian's *Journal*, which were laid at my disposal, with his unfailing kindness, by A. Heinen: The English edition [Mihail Sebastian, *Journal. 1935-1944*, translated for Romanian by Patrick Camiller. With an Introduction and Notes by Radu Ioanid, *William Heinemann*, London, 2001] and the German edition [Mihail Sebastian, '*Voller Entsetzen, aber nicht verzweifelt*'. *Tagebücher 1935-1944*, hrsg. von Edward Kanterian. Aus dem Rumänischen von Edward Kanterian und Roland Erb, unter Mitarbeit von Larisa Schippel, *Claassen*, Berlin, 2005] are translations of the Omăt-Volovici text. The English edition, which has an excellent *apparatus criticus* and an admirable *index*, deserves special praise. I have to confess I could have saved a lot of time working with the English edition before completing this study, even if I only take into account the references, (no matter they are incomplete), to Alexander the Great, which unfortunately are entirely missing from the *Index* of the Romanian edition. I can not say the same about Ioanid's *Introduction* (VII-XXI) which departs from the real message of Sebastian's *Journal*. Instead, it rather looks like a guide for The Holocaust Memorial in Washington. By contrast, the *Vorwort des Herausgebers* (5-33) by Edward Kanterian takes the same wide and comprehensive perspective of the text as Volovici's *Preface*.

<sup>7</sup> **Nae (Nicolae) Ionescu** (1890-1940) studied at Göttingen and München and in 1921 defended his Ph. D thesis named *Die Logistik als Versuch einer neuen Begründung der Mathematik*. When he returned to Romania he became Associate-Professor of Philosophy and after Vasile Pârvan's death his lectures had the largest audience in the University of Bucharest. A fascinating personality and a gifted journalist, Nae Ionescu managed to gather around him almost the entire young between-war generation, with Mircea Eliade, Mircea Vulcănescu, Mihail Sebastian etc. at the top. Halting between opinions and being a political time-server [for his political views between 1926-1933 s. Nae Ionescu, *Roza vînturilor. 1926-1933*. Collection edited by Mircea Eliade, The *Cultura Națională* Publishing House, Bucharest, 1936; Reprints: *Omul nou* Collection, no. 42, München, 1973; The *Roza vînturilor* Publishing House, Bucharest, 1990 ( with an *Introduction* by Dan Zamfirescu)], he

future spiritual mentor<sup>8</sup> who happened to be the chairman of the baccalaureate board at that time. Sebastian attended the Law School in Bucharest because he had set his mind on becoming a lawyer<sup>9</sup> but, unfortunately, this profession would not meet his intellectual and material expectations<sup>10</sup>.

Essay-writing, literary criticism, novel and drama writing, journalism<sup>11</sup> would undoubtedly have given this active and interesting representative of the famous ‘young generation’ or the ‘gold generation’<sup>12</sup> of

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turned from a very influential member of Carol II's royal camarilla, into *The Iron Guard's* ideologist. (cf. Nae Ionescu, *Fenomenule legionar*, with an *Introduction* by Constantin Papanace, Bucharest, 1993). There have been rumors (cf. Dr. Șerban Milcoveanu, *Profesorul Nae Ionescu. În dilema democrație-dictatură a anilor 1930-1940*, Bucharest, 1999, 52 sq.; more vague in this respect, Petre Pandrea, *Garda de Fier. Jurnal de filosofie politică. Memorii penitenciare*, Bucharest, 2001, 293 sq.) that he was to take over the leadership of The Iron Guard after the death of the ‘Captain’ Corneliu Zelea-Codreanu. Interesting details regarding Nae Ionescu's relationship with the artistic and musical world, can also be found in Doru Popovici-Mircea Popa, *Falimentul verde. Dialoguri în legătură cu activitatea Gărzii de Fier și interferențele acesteia cu intelectualitatea din România*, Bucharest, 2000. This book, consisting in a series of conversations between Doru Popovici and Mircea Popa, includes subtle remarks of the composer and conductor Mircea Popa about The Iron Guard and the between-war times. It must be said that Mircea Popa was a supporter of Codreanu's ideology, who left the Iron Guard after Iorga's assassination (on Codreanu's ideology of the Iron Guard see Alexander von Randa, *Lebende Kreuze, Einführung und Nachwort* von Univ.-Prof. Dr. Günter Kahle, Hrsg. Ion Mării, *EUROPA Collection*, München, 1979). The usefulness of the volume edited by Popovici is even greater due to the fact that it includes, at the same time, considerable passages from Romanian journalism. One of these passages – to which we will make reference – regards Sebastian himself. On Nae Ionescu, the philosopher-myth, also see G. Calinescu, *Istoria literaturii române de la origini pînă în prezent*, ed. Al. Piru, București, 1982<sup>2</sup>, 953-954; Sebastian, *Journal*, 5-6, 7-9, 11, 16-17, 28, 37, 41 etc., and espec., 278-279; A. Heinen, *Die Legion ‘Erzengel Michael’ in Rumänien. Soziale Bewegung und politische Organisation. Ein Beitrag zum Problem des internationalen Faschismus*, München, 1986, 140, 171-172 and espec., 175 sq. etc.

<sup>8</sup> Cornelia Ștefănescu, *Mihail Sebastian*, Bucharest, 1968, 9-10; Dorina Grăsoiu, *Mihail Sebastian sau ironia unui destin*, Bucharest, 1986, 14-15. From the beginning, I must say I am greatly indebted to these two substantial monographs on Sebastian. Obviously, most of this introductory passage builds on the information provided by these two works.

<sup>9</sup> M. Sebastian, in his *Scrisori către Camil Baltazar*, Bucharest, 1965, 107, came clean with his real intentions: ‘I will never be a writer ... I will be a lawyer; I believe this and I intend to become a great lawyer’.

<sup>10</sup> In his *Journal*, Sebastian confesses his desillusions. He is not the only one because Petre Comarnescu, *Jurnal. 1931-1937*, Iași, 1994, 24, 29 had the same desillusions.

<sup>11</sup> On all this many-sided development of Sebastian, see, in great detail and with competent commentaries, the already mentioned monographs, *supra*, n. 8.

<sup>12</sup> Among the best-known: Mircea Eliade, Mircea Vulcănescu, Petru Comarnescu, Constantin Noica, Eugen Ionescu, Emil Cioran, Marietta Sadova, Haig Acterian, Ionel Jianu, Margareta Sterian, Emil Botta, Dan Botta, Ion I. Cantacuzino, Petre Țuțea, but also Petre Marcu-Balș

between-war Romania, those intellectual satisfactions<sup>13</sup> which were denied to the lawyer. However, it must be mentioned that many of these intellectual delights would be preceded by trials and tribulations. And, it is difficult to say if these tribulations produced the sublimation of the unfair sufferings of the hard-trying Sebastian.

Obviously, Mihail Sebastian's life within between-war Romanian society was one of the most complicated. He spared no effort to act like a Romanian writer in spite of his Jewish origin and that brought him accusations from both the Romanians and the Jewish<sup>14</sup>. The most difficult and painful event that Sebastian went through may have been the publication of his autobiographical novel, *De două mii de ani*<sup>15</sup>. This novel represents one of the most important moments – perhaps the most profound in his artistic evolution – where he reveals his personality, confesses some repressed feelings from childhood and adolescence. Sebastian wants ‘to tell everything’, to express the tribulations brought about by the disreputable insult ‘fearful Jew’ and by the interdiction of saying, as a pupil, ‘we, Romanians’. Just as hard he took the undeserved public reproach at one of the *Criterion Colloquia*. In 1932, when he was about to speak about Chaplin, a *quidam* in the hall, told him: ‘a Jew can not speak about another Jew’<sup>16</sup>.

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(Petre Pandrea), Sorin Pavel, Ion Nestor, Zaharia Stancu, Sandu Tudor etc. A very relevant and accurate analysis of this generation's problem, which was not at all solidary but divided into many fractions, see Grăsoiu, *Mihail Sebastian*, 31 sq.

<sup>13</sup> Unfortunately, for a long time, Sebastian lived on uncertain and poor incomes. He was not the only one in this situation: actually, the whole ‘young generation’, except for Mircea Vulcanescu, manager of the Ministry of Finance, used to live in privation. The same picture is described in Mircea Eliade's and P. Comarnescu's notes who lamented over the financial problems they had to pass through, i. e. they had to practice worthless journalism, straying from real scientific, philosophic and artistic interests. For a long time, even a valuable writer such as Camil Petrescu, a brilliant representative of the ‘war generation’, also had the same difficulties [*Note zilnice (1927-1940)*, ed. Mircea Zăciu, Bucharest, 1975, 43, 52, 56 etc.]. I have given all these details because I find them relevant not only from the wider perspective regarding the whole younger generation, but also from a narrower one, as revealed by Sebastian's *Journal* or even in the play *Ultima oră*.

<sup>14</sup> Sebastian's *Journal* is an eloquent confession of this intolerable situation: Grăsoiu, *Mihail Sebastian*, *passim*.

<sup>15</sup> *De două mii de ani (For Two Thousand Years)*, Novel. With a *Preface* by Nae Ionescu. Cover by Margareta Sterian, The Ciornei Publishing House, Bucharest, 1934.

<sup>16</sup> About this incident, among other, M. Eliade, *Mémoires. 1907-1937*, I, Gallimard, Paris, 1980, 327: ‘... "J'avais l'intention de vous entretenir de certains aspects de l'oeuvre de Charlot", dit-il [scil. **Sebastian**]. "Mais quelq'un parmi vous a prononcé le mot **Juif**. C'est donc en **Juif** que je vous parlerai du **Juif** Charlot" ... . Mihail Sebastian nous fit un portrait de Charlot comme seul un Occidental aurait pu le faire ou le concevoir. Il évoqua le thème de la solitude dans les films de Charlot, et dit à quel point celle-ci était le reflet de la solitude des

He was thinking of writing this novel for a long time and, upon his return from Paris, in July 1931, he confessed this desire to Nae Ionescu: 'I am writing a Jewish novel'. Nae Ionescu encourages him, promising to write a *Preface* for his novel<sup>17</sup>. A quotation from Eliade's memoirs where he puts the case clearly is extremely useful: '1934 ... Je me souviens que, quelque temps auparavant, Sebastian était venu chez moi un après-midi, pâle et le visage défait: "Nae Ionescu m'a remis le texte de sa préface", me dit-il. "C'est une tragédie, une véritable condamnation à mort ...". Et il me tendit le manuscrit du professeur. Je le lu avec une certaine émotion, mais aussi avec un serrement de cœur. "Si les fils de Sion souffrent, c'est parce qu'ils doivent en être ainsi", écrivait Ionescu, et il donnait les raisons: les Juifs avaient refusés de voir en Jésus le Messie. Leurs souffrances à travers l'histoire témoignaient en un certain sens du destin du peuple juif, lequel, du fait même qu'il avait refusé de reconnaître le Christ, ne pouvait être admis à la Rédemption. *Extra ecclesiam nulla salus* ... Sebastian et moi-même étions tous deux parfaitement conscients de l'origine et des raisons de ce recul. Nae Ionescu, étant donné son opposition à la politique royale, savait pertinemment qu'il ne serait lu désormais que par un certain public d'extrême droite, et il tenait à ce qu'on sache comment se posait à ses yeux le problème juif, du seul point de vue religieux, et à l'exclusion de toute autre considération politique et sociale. Mihail Sebastian ne déniait absolument pas à Nae Ionescu le droit d'avoir telle ou telle opinion. C'est qui le consternait, c'était de le voir choisir cette occasion, à savoir la préface de ce premier roman, pour exposer les conclusions auxquelles il était récemment parvenu. Toutefois, c'est Sebastian lui-même qui avait réclamé cette préface, qui l'avait attendue durant des semaines alors que le livre était déjà composé, et il n'entendait pas revenir sur sa décision, quitte à payer cher les conséquences de sa fidélité'<sup>18</sup>. With his own words, Nae Ionescu draws the conclusion in this impossible Preface that 'Judas suffers because he is Judas ... Iosef Hechter, can't you feel the fever and the darkness rallying around you?'<sup>19</sup>.

M. Sebastian's novel did not count from a literary point of view. It was read and interpreted not as a literary work, i. e. from an artistic perspective – but only in terms of the clue offered by Nae Ionescu's *Preface*. A clear portrayal of this unusual situation is made by Ion I. Cantacuzino, another admirer of Nae Ionescu's, but one of the very few contemporaries who had read and interpreted Sebastian's novel from an artistic point of view:

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ghettos. Lorsqu'il termina son exposé, une vingtaine de minutes plus tard, la salle éclata en applaudissements'; See also Comarnescu's remarks, *Jurnal*, 77 sq.

<sup>17</sup> Grăsoiu, *Mihail Sebastian*, 58.

<sup>18</sup> Eliade, *Mémoires*, 396-397.

<sup>19</sup> Nae Ionescu, *Preface of De două mii de ani* (*supra*, n. 15), XXXII.

‘All the polemics, controversies, answers and notes brought about by Prof. Nae Ionescu's preface and by Mihail Sebastian's title lead us to a very sad conclusion. On the readers' lack of respect for *the core* of their readings. That is, for that element around which the whole work revolves. For its *essence*. Because discussing Sebastian's book relative to Politics, Theology, Sociology and questioning the peace treaties and Eastern Church dogmas, is, in my opinion, exaggerated! On the off-chance, this means that you have discussed *some of* the problems, starting from this work. This does not mean you have reached the *main problem* of the work. On the grounds of this misunderstanding, the public was attracted by Prof. Nae Ionescu's *Preface*. Writing, at the beginning of the novel, this simple sentence: “*Mihail Sebastian has decided to deal with the Jewish problem ...*” Nae Ionescu was to cancel a writer's entire work done in the ensuing 300 pages ... And, under this influence, all the readers followed his lead, forgetting that, as long as we deal with a literary phenomenon, we must seek its essence on a literary level ... But what is beyond our understanding is when these contradictory discussions are presented under the mask of literary criticism. And, presented as such, they mislead the entire readership, making them forget that they are facing a literary work, in which ideology is not a purpose in itself<sup>20</sup>.

I have quoted *in extenso* from Eliade<sup>21</sup> and Cantacuzino, precisely because, unfortunately, they were among the very few contemporaries<sup>22</sup> who rejected the interpretation in the novel's preface. They read the novel – unlike most others – from an aesthetic perspective and not from an ideological or theological one, as their mutual mentor, Nae Ionescu, had suggested.

<sup>20</sup> Ion I. Cantacuzino, in *Criterion* I.1, 2, *apud*, Popovici-Popa, *Falimentul verde*, 78 sq.

<sup>21</sup> Mircea Eliade wrote two articles on this theme: *Judaism și antisemitism*, *Vremea*, July 22<sup>nd</sup> 1934, nr. 347, 5 și *Creștinătatea față de iudaism*, *ibidem*, August 5<sup>th</sup> 1934, nr. 349, 3, articles which can be read, easily, in Eliade, *Texte 'legionare' și despre 'românism'*, ed. Mircea Handoca, The Dacia Publishing House, Cluj-Napoca, 2001, 98-117. Here, I would like to emphasize the well-informed and well-balanced preface elaborated for this articles collection by M. Handoca, who is, certainly, the expert of Eliade's work and bio-graphy. For Eliade's relations with The Iron Guard see also Sorin Alexandrescu, *Paradoxul român*, București, 1998, 193 sq., and 223-244.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. Ștefănescu, *Mihail Sebastian*, 83, who, mentioning Ș. Cioculescu și P. Constantinescu quoted the latter [review at Mihail Sebastian, *De două mii de ani*, *Vremea* VII (nr. 347, 22 iulie) 1934, 7]: ‘Who is looking for general truth in this novel, looks for something extra-artistic, looks for something that is beyond the novel's province’. From Grăsoiu, *Mihail Sebastian*, 61, n. 138, we find out that also O. Șuluțiu is one of the few critics, who analysed Sebastian's novel from an aesthetic perspective.

The attacks against Sebastian – external to literature and extremely violent – came from all sides, from the right as well as from the left, from the Romanian writers and from the Jewish writers as well<sup>23</sup>.

Mihail Sebastian revealed this terrible disappointment caused, first of all, by his beloved mentor<sup>24</sup>, Nae Ionescu, by writing a document-book in which he brought together all the ‘evidence’, just like a real *barrister*<sup>25</sup>. As Sebastian himself expected, the publishing of this reply-book would not solve the problem<sup>26</sup>, because the attacks started again and the situation remained tense. When his best friend, Mircea Eliade, became an iron guardist, Sebastian's seclusion deepened<sup>27</sup>; he felt even lonelier and more excluded<sup>28</sup>.

<sup>23</sup> For an extremely serious presentation of this novel's ‘files’, cf. Grăsoiu, *Mihail Sebastian*, 58-64, but also Ștefănescu, *Mihail Sebastian*, 78-83, with interesting observations upon the internal dynamic of the novel.

<sup>24</sup> Sebastian, *Journal*, 278-279: Saturday, 16 [March 1940]: ‘Nervous, uncontrollable sobbing as I entered Nae Ionescu's house yesterday morning, two hours after his death. He takes with him a whole period of my life, which is now – only now – over for good. What a strange fate he had, that extraordinary man who has died unfulfilled, beaten, and – hard though it is for me to say it – a failure. He is so dear to me precisely because he had so little good fortune ... . But Nae Ionescu dies at the age of forty-nine, not taken seriously, defeated’.

<sup>25</sup> M. Sebastian, *Cum am devenit huligan. Texte, fapte, oameni (How I Became a Hooligan)*, The Cultura Națională Publishing House, Bucharest, 1935.

<sup>26</sup> *Idem*, *Journal*, 5.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibidem*, 29, 41-42, 49, 50-51, 60-61, 79-80, 238-239, 242-243, 282, but see also 490, 498, 527-528; pages full of sad notations, which confess his pain for loosing so many friendships.

<sup>28</sup> Relative to this, I find it relevant to mention the letter written by Sebastian to Petru Comarnescu, in 1936: ‘*Dear Titel*, ... I was thinking of things that split people, of late, of passions that shatter friendships and peace of minds, of this diabolical breath which lay waste, for some time, minds and souls. After looking in the secret recesses of my heart, I was asking myself if I am less Romanian than the others, like Mișu Polihroniade [ex-friend of Greek origin, who became one of the Iron Guard's leader and started a conflict with P. Comarnescu (Comarnescu, *Jurnal*, 28, 36)], for example? My childhood – as that of everybody's in my generation – was under the badge of care and love for my country ... Whenever it came or it comes to – my country, my heart is throbbing the same way. While in Paris, when I was a journalist writing for *Le Soir* I used to praise my country from an inner calling, without being asked or rewarded ... . Why should I be considered less Romanian than Mișu Polihroniade, for example, and was this even more degrading – why should somebody refuse me the right of acting like a patriot? ... On who's behalf is the right to consider myself Romanian denied? In the name of the country's interests? What does the country lose because of my devotion? I had never asked for and I had never had any subsidy, job, help or gratuity from the state ... This agitation will pass, but how many old true friends could I find again after this? See (*Journal*, 241-242), Sebastian expresses his regret hearing that on the night of 24-25<sup>th</sup> of September 1939, Mihail Polihroniade was put to death because of his position as a leader of the Iron Guard, during the reprisals caused by the assassination of the prime-minister Armand Calinescu by the iron guardists. Under the same circumstances, they also put to death Alexandru-Christian Tell, an ex-member of *The Criterion Society* and also a member of the Iron Guard.

At the end of the year 1937, when the Goga-Cuza government took over political power and introduced an anti-Semite legislation in Romania, Sebastian's condition became difficult from a judicial and administrative point of view as well. Carol II's royal dictatorship (1938-1940) only put this misfortune off for a short time, because, during the summer of 1940, the Romanian king made a lot of concessions to Nazi Germany and the anti-Semite legislation was only one of them. But the inevitable did take place, on the 6<sup>th</sup> of September 1940, when General Ion Antonescu formed a new government in association with The Iron Guard. The new extreme right government sided with Germany, a political act which involved the application of a harsh anti-Semite legislation<sup>29</sup>.

As a consequence to this murderous legislation, Mihail Sebastian received the following notification, on September 7<sup>th</sup> 1940<sup>30</sup>: 'Bucharest, September 7<sup>th</sup> 1940. To Mihail Sebastian, editor at *Uniunea Fundațiilor Culturale Regale*. Loco no. 5590. *We are honoured to inform you that, in accordance with the decree adopted on August 9<sup>th</sup> 1940, you are dismissed for being a Jew*'<sup>31</sup>.

In appropriate words, Dorina Grăsoiu noted this terrible fact: 'And thus, at the age of 33, Mihail Sebastian's public activity as a writer, critic and essayist, comes to an end. All that came afterwards was under the signature of the forced anonymity'<sup>32</sup>.

Since 6<sup>th</sup> of September 1940 till 23<sup>rd</sup> August 1944 Sebastian lived, not only under the interdict of using his own signature in the cultural life of Romania at that time, but, especially, with the permanent fear for his own life and the life of those close to him, which were, at any time, under the threat of deportation.

Although, fortunately, he was not deported<sup>33</sup>, he could not avoid, however, other humiliations following from the anti-Semite legislation: the

<sup>29</sup> A synthetical and accurate presentation of this problem is made by A. Hilgruber in *Hitler, König Carol und Marschall Antonescu. Die deutsch-rumänischen Beziehungen 1938-1944*, Wiesbaden, 1965<sup>2</sup>, 236-247. Also see Heinen, *Die Legion 'Erzengel Michael'*, 435 sq., G. Aly, *Hitlers Volksstaat. Raub, Rassenkrieg und nationaler Sozialismus*, Frankfurt a. Main, 2005<sup>3</sup>, 263 sq., etc.

<sup>30</sup> *Apud*, Grăsoiu, *Mihail Sebastian*, 79.

<sup>31</sup> After four years on September 12<sup>th</sup> 1944, Sebastian, *Journal*, could note: 'A letter from Titel Comarnescu: To Mr. Mihail Sebastian, writer and editor at *Revistei Fundațiilor Regale*' – 'Dr. Octavian Neamțu and colleagues at the R.F.R. invite you to resume your post as editor at this review. Would you please come to Foundation on Wednesday at 4 p.m. (Bd. Lascăr Catargiu), where you will make contact with the management committee'.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>33</sup> The *Journal* does not say anything about the intercession – into this situation – of some of his influential Romanian friends (possibly, Al. Rosetti or the prince Antoine Bibescu).



interdiction of the phone, radio and attendants, the requisitions, the separate prices for rent and goods for the Jewish, the forced labour<sup>34</sup> etc.

Sebastian managed to get a teaching position at the *Cultura*, the Jewish high-school and, then, a professorship at *Onescu College*<sup>35</sup>, where he made efforts praised by his students<sup>36</sup>, but which, unfortunately, were not enough to ensure him daily subsistence. Because of this, he had to translate books for children for The *Hachette* office in Bucharest<sup>37</sup> but, most of all, to translate numerous plays for both Romanian and Jewish theatre companies in Bucharest<sup>38</sup>, in order to, somehow, survive<sup>39</sup>.

How helpful to Sebastian were, during these trying times, prince Antoine Bibescu's<sup>40</sup> invitations to his residence in Corcova (Oltenia), where the writer could recover physically and mentally! One of these wonderful visits, in August – September 1943, gives him the strength to write the first two acts of one of his most interesting plays: *Steaua fără nume* (*Nameless Star*)<sup>41</sup>.

In this period Sebastian is active in the Resistance<sup>42</sup>, cooperating closely, as pointed out in the *Journal*, with remarkable communist leaders

<sup>34</sup> The same *Journal* is full of notes relative to the Jewish's hard life in Romania at that time and to Sebastian's particular case.

<sup>35</sup> This college was actually the Jewish community's Faculty of Letters.

<sup>36</sup> E. g., Radu Albala, Paul Cornea. Cornea's artistic and suggestive memories are quoted by Leon Volovici in the *Preface* of Sebastian, *Journal*, 10.

<sup>37</sup> *Journal*, 446-457.

<sup>38</sup> Glimpses into this kind of exhausting activity can also be found in Sebastian's *Journal* where the author mentions Grigore Vasiliu-Birlic (567, 571, 601), extremely fair in his relationship with Sebastian, but also Sică Alexandrescu (526, 559 etc.), who sometimes used, to take advantage of the difficult situation of 'the swarthy' (526). What is surprising is that he experiences such disappointments even in the Jewish theatre *Barașeum* (*Journal*, 622, 626).

<sup>39</sup> Many times he had to take out loans from the rich Jewish, like Aristide Blank or A. L. Zissu; (Sebastian, *Journal*, 445, 454, 457, 465, 467-468, 554, 558 etc.)

<sup>40</sup> Antoine Bibescu and his wife, Elisabeth, descendent of the great British aristocratic family of Asquith – were constant devoted friends of Sebastian's, extravagant and paradoxical as they may have been. Cf. e.g., Sebastian, *Journal*, 209-217, as well as 510 and, especially 522: 'Their hospitality was the most considerate, delicate and discreet I've ever encountered. It's an art, a profession, a calling'.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibidem*, 567.

<sup>42</sup> Grăsoiu, *Mihail Sebastian*, 86. Sebastian, *Journal*, 608, makes a confession of this activity was only *post-factum*; the first note is dated August 29<sup>th</sup> 1944. Another note, from September 7<sup>th</sup> 1944, clearly unveils Sebastian's activity in the Resistance: 'It amuses me how one sentence I used in the manifesto of the National-Democratic Block which I drafted, i.e. "History makes no gifts" tends to be widely circulated. When I wrote these four words I did not know they would become a historical quotation. The statement has been taken up by Radio London. *Universul* has written a whole commentary under the same title. And

such as Lucrețiu Pătrășcanu<sup>43</sup>, but still having constant relations with old friends like Constantin Vișoianu, minister of Foreign Affairs during the first government after August 23<sup>rd</sup> 1944<sup>44</sup>.

However, Mihail Sebastian could not integrate into the new political, social, moral, aesthetical order that would evolve after August 23<sup>rd</sup> 1944. His *Journal* contains suggestive notes which highlight his lack of solidarity with the ideals shared by those he had stood by during the years 1940–1944, some of them even of the same ethnic as his<sup>45</sup>. Two of these notes deserve special attention as they may explain, in my view, even his appalling end<sup>46</sup>: ‘Indoctrinated stupidity is even harder to stand than pure, simple stupidity’<sup>47</sup>. And, somewhere else, his criticism of the ‘light from the East’ was even more severe ‘Further on there is life. A kind of life which has to be lived. The only thing I longed for was freedom. Not a new definition of freedom – but freedom. *After so many years of terror, we don't need to have it explained to*

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yesterday I read in *Semnalul*: “History, makes no gifts” said a great Romanian statesman’. Prof. Andrei Pippidi wrote me (February, 21, 2007) that ‘my former professor, Eugen Stănescu, an old communist, knew that Sebastian wrote the manifesto *The Red Army is coming!*’.

<sup>43</sup> Sebastian, *Journal*, 609, 608, 610, 626, 627, n. 2.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibidem*, 618, 619, 622, 626.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibidem*, 610 ‘I am happy that my experience at *România liberă* ended quickly, before I signed up for anything. I'd have found it impossible to work in that regime of secret committees ... . In three days, after Graur and his crew pushed their way in, I realized that I would be joining an editorial committee terrorized by conformism ... . Later I infirmed them through Belu [*scil.* Herbert Silber] that I was pulling out for good’; 611: ‘... In the end, the Russians are within their region. The locals are disgusting – the Jews and the Romanian alike ... [Friday, 1 September 1944] This morning I made the stupid mistake of going to Dorian's, where I have been invited to a “writers' conference”. I helplessly witnessed the constitution of “the Union of Jewish Writers” with Benador, Călugaru and Dorian ahead. Unknown figures, nonentities – a mixture of desperate failure, thundering mediocrity, old ambitions and troubles, all drawing fresh life from impudence and ostentation. I won't forgive my cowardice at not having shouted out all they deserved to hear. But that's the last time I let myself be caught in such snares’; 617: ‘There are certainly miserable tricks, farces, impostures. There is Victor Eftimiu, with his impudence, his bad taste, his eternal vulgarity. There is young [George] Macovescu, who had a comfortable life under the Germans and is now a fierce Jacobin. There is Graur, obtuse, dismal, triumphant. There is a frightening spirit of conformism, new in its orientation but old in its psychological structure’; 627: ‘In the evening, a reception at the Foreign Ministry. Vivi [Constantin Vișoianu] insisted that I go, and I went. It was agreeable as fashionable society, but disgusting as a political spectacle. These are the same people who, five months ago, were clinking glasses with [Hitler's ambassador at Bucharest, Manfred von] Killinger!’ etc.

<sup>46</sup> I am absolutely sure that Sebastian did not hide his political and aesthetic opinions.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibidem*, 610. This statement can be related to his refusal to write on for *România liberă*. This note drew Leon Volovici's attention too (*supra*, n. 6), 11.

us what freedom is. We know what it is – and it cannot be replaced by any formula<sup>48</sup>.

The writer did not get the chance to see the entire evolution and development of the new communist order because, on May 29<sup>th</sup>, 1945, at about 15.15, he was crushed by a truck which ‘happened’ to go at high speed on a street where there also was a tram station. Then Mihail Sebastian was on his way to the newly-founded Free Democrat University<sup>49</sup>, where he was to inaugurate his course in comparative literature. He had not turned 38 years old yet ...

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Between 1940-1944, a period whose atmosphere I have tried to render somehow, Sebastian strove to create, not to let the writer in him die. His intense and varied readings, the study and the sound command of the English language<sup>50</sup>, evidently were not enough. The already-mentioned *bâclages* for the theatre companies in Bucharest – were not even surrogates for the *writer* Sebastian. He anxiously sought subjects which, by accident or not would appear<sup>51</sup>. They sometimes seemed painfully too many to a writer haunted by the worry of physical survival, to whom *l'art pour l'art* was forbidden. He could write only to earn a certain amount of money as soon as possible<sup>52</sup>.

Thus, *Ultima oră*, was to be created under the influence of these damned external constraints<sup>53</sup>, which had negative consequences on the play's structure and content of ideas. The ‘prehistory’ of the writing of this work – as it can be reconstituted from the *Journal* – fully illustrates this painful situation.

In order to avoid any confusion, it must be mentioned from the very beginning that what we now know and read as *Ultima oră* is the result of what Sebastian had initially conceived of as two plays: *Ultima oră* and *Alexandru cel Mare (Alexander the Great)*. This remark is necessary because

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<sup>48</sup> *Ibidem*, 617-619. Very suggestive is also Sebastian's conclusion (*ibidem*, 618) after his talk with Vișoianu, on September 20<sup>th</sup> 1944, when he reveals him ‘all the bitterness with which he has returned from Moscow’.

<sup>49</sup> Its founding Rector was the mathematician Simion Stoilow.

<sup>50</sup> He reads English and he translates even Shakespeare's *Sonnets*, without mentioning the translation of some plays of the Great Will (*Journal*, 490, 503, 504, 528, 576-577).

<sup>51</sup> *Journal*, 462, 468 etc.

<sup>52</sup> *E. g.*, *ibidem*, 470-471 etc.

<sup>53</sup> On February 6<sup>th</sup> 1941, when one first noted his intention of writing *Ultima oră*, he has already expressed his compunction for ignoring the present catastrophes: ‘I am so light-minded that I forget all that happened, all that is still happening, all that is in store. All that is awaiting us! No, I don't forget. But I too get carried away by an evening's calm’ (*ibidem*, 318-319).

the first draft of *Ultima oră* precedes *Alexandru cel Mare* and the already mentioned prehistory will begin with the first mention of *Ultima oră*.

The intention of writing a play on this subject is noted in the *Journal* under February 6<sup>th</sup>, 1941: 'For some time now (several years) I have been thinking of a comedy that takes place in the editorial offices of a newspaper. At first I imagined a simple one-act comedy set on a summer's day (1928-1929) at the height of the political holiday season, with no events, no news, a short print run, bored reporters not paid for weeks ... the milieu, the atmosphere, the character types – which I know so well from *Cuvîntul* ... I think I keep thinking of my plays but cannot make up my mind to start work on them. It is true that the one with the journalist should be left to clarify itself, to acquire sharper contours. The material is rich enough but I can't yet see the structure. Sometimes I think it should be more serious and more substantial than a mere Bucharest comedy of manners. Is it not the way Nae came to *Cuvîntul* and ended up controlling in the theatrical adventure?'<sup>54</sup>. Under January 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1942, he noted that *Ultima oră* was insufficiently contoured 'moreover, it can also create political difficulties'<sup>55</sup>.

Under January 7<sup>th</sup>, 1942, there comes out the first entry about *Alexandru cel Mare*: 'So yesterday afternoon, while I was watching a film, I suddenly felt that I'd "found" it. I had an idea, a title (*Alexandru cel Mare*) and two characters. I left the cinema in a kind of optimistic excitement (as I always do when I "see" a plan for a book or play). On the way home the idea took on shape and substance – but at a certain point I realized that it is altogether too sketchy, too thin and shaky to fill up three acts. I don't feel capable now for writing an intimately poetic play for the stage ... I need something more solid, more earthy, more full of content. I need a firm structure with many characters and incidents, a proper plot, a wealth of detail that makes full use both of Nicușor's<sup>56</sup> name and of the National Theatre's troops. *Ultima oră* could be, or could have been, such a play. I don't know when (or indeed if) I had precisely these reflections. I don't know how I came to link "Alexander the Great" and *Ultima oră*. I think it was all a question of minute or even of seconds. Suddenly the two projects merged into one. *Ultima oră* became Act One, and "Alexander the Great" Act Two, of the same play. I don't yet have Act Three – but there are so many comic elements

<sup>54</sup> *Ibidem*, 318-319, 330.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibidem*, 462.

<sup>56</sup> Nicușor Constantinescu, dramatist, manager of the *Alhambra* Theatre (*Journal*, 462, n. 1), who was about to write his name on Sebastian's play. On February 3<sup>rd</sup> 1942 (*Journal*, 462) he made Sebastian the generous proposal to write a play: 'He is prepared to sign it, to offer have it performed by a theatre. The author's share would be paid to me, and after the war the truth will be told'.

in the first two acts that I think everything will sort itself out. *Et maintenant il s'agit de travailler*. Will I be able to? Will it come easily enough? Scruples<sup>57</sup>, as I said before, are not a problem. I could just do with some luck<sup>58</sup>.

That he tried to ignore artistic scruples<sup>59</sup>, is proved by this entry under January 11<sup>th</sup>, 1942: 'This play must be written fast, very fast, if I want it to appear this season and bring me in some money'. On January 14<sup>th</sup>, 1942, the obsession comes back. 'I should write this play quickly with my eyes closed, so that scruples and pangs of conscience do not have time to invade me. Sometimes, I am seized by a terrible disgust for what I am writing – but I soon manage to repress it. *C'est un vile besoin, mais il faut le faire*<sup>60</sup>. However, the writer in him cannot be defeated, as on February 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1942, Sebastian notes again: 'Nicușor has offered to work with me on my play. He suggests various solutions for Act Two and Act Three. He assures me that we will have a hit on our hands, and has even offered an advance of fifty thousand lei. I don't think I'll accept. I am sorry to say that I still have some literary prejudices, and an absurd, ridiculous *artistic conscience*<sup>61</sup>. After a while, on February 26<sup>th</sup>, 1942, he thinks he has found the solution to this dilemma: 'In the last few days I have been thinking that there is a solution for *Alexandru cel Mare* that would address both my own doubts and Nicușor's suggestions. I write the play as I want to write it, then I give it to Nicușor and give him the complete freedom to change and perform it as he wishes. We split the author's share fifty-fifty. This strikes me as an acceptable solution, especially if he keeps to the fifty-thousand-Lei advance. Will sort things out again after the war<sup>62</sup>.

Sebastian's plans of quickly finishing *Ultima oră/Alexandru cel Mare*, and of seeing the play staged in the spring of 1942 are not fulfilled<sup>63</sup> because only on July 18<sup>th</sup> can he note: 'I have finished "Alexander the Great" – at last! – or, to be more precise, I have finished Act Three. The play still needs some touching up, but that should be easy to do when I copy it out. This does

<sup>57</sup> To understand this sentence one must read the notes from *Journal*, 457 and 465, where Sebastian lists all his debts. This play – written without any *artistic scruples* – was to put an end to his financial problems.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibidem*, 463-464.

<sup>59</sup> At this point *Journal* has an air of journal of creation *stricto sensu*.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibidem*, 467.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibidem*, 476.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibidem*, 477.

<sup>63</sup> His plans failed for several reasons: the inherent difficulties of the play writing, Sebastian's many teaching tasks, his periods of forced-labour, the constant concerns with the war development, his English lessons and his readings from Shakespeare. Fortunately, his *Journal* also records Sebastian's frequent meetings with his old friends, Al. Rosetti and Camil Petrescu, and other pleasant events.

not mean that I am satisfied with the work I have done. In fact, if I think of my original intentions (a light play, written quickly for immediate performance to earn some money), I have failed. It has turned out quite differently: not good enough to count in my writer's corpus: not common enough to be a big hit; not innocuous enough to pass as such into one of today's repertoires. But I should grouse – not today, at least. For better or worse, I have finished it and therefore become available for something else<sup>64</sup>.

Of course, the prehistory and the genesis of the play are much rougher than they appear in this brief sketch. Evidently, other important elements will be later pointed to in relation to their significance to the subject of this study.

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In this context, clarifying the issue of the real title of this play that we now know as *Ultima oră*, seems very useful to me. Judging by the entries in the *Journal*, I believe that Sebastian himself could not decide on the final title of the play until his violent death.

There are three arguments that support my statement above: first, in the process of writing the play, the author does not use the same title, sometimes naming it *Ultima Oră* and other times *Alexandru cel Mare*. Second, even the final draft version – because, in my opinion, he never considered it completely finished<sup>65</sup> – has no final title. And thirdly, in the final entry of the *Journal*, Sebastian refers to his play naming it *Alexandru cel Mare*<sup>66</sup>.

As it is well-known, the play was performed only after the author's death, the first representation being on January 25<sup>th</sup> 1946. From the documentation I have had available I cannot say for certain, who decided on the title *Ultima Oră* for the play: either the director, or Beno Sebastian, the author's brother, or somebody else. I would like to believe that it was Sebastian's indecision about its final title – and not the idea of commercial success that may have determined its screen version be entitled *Afacerea Protar* (*The Protar Business*) ...<sup>67</sup>.

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<sup>64</sup> *Ibidem*, 496.

<sup>65</sup> *Journal*, 591, where, on April 16<sup>th</sup> 1944, we find out the following: 'I have reread with disgust one of my plays (*Alexander the Great*). I didn't realize it was quite that bad. Inexorable'. I wonder whether this severe judgment could have been determined by his own impression that Alexander's myth had not been fully explored?

<sup>66</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>67</sup> I wonder whether this could have been Mircea Șeptilici, Mihail Sebastian's friend? Or could it be Sorana Coroamă-Stanca, who directed the film and entitled it *The Protar Business*?

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Before trying to outline Sebastian's perception of Alexander the Great, let me summarize briefly the play *Ultima oră*<sup>68</sup>, in order to establish, from the beginning, some concrete elements of the Great Macedonian's image in the Romanian writer's view.

The play starts in the poor editorial office of a Bucharest small gossip paper named *Deșteptarea (The Clarion Call)*, which barely manages to keep afloat due to small blackmails. Many times, these blackmails are used by the reporters of the tabloid who, on their own, thus 'recover' their unpaid salaries. Everybody is surprised that this paper, which can not pay the printing house, or its own employees and its own external contributors, does not disappear ... It is a heavy, thick, hard to breathe atmosphere, made even harder to breathe by the torrid summer heat ...

The only thing that seems to keep the paper going are the efforts of its editor who is desperately searching for a scandal, for a press 'lucky break' which would help him break the deadlock.

The 'lucky break' comes out when nobody expects it and – especially – whence nobody expects it, being absolutely accidental. In the same printing house there came out, among others, *Deșteptarea*, but also *Revista de Istorie Antică (Review of Ancient History)*. In the latter it was to be published the study *Alexander the Great in the Media*, signed by *Alexandru Andronic*, Reader in Ancient History at the University of Bucharest. Because of an unfortunate mistake of a printer, the study appeared in *Deșteptarea*.

In this study, the author brings into discussion the logistical problems which Alexander had to solve during his campaigns in Iran and Afghanistan. The central logistical problem which Andronic insists on is the grain supply of the Macedonian army. He assumes that the king imposed the monopoly

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<sup>68</sup> The summary is based on the text *Ultima oră*, that came out in M. Sebastian, *Opere alese I*, Ed. Vicu Mîndra, București, 1962, 268-385 = *Stop News. A Comedy in Three Acts* (Translated from Romanian), "The Book" Publishing House, Bucharest, 1954, 7-193. The quotations from Sebastian's play in my article are taken from *Stop News*, the English version of Sebastian's *Ultima ora* that needs a few further remarks. First, a more adequate translation of the title of the play could be *Breaking News*. Then, *Stop News* does not render the full text of *Ultima ora* (in *Opere alese* edited by Mindra) and this can be noticed in the translation of Andronic's speech. Equally, in *Stop News* there are some misspellings of the proper names: e.g., *Protah* instead of *Protar*, a name directly related to the very *clou* of the play. Last but not least, we should not neglect the **absence of the translator's name**. This can also be noticed in the German version of *Ultima oră – Letzte Nachrichten. Lustspiel in drei Aufzügen* (Aus dem Rumänischen übersetzt), Verlag "Das Buch", Bukarest 1954. So, I wonder whether the omission of the translator's name cannot be accounted for by a common practice in Communist Romania, i. e. the translator had not any **signature right** at that time. If this is true, history's irony would be perfect ...

upon grains, especially oats, in order to solve all these problems conveniently.

For the author's misery to be complete<sup>69</sup>, the study is printed out with many printing mistakes. Consequently, the exotic Asian toponyms and anthroponyms from Alexander the Great's times are, almost without exception, corrupted. To better understand Andronic's despair, let me mention only one example: the toponyms **Prophtasia** and **Kabul**, two of the most important stages of Alexander's itinerary in Asia, are printed in *Deșteptarea* as **Protar** and **Carun**. The unhappy author – having a creed for the written word – comes at the paper's editorial office and implores them to publish an erratum with the correction of those horrible mistakes which could throw him out of the scientific world for good. The reply of the secretary at the editorial office, Ștefănescu, is astounding: why shall they publish an erratum if – a few minutes after reading the information – people forget everything they have read in any newspaper?<sup>70</sup>

Under these circumstances, the publication of Andronic's study has aroused various and unexpected reactions. If the editorial office is disturbed by this pest's insinuations, the printing house is worried about the troubles caused by the publishing of the article in the gossip paper instead of the specialized journal.

What was even more unpleasant was the fact that the paper's editor had imposed an embargo on any article that would mention – even accidentally – oats or any other cereal. The reason was that at that time, one of the sponsors of *Deșteptarea*<sup>71</sup> was handling an illicit affair with oats. And

<sup>69</sup> Andronic apply for a full-professorship at the University of Bucharest and the publication of his study in a tabloid would have cut a sorry figure on his colleagues, who could have accused him of using 'non-academic means' to make himself conspicuous in front of the public. There is no doubt that at this point Sebastian alludes to the situation of his mentor Nae Ionescu, Reader in Philosophy at University of Bucharest. Nae Ionescu as a manager of an influential magazine, i. e. *Cuvîntul*, was judged too severely for this 'trivial' activity in the academic environment. This very gifted intellectual, was not able to keep a full-professorship in University. Obviously, he had not the necessary scientific work because of his journalistic and political activity. See also the right and keen appreciations of H. H. Stahl, *Amintiri și gânduri*, București, 1981, 214-219, about the 'Nae phenomenon', the origins, the means of manifestation and unfortunately his lack of originality. This last accusation, brought to Nae Ionescu by T. Vianu and M. Ralea, is mentioned in Sebastian's *Journal* too (37, 358).

<sup>70</sup> This could be interpreted as a reflection image of the author's inner feelings, who had struggled between daily journalism and artistic creation. See Grăsoiu, *Mihail Sebastian*, 144 sq.

<sup>71</sup> This sponsor will become the object of a blackmail of the paper. Such a 'model' can also be found in between-war Romania, the most eloquent being the famous Pamfil Șeicaru, editor of *Curentul*. He had built an imposing multi-storey building in Bucharest, perhaps based on the principle 'A new blackmail, an upper storey'.



such a reference – without ambiguity and aggravated by the mentioning of the term monopoly – could have endangered the paper ‘policy’.

After that, there appears *Magda Minu*, an extremely fretful and indignant student of Andronic's, who – consciously and avowedly infatuated with Alexander the Great and unconsciously, even with the professor – is disgusted by Andronic's suppositions. One of them – the possible participation of the king in Parmenion's assassination or even, *horribile dictu*, the assassination of the old general by Alexander himself – seems a horrible sacrilege to this girl in love with the young god. Therefore, she comes at the editorial office to find the sacrilegious. Here, she comes across an office secretary, who, only interested in the immediate publication of his paper, does not understand her existential concern. Being in an admirable exaltation and shocked by his limited pragmatism, Magda teaches him a lesson about the absolute and universal value of Alexander the Great, which contrasts sharply with the worthlessness of ordinary facts noted in his paper.

In spite of the displeasures of the editorial office or of the printing house and of Magda's exaltation, which had set out on a ‘crusade’ against the sacrilegious – everything could have remained just a storm in a teapot. Only Andronic's study was to provoke a real storm, precisely because of its discussion about the supposed monopoly upon the cereals. Moreover, the unfortunate corrupted **Carun** and, especially, **Protar** happened to be ‘the code names’ for some grain business of one of the potentates of the country, *Grigore Bucșan*<sup>72</sup>. If the *Carun Business* was in progress, and its purpose was rather known, as I said before, the *Protar Business* was an ultra secret operation planned by Bucșan a long time ago. It anticipated the achievement of that monopoly which precisely Andronic's study hinted at, by retrospective projection.

The businessman immediately ‘decodes’ the allusion and – in spite of his power – he becomes anxious, determined to put an end to the blackmail by any means necessary. The first to be suspected, and therefore the first to be attacked with violence is the paper's editor, *I. D. Borcea*. Although he had just found out about the publication of Andronic's study in his paper but having no clue of its content, he acts the surprised very artfully and naturally which makes Grigore Bucșan even more confused!

Without his knowledge, Andronic becomes the hero of a ‘comedy of errors’ and, therefore, the most wanted and hunted man. He is sought for by Magda because he has stained Alexander's sacred image; he is hunted by Bucșan and by Borcea because of the easily understandable reasons I have just shown above.

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<sup>72</sup> It was him the mentioned ‘sponsor’!

Magda is the one who finds him first, having looked for him even at his house. Here, she has the opportunity to hear once more, during one of Andronic's radio conferences, some of his 'heresies'. At the same time, another uninvited guest comes at the professor's house: Borcea, the editor of *Deșteptarea*. Magda and Andronic's housekeeper give him wrong information about the professor's schedule in order to get him out of the house.

Gradually, after a short discussion with Borcea, Magda begins to understand the hubbub provoked by the publication of Andronic's study *Alexander the Great in Media*, in *Deșteptarea*. Even more, she leaves Borcea totally confused about the role she played in 'the blackmail'. Moreover, she strengthens his conviction that Andronic was plotting a real blow.

When Andronic comes back from the Radio Society, a fretful argument on the two divergent representations of Alexander the Great's image, starts between him and Magda. The student reproaches Andronic his lack of enthusiasm for the great king, even his attempt to minimize his role and pass unfair judgment on him. This explains why his students call him *Alexander the Small*. Andronic tries, rather *ex cathedra*, to enlighten the enthusiastic Magda that the historian has as a duty *to understand*, not *to defend* or *to condemn*<sup>73</sup>

This simple but subtle<sup>74</sup> lesson of hermeneutics and of history theory is interrupted by Borcea, who shows up after he had looked for Andronic in vain through the whole Bucharest. The canny journalist wanted to buy his 'blackmail' or, at least, to pay for a part of it. With subtle and enthusiastic tirades about the staggering spheres in which the scholars lived, contemptuous of the quotidian, the editor tries to attract the professor to the

<sup>73</sup> I believe this response can be related with the impact of Nicolae Iorga's lectures on Sebastian; or it can even be the result of his reading *Generalități cu privire la studiul istoriei*, published in two editions (Vălenii de Munte, 1911<sup>1</sup> and Bucharest, 1933<sup>2</sup>) until the date of *Ultima oră's* publication.

<sup>74</sup> It should be interesting to realize a parallel between Sebastian's theory – as part of a large and irradiant historical conception, taken, probably from Iorga's work – about the value and signification of myths and the newly tendencies of the Romanian historiography. In my opinion, they seem too concerned to find out how the myth became history, and even created history, according to *la règle de l'epilogue* mentioned by Marrou. Their tendency is, rather, an unproductive derision of some precursors' tentative of historical restoration called, in a modern way, demythologization. Cf., e. g., L. Boia, *Istorie și mit în conștiința românească*, București, 1997, 91 sq. (for some additional observations see also, V. Lica, *Scripta Dacica*, Brăila, 1999, 2-3, 7), whose 'original thin' is, I think, to give out some valuable judgments, in areas for which he is, undoubtedly not qualified. So it went to the length of interfering – to quote only the 'myth' of **thracomania** – the supporters and the antagonists of this excrescence of the Romanian spirit.

*forum*. He offers to assure Andronic the high publicity of his theories, to make him famous and known to the whole public. For a moment, Andronic – bringing to his mind the empty halls where only few students enter – dreams of full, quivering halls<sup>75</sup>, but this dream, however tempting the image of such halls would be, it seems too improper with his inner structure and with his perception upon history.

But the real jolt is caused by Grigore Bucșan's coming at Andronic's house. Unlike Borcea who has gone the diplomatic, 'byzantine' way with him, Bucșan approaches the issue of 'the blackmail' directly and brutally, presenting his omnipotence suggestively and challenges Andronic to disclose his financial claims. Obviously, the professor – what planet is he on? – is not able to make head or tail of this situation<sup>76</sup>. He strives hard to make the manufacturer understand that **Protar** and **Carun** are, in fact, some unfortunate misprints of **Prophtasia** and **Kabul**, respectively.

The moment when Bucșan, seems, for a moment, to accept this logical explanation, Magda stroke in. Hearing from the next door room the discussion between the violent Bucșan and the shy innocent Andronic, because of the high key of the manufacturer, Magda takes now the right view of the consequences that the innocent study about Alexander the Great could bring. Joining end to end Andronic's disputes with Borcea and Bucșan, she eventually sees the entire proportions of this 'comedy of errors' and the idea that the professor and his research could, somehow, take advantage of this confusion crosses her mind.

To this purpose, she decides to delay the manufacturer's 'enlightenment'. She gets out of the next door room, shows Bucșan the real dimension of the 'blackmail' and explains that Andronic is a real swindler that is in collusion with Borcea, the editor of *Deșteptarea*.

After this unexpected and aggressive intercession, Bucșan reconsiders his way of thinking and his usual means of action and leaves the house with the idea that Andronic is a very dangerous blackmailer. Therefore, he makes some prompt and drastic arrangements, intended for the professor not to be able to reveal the 'blackmail' publicly. After he calls *Brănescu*, the Minister of Education, to order and menaces him with dismissal if he turns down the request<sup>77</sup>, he makes his first move, meant to exclude Andronic from the University. Until his final elimination, Bucșan and Brănescu plot some

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<sup>75</sup> Sebastian describes, here, Nae Ionescu's or Nicolae Iorga's halls.

<sup>76</sup> From the beginning, Bucșan put Magda out of the meeting, student participation at discussion being refused.

<sup>77</sup> Brănescu tried to explain Bucșan that Andronic's exclusion is, practically, impossible because of University autonomy restrictions.

‘disturbance’, including violent acts and gunshots<sup>78</sup> at the professor's courses. His second move regards the downfall of the paper *Deșteptarea*, by means of buying, at an overdone price the printing house where the paper come out. But, when its editor confesses his ignorance and weakness concerning Andronic's ‘blackmail’, he ‘sells’ the printing house back to him<sup>79</sup>.

The great manufacturer does not want to ‘meddle’ in ‘its moral and political tendency’ pretending to remain ‘an absolutely independent’ paper. Obviously, *Deșteptarea* must have a militant attitude towards the ‘disturbances’ during the professor's lectures. The paper will provide only objective information to the readers about what happened, asking the authorities to see the point and exclude such an inadequate member of the academic staff from the University.

When all this strategy is perfected and is to be put across, the *climax* of the play is reached, Magda – who has set his own plans in order – appears on the stage. She understands that Bucșan is afraid and prepared to pay any sum to put an end to this fearful blackmail. Therefore, she decides to assume the offensive and also takes over the control of the negotiations.

Making certain about Andronic's passive ‘collaboration’ – due to the professor's total confusion – Magda offers Bucșan<sup>80</sup> the long-expected solution which is very simple: the manufacturer will finance the ‘blackmailer’ a three year study travel, in order to ‘take him out’ of the country and, this way, to work out the problem.

Bucșan has no hesitations and everything is concluded with all possible speed, to all sides’ satisfaction. Only Alexandru Andronic does not understand yet the secret mechanism of his dream life fulfillment – to pursue the traces of Alexander the Great's campaigns. The tension continues due to the professor who – after a lot of considerations about the importance of his research and astonished by this sponsor's liberality for such an unpractical science like history of Antiquity – asks, innocently: ‘What does the word **Protar** mean’<sup>81</sup>? Magda saves the situation again: **Protar** – she explains, arousing the initial fraught of Bucșan, who had seen his plans busted up – means *The Society for the Promotion of Studies of Ancient History*. Andronic is ecstatic in front of such a generosity, while Bucșan and Borcea,

<sup>78</sup> Sebastian could think of such staging because, in between-war times, the violent activities of the fascists students of the University were a hard fact.

<sup>79</sup> The editor of *Deșteptarea* signs some blank cheques, and Bucșan held them as security.

<sup>80</sup> During a discussion, she increases his doubt, making, with great talent, a fearful portrayal of Andronic, presented as a master of the blackmail.

<sup>81</sup> Sebastian, *Ultima oră*, 380 = *Stop News*, 190: ‘This word must have a meaning now. Protar – it's enough for you to hear it uttered and you start, all of you, with a sort of fright. Why?’

who were gone through hell, felt relieved and delighted at Magda's brilliant idea. This news is presented in *Deșteptarea's* 'Breaking News-Page': 'Yesterday the **Protah** (*scil.* **Protar**) society was constituted in Bucharest. One of the object of the society is to promote the study of ancient history ... The chairman of the board of directors is Professor Alexander Andronic our eminent contributor'<sup>82</sup>.

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Next, I will try to throw some light on the expertise in Alexander the Great of Professor Alexandru Andronic and Magda Minu, his student. From the very beginning, I have to say that such an enterprise is one of the most difficult. Because of the dramatic structure of the play Sebastian offers only some excerpts from his study and radio conference where he puts forward his hypotheses. Moreover, besides the text's fragmentation also, in order to achieve the highest internal tension of the play – he will insert events, modern historians and their hypotheses etc, thus coming to the expected results.

As we can see in the first scenes of *Ultima oră*, King Alexander the Great and his epoch, represent an outlandish topic, totally different from the daily concerns of the journalists from *Deșteptarea*. Obviously, such a topic is not entirely unknown to them, all being educated people, but it is not a common topic either. So, this explains why they were surprised when they saw Andronic's study published in their paper, not to mention that the editorial's discipline has been breached.

Their surprise is even greater when the editor – considering the 'blackmail' a real fact – asks for a special edition: 'Breaking News on Alexander the Great!' exclaims Ștefănescu, secretary of the editorial<sup>83</sup>, in astonishment.

According to his own statement, Andronic studied in Göttingen where he got a doctor degree with his thesis, *Studien über das Bildnis Alexanders des Grossen*<sup>84</sup>. In his study *Alexander the Great in Media* he pretends he

<sup>82</sup> *Ultima oră*, 384 = *Stop News*, 192-193. I believe the translator of the English version of *Ultima oră* wrongly interpreted **Protah** as an abbreviation of *The Society for the Promotion of Studies of Ancient History*. The mistake is obvious as Sebastian, through Andronic, observes that **Protar** is only a misspelling of **Prophtasia**, so **Protah** cannot be another misspelling.

<sup>83</sup> *Ultima oră*, 308 = *Stop News*, 73.

<sup>84</sup> *Ultima oră*, 328 = *Stop News*, 101. Obviously, Sebastian 'borrows' the title from Th. Schreiber, *Studien über das Bildnis Alexanders des Grossen*, this monograph's title becoming the title of Andronic's thesis for his doctor's degree. As a bibliographical oddity, I must note that, Schreiber's work is quoted in H. Berve, *Das Alexanderreich auf prosopographischer Grundlage* I, München, 1926, XV, as being edited in *Abhandlungen der Sächsischen*

brought: ‘an entirely new contribution to the history of Alexander the Great’<sup>85</sup>. Being interested in logistical problems of the Macedonian's army supply while being in Eastern Iran, Andronic thinks having them solved by bringing forth the hypothesis of Alexander's monopoly in oats.

In the mentioned study, Andronic argues that: ‘Alexander the Great waits for yet another year to strike a new blow, not because his adventurous spirit is not urging him further on, but because he is always coming up against the serious business of grain. He has to feed a considerable number of cavalry horses and even if he would succeed in organizing a monopoly in oats ...’<sup>86</sup>. Here, the text is interrupted by Bucșan's outburst of indignation, who scolds the paper's editor, soon after he has read the fragment aloud. He will resume reading but only in parts, looking for the components of the subtle ‘blackmail’: ‘We shall show on another occasion and we have evidence, which we prefer not to reveal for the moment, to support our conviction that from Protar to Carun there were stages in the itinerary of our hero insufficiently studied’<sup>87</sup>.

Starting from this hypothesis Andronic also outlines the chronology of Alexander's campaigns. We find out this new chronology from Magda who, as we already know, is looking – for the spotter of the ideal image of Alexander, even at the editorial office. Also, the hasty and nervous secretary of the editorial office, shocked at her exaltation, constantly breaks off her discourse. When she tries to resume the horrible charges brought against the young god, we find out the following: ‘I should like to have some explanations ... the article asserts some strange things, I may say some disturbing things ... Until now it has been as accepted fact that Alexander went from Prophtasia to Kabul in the winter of 330-329 BC. Mr Andronic holds that it was one year later, in the winter of 329-328 ... I know that other historians have already mentioned that date, and that Hoygarth (Koygharth)

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Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften. Phil-Hist. Klasse XLVIII (1903), Abh. 3, making a mistake related to the author's first name: *Otto*. On the other hand, J. J. Bernoulli, *Die erhaltenen Darstellungen Alexanders des Grossen. Ein Nachtrag zur griechischen Ikonographie*, München, 1905 [Reprint 1969, Hildesheim], 1 mentions the right first name, *Theodore* also adding a part of his work's subtitle: *Ein Beitrag zur alexandrinischen Kunstgeschichte*, and ignoring the rest of it: *Mit einem Anhang über die Anfänge des Alexanderkultes*. See further information on Schreiber in Nancy J. Burich, *Alexander the Great. A Bibliography*, The Kent State University Press, 1970, 74, nr. 277; 139, nr. 552; J. Seibert, *Alexander der Grosse*, Darmstadt, 1972, 250; 251-252; S. Lauffer, *Alexander der Große*, München, 1993<sup>3</sup>, 279.

<sup>85</sup> *Ultima oră*, 288 = *Stop News*, 39-40.

<sup>86</sup> *Ultima oră*, 305 = *Stop News*, 66-67.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibidem*. It is obvious that here Sebastian has clearly worked up the text using editorial tricks in order to achieve the desirable ‘special effects’.

and Wartenburg (Wuertenburg), for instance, adopt the same chronology!<sup>88</sup> ... But Mr. Andronic advances a dreadful hypothesis, insinuating, stating that in 330 Alexander could have been in Media, in 330, at moment of Parmenio's assassination, and that he took part in the murder'<sup>89</sup>.

During his radio conference, Andronic presents another part of his hypothesis: 'That Alexander was in Phrygia and particularly in Gordium during the winter of 333<sup>90</sup>, that the battle of Issus in Cilicia was fought in the spring of the same year<sup>91</sup>, that the siege of Tyre and following it the siege of the stronghold of Gaza all took place in a well – established succession of time, that the whole Egyptian campaign came to an end in the last quarter of 333 and in the first months of 332 – all these operations which history accepts as being definitely established, might be called in question and, in any case, deserve to be reexamined; more carefully, with greater attention and with less respect for certain statements which have the quality of being ancient, but not always the virtue of being irrefutable. The entire chronology of the wars waged by Alexander the Great is susceptible of reconsideration. Even in cases where historians agree, thus seeming to make any doubt impossible, we have a right to examine the facts, as long as we do not possess precise documents. It often happens that wholly plausible hypotheses backed by scholarly considerations are shattered by trivial but undeniable facts. Did Alexander the Great's halt at Troy really occur in 334? One is justified in questioning it. The fact itself is even more questionable. Did the halt at Troy actually take place? Did it really occur? Tradition will have it that Alexander the Great bent over the tomb of Achilles. This legend is more than a tradition – it is a symbol. The epic poem encountering history, Homer's hero meeting

<sup>88</sup> *Ibidem*, 295-296 = *Stop News*, 51. I cannot say for certain who is to blame for the misspelling of the names of **David G. Hogarth** and **Maximilian Graf Yorck von Wartenburg**: Sebastian or the unknown translator or the editor Vicu Mîndra. It could also be a case comparable to '**Proptasia-Protar**' and then is a mistake of the editorial house where *Opere alese*, edited by Mîndra were published. The same can hold true for the toponym **Marakanda (Samarkand)**, printed in *Deșteptarea* as **Maroc** and in the play (293, 324), **Marocardo** (sic!), also, the ancient name given in the ancient literary tradition is **Marakanda!**

<sup>89</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>90</sup> This information is wrong because Alexander is in Gordion, in Phrygia, during the spring of 333. See J. G. Droysen, *Geschichte des Hellenismus*. I. *Geschichte des Alexanders des Grossen*, Ed. by Erich Bayer, Introd. by Hans-Joachim Gehrke, Darmstadt, 1998, 158; D. G. Hogarth, *Philip and Alexander of Macedon. Two Essays in Biography*, New York - London, 1897 [Reprint Freeport, New York, 1971], 182; G. Wirth, *Alexander der Große*, Hamburg, 1973, 143; Lauffer, *Alexander*, 240; W. Will, *Alexander der Grosse*, Stuttgart, 1986, 195.

<sup>91</sup> This information is wrong too because the great battle of Issos took place in November 333. Cf. Droysen, *Geschichte des Hellenismus* I, 164 sq.; Hogarth, *Alexander*, 184 sq.; Wirth, *Alexander*, 143; Lauffer, *Alexander*, 240; Will, *Alexander*, 195.

Aristotle's pupil. This is an idea of great majesty, of infinite grandeur, but a man of science has no right to be deluded by such beauty, when the historic truth is uncertain, the more so, when it is decidedly false ... There are very few certain, absolutely certain data concerning the history of the wars waged by Alexander the Great. For example we can, surely, say that his armies pass over the Tigris in the last day of September 331 BC because this event concurs with a moon outshine, which was, definitely, on September 30<sup>th</sup> 331<sup>92</sup>. Such coincidences are not numerous in the Alexandrian chronology. The historian may regret their absence, for he desires as much precision as possible. Alexander the Great's figure, however, does not lose owing to the uncertainty of the data. Myths are stronger than documents. It may well be that the most fascinating thing about the great Macedonian is the mystery which even today, 23 centuries after his death, surrounds and conceals his miraculous adventure<sup>93</sup>.

The last elements of Andronic theory about Alexander the Great can, with some difficulty, be pinned down in the dialogue between Andronic and his student, Magda Minu. The professor remembers that Miss Minu presented a very interesting report on *Etiquette at the Court of Alexander the Great*, based on very good German references, including **Bernoulli** and **Spiecker**. This is why he is surprised she did not attend his course during the second term, too.

As we can see from the summary of the play presented earlier, Magda accidentally confesses her deep admiration for Alexander the Great, whom – he, the professor detests. For this reason, she stopped attending his course. More than this, in that unfortunate study published in *Deșteptarea*, this *Small Alexander*<sup>94</sup> – because of his unreasonable hatred for the young god – accuses the Great Alexander to have assassinated Parmenion, the experienced and devoted advisor of Filip II and Alexander the Great himself – with his own hand.

In front of her exaltation, portraying Alexander like a real god and also exaggerating the information in *Vulgata*, Andronic is forced to permanently bring arguments. His rare intercessions – to correct a free quotation from Plutarch or to make historical theory and methodology comments can be summarized as follows: *Vulgata*, on which Magda is ready to swear, can not be considered the only source, it has to be completed by and

<sup>92</sup> This is mistaken because the moon outshine took place on September 20<sup>th</sup> 331! Cf. Arrianus, 3.7.6; G. Radet, *Alexandre le Grand*, Paris, 1931, 140; Wirth, *Alexander*, 143; Lauffer, *Alexander*, 141; Will, *Alexander*, 196.

<sup>93</sup> *Ultima oră*, 310-312 = *Stop News*, 73-76.

<sup>94</sup> I have to remember that Andronic's student gives this ironical *cognomen* to Alexandru Andronic.



compared with the rest of all historical sources, even they are not favorable to Alexander. Moreover, he constantly stresses the real necessity of a complex topographical study<sup>95</sup> of the great Macedonian's campaigns.

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Next, I will try to identify, as much as possible, Sebastian's sources and knowledge of Alexander the Great. This is a difficult survey because of at least two reasons: first, I only have had access to few of them. Second, it seems to me the author carefully hid his *genuine real*<sup>96</sup> sources on Alexander the Great and his time<sup>97</sup>. Indeed, *Journal* can hardly be seen as a creation journal, so it is not surprising that Sebastian made no mention about the tribulations of his difficult documentation work<sup>98</sup>.

Obviously, the notes from the *Journal* are priceless, referring to his readings of the ancient, and also modern historians and revealing his real for interest in Antiquity as a whole and especially in Alexander the Great. Highly important to me are his notes concerning Romanian historians – friends of Sebastian's, with whom the writer frequently exchanged ideas.

The most important source is the text of the play, *Ultima oră*, where Andronic and Magda directly refer to the ancient and modern historians of Alexander. The enterprise is simple and implies only a few spelling inconveniences I will discuss later.

Nevertheless, I believe that only the reading of the play from 'a stylistic' perspective offers the solutions to identify a part of the hidden sources of Sebastian's expertise in Alexander the Great. From the beginning, I must stress that the outcome of this survey should be dealt with cautiously.

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*The Journal* repeatedly proves Sebastian's interest for Antiquity. One must not forget that he attended one of the famous high schools of the

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<sup>95</sup> Definitely, Radet's influence, *Alexandre*, 29 sq., can be detected, with his admirable depictions of Macedonian and Microasia's relief.

<sup>96</sup> Unlike Hogarth and, probably, von Wartenburg, sources that Sebastian consulted directly, I am not so sure about Spiecker's work, which, seems to be one of his 'hidden' sources. For the time being, the case of Bernoulli's work is open for discussion.

<sup>97</sup> It is the usual way of action in the literary world. Somehow, we can mention, Arno Schmidt, who uses his sources, in a very special way too: W. Will, *Alexander oder was ist Wahrheit*. Arno Schmidt, Kyng Alsauder & Mütterchen Klio, in *Alexander der Grosse. Festschrift für Gerhard Wirth um 60. Geburtstag* I, Ed. W. Will & J. Heinrichs, Amsterdam, 1987, 1233 sq.

<sup>98</sup> The lack of this kind of information in *Ultima oră* is rather curious.

between-war Romania<sup>99</sup> which has one of the best libraries<sup>100</sup>. Here, he received a sound philological education from very competent and responsible teachers, an education which he would further at the University of Bucharest. Therefore, he is far from being an ignorant in this area.

Some of Sebastian's *colloquia* with a number of the most important Romanian historians and classicists are mentioned in the *Journal*. From my point of view, the most relevant are those between Sebastian and **Dionisie M. Pippidi**. During such a *colloquium*, in Pippidi's alluring<sup>101</sup> *Gelehrterstube* he read and analyzed, together with Sebastian and Eugen Ionescu, some 'perennial' passages from *The Peloponnesian War* of Thucydides: 'I visited Pippidi this afternoon with Eugen Ionescu, He read us some strikingly topical pages from Thucydides. It could have been a pamphlet against the Germans'<sup>102</sup>.

The Peloponnesian War fascinates him and he will continue reading the Greek historian's work on his own 'I have been reading Thucydides – splendid and soothing. How stupid is our fretting over things that have remained the same down the ages! There is hardly one page in Thucydides in which you can't find things directly applicable to events today. Sometimes it even seems like a contemporary pamphlet'<sup>103</sup>. Further reading the story of the Greek historian about the Peloponnesian War, Sebastian makes some most interesting and unexpected remarks: 'Book Six of Thucydides, which I read today, recounts the war of Athens against Syracuse, the Sicilian expedition, the diplomatic negotiations with the colonies in Italy, and the treachery of Alcibiades. It seemed the finest of all the books, the one most susceptible to comparisons with the present war. The analogies between the Peloponnesian War and the wars of 1914 and 1940 are so great that they sometimes seem to merge into one. Only the element of anti-Semitic diversion was lacking in the war policy of the Greek city-states<sup>104</sup>. A lack all the more glaring in that they were waging a war for economic interests but (like today) camouflaging it beneath a war in the name of ideology and public opinion. The Jews would have been very useful to them, if they had had any, but closer analysis might

<sup>99</sup> The high school *Nicolae Bălcescu* from Braila was held in high esteem, a lot of the Romanian Academy members having graduated there, without mentioning a lot of writers or artists, who took a prominent part in the Romanian culture. See also, the monograph by T. Buculei, *O vatră de cultură seculară. Liceul 'Nicolae Bălcescu' (1863-1988)*, Brăila, 1988.

<sup>100</sup> While he attended the high school *Nicolae Bălcescu* Sebastian himself set up and administered a popular library! Cf., Ștefănescu, *Mihail Sebastian*, 8.

<sup>101</sup> Cf. *Journal*, 443, on November 17<sup>th</sup> 1941; 560, on June 4<sup>th</sup> 1943.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibidem*, 359, on June 2<sup>nd</sup> 1941.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibidem*, 369, on June 21<sup>st</sup> 1941.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibidem*, 373. Then Sebastian changed his first note: 'I must analyze closer the technique of their propaganda'.

reveal who then served that function ... I intend to read Aristophanes after I have finished Thucydides. I find the Peloponnesian War too absorbing to set it aside so quickly. With Aristophanes, I shall remain within its framework'<sup>105</sup>. On July 1<sup>st</sup> 1941 he passes a remark which can enlighten the contemporary society by the perception of Antiquity: 'The fall of the democratic regime in Athens, after the terrible defeat in Syracuse (which Thucydides describes in all its pain and suffering), is so similar to the fall of the French Republic after the collapse of the Somme front. Alcibiades is a kind of Laval, but probably more daring and adventurous, more willing to expose himself to blows, less abject. You feel a tightening of the chest, a strange sense of humiliation as you read all about the fall of Athens'<sup>106</sup>.

Out of Sebastian's meetings with Pippidi<sup>107</sup> the one from November 17<sup>th</sup> 1941 is worth mentioning: 'Pippidi's room (*I called by to take him some books*) is the kind of island in which I wouldn't have minded living myself. A desk, a library, solitude, light, quietness'<sup>108</sup>. I highlighted the passage between brackets, because it represents an important indication about one of Sebastian's sources of information, which he uses for his documentation necessary for the writing of *Ultima oră*. Definitely, another source of information could have been the big libraries in Bucharest<sup>109</sup> he used to go to. We surely know that he looked through the collections of the Romanian Academy library because a library card, valid between June 21<sup>st</sup> 1944-June 30<sup>th</sup> 1945 was preserved<sup>110</sup>. But, in my opinion, Pippidi, with his good library, unquestionably was an important source of information for Sebastian. I also assume that Sebastian discussed many Alexander-related issues which

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<sup>105</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibidem*, 375.

<sup>107</sup> Cf. notes 414, 426, 560 from *Journal*.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibidem*, 443. Here, it is an interesting note on Pippidi's scientific concerns at that moment: 'He is working on a study about the date of Tiberius's enthronement'. Obviously, this observation refers to the study: *L'avènement officiel de Tibère en Egypte* (published in RHSEE 18 (1941), 87-94).

<sup>109</sup> At that time, Romanian libraries were not in such a deplorable condition as they are nowadays, having all new publications in the field and the gap between Romanian and Western Universities was not as visible as it is today.

<sup>110</sup> See Ștefănescu, *Mihail Sebastian: the Appendix* includes a photocopy of that card.

we find in *Ultima oră*<sup>111</sup> with Pippidi, a refined classic philologist and historian of Antiquity<sup>112</sup>.

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Andronic and Magda mention some modern historians, who studied Alexander the Great's personality and time. First, it is worth saying that among the **ancient historians** – that they frequently refer to – **Plutarch** is the only one mentioned directly.

Throughout the play, Magda accuses David G. Hogarth and Maximilian Graf Yorck von Wartenburg for their 'heretical' chronologies assumed by Andronic also mentioning J. J. Bernoulli and Spiecker, as references in the bibliography for her seminar paper, *Etiquette at the Court of Alexander the Great*.

I must note, before indicating the title of their works, that Magda does not mention their *praenomina*. As I said before, even the name of Hogarth and von Wartenburg are mistaken. Sebastian refers to *Philip and Alexander of Macedon. Two Essays in Biography*<sup>113</sup> by David Hogarth, and to *Kurze Uebersicht der Feldzüge Alexanders des Großen*<sup>114</sup> by Maximilian Graf Yorck von Wartenburg. Spiecker's<sup>115</sup> case is quite simple because he is

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<sup>111</sup> D. M. Pippidi's son, Andrei Pippidi, professor at the University of Bucharest, told me, with his great kindness, that in his family library there is one of Sebastian's novels, *Accidentul*, which the author had given as a gift to his close friend Pippidi. Andrei Pippidi also admitted the existence of many volumes in his family library that Sebastian could have looked through.

<sup>112</sup> Curiously, Volovici does not count Pippidi among Sebastian's close friends, when he realizes a '*formula amicorum*', in the *Preface of the Journal*, 8.

<sup>113</sup> Published at New York - London, 1897 [Reprint Freeport, New York, 1971]. Hogarth put in a synthetic chronology of the Macedonian king's reign and campaigns at the end of his study about Alexander (p. 304-305). Definitely, these pages were extremely useful to Sebastian when he reverted the whole chronology of Alexander in order to achieve the desired stage effects.

<sup>114</sup> It was published in Berlin in 1897. At the end of the chapter on Alexander the Great's campaign in Eastern Iran, at p. 47, von Wartenburg summarizes the main stages, their chronology and distances in kilometers made by the Macedonian armies. I quoted von Wartenburg's work, saying *Uebersicht* not *Übersicht*, as it should be, because on the binding of the book the word is written *Uebersicht*.

<sup>115</sup> **Spiecker's** last name is unknown to Berve and Burich. Burich, *Alexander the Great. A Bibliography*, 141, no. 575, has an additional reference: **Direktor**. But what is interesting is the following situation: Berve names him **Spieker**, while Burich names him **Speicker**! I found out the last name and the correct name of the author of the study quoted by Berve: **Max Spiecker**, headmaster of the Superior School for Girls from Stolp, for a long time, by the extreme goodwill of Mr. Helmut Kunefke, webmaster of the interesting site [www.stolp.de](http://www.stolp.de). In the Stolp's *addressbook* I found the following: **Spiecker, Max**, Lyzealdirektor, Wallstr. 2. 'The metathesis' – **Spiecker/Speicker** – made by Burich (see

quoted with only one contribution: *Der Hof und die Hofordnung Alexanders des Grossen*<sup>116</sup>. There are some identification difficulties with J. J. Bernoulli, *Die erhaltenen Darstellungen Alexanders des Grossen. Ein Nachtrag zur griechischen Ikonographie*<sup>117</sup>.

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If the identification of this ‘minimal bibliography’ has not raised special difficulties, the real problem will appear when I try to identify hidden ancient and modern historians. ‘Hidden historians’ means those historians studied by Sebastian and analyzed from cover to cover. The reading of Plutarch, Hogarth only and maybe von Wartenburg, Spiecker and Bernoulli was not enough to offer Sebastian a real and *complete* image of Alexander the Great. I highlighted *complete* because Sebastian is able to create his own skillful and credible ‘alexandrology’. Sebastian's ‘hypotheses’ are not unsubstantiated statements but strong arguments which trigger comparable reactions of both connoisseurs' such as Magda and of ignorants who see a ‘blackmail’ in the grand style.

From the *Journal* we learn that Sebastian had a fairly good command of German<sup>118</sup> – not to mention that of French – and, before 1940, he starts to learn English, eventually managing to translate Shakespeare's sonnets<sup>119</sup>. Endowed with these linguistic skills, the writer could have direct access to the main studies or monographs on Alexander the Great published before The Second World War. As this bibliography on Alexander the Great could be found in Bucharest libraries, we are certain that Sebastian's documentation was not superficial or the mere result of his *colloquia* with Pippidi.

I must add that his astonishing intellectual curiosity<sup>120</sup>, is complemented by a pragmatic purpose, i. e. *deepening his knowledge of English*. This stands as a reason for Sebastian's choice of at least two

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infra n.116) who in his bibliography includes all the information that Berve has not, can be explained, in my opinion, only by this misprint.

<sup>116</sup> It was published in *Jahresbericht der städtischen höheren Mädchenschule in Stolp i. P. Ostern II* (Stolp, 1904), Programm Nr. 223, 1-22. Hard to find it because even Seibert, *Alexander*, 214, said: ‘mir nicht zugänglich’.

<sup>117</sup> It was published in München, 1905 [Reprint 1969, Hildesheim]. In Berve, *Das Alexanderreich*, XIII, the title is mistaken: *Zur Ikonographie Alexanders des Grossen*, but the same year and place is mentioned: München, 1905. In Burich, *Alexander*, 34, no. 29 and Seibert, *Alexander*, 250, Bernoulli's name and work are rightly quoted.

<sup>118</sup> *Journal*, 319, on February 6th 1941. He read S. Dubnow, *Weltgeschichte des jüdischen Volkes I-X*, Berlin, 1925-1929, also there was a French edition: S. Dubnow, *Histoire moderne du peuple juif I-II*, Paris, 1933 at the library of the Romanian Academy.

<sup>119</sup> *Journal*, 489, 500, 501-502, 522 etc.

<sup>120</sup> This was proved by his entire activity.

important studies, related to Alexander the Great from Anglo-Saxon historiography<sup>121</sup>.

The great alexandriological contributions<sup>122</sup> published before The Second World War<sup>123</sup> could be found in Romanian libraries, so Sebastian had no problem to find them (e.g., *Histoire Générale*<sup>124</sup>, *Peuples et civilisations, Évolution de l'humanité, Clio. Introductions aux Études Historiques*<sup>125</sup> and *The Cambridge Ancient History*<sup>126</sup>. There is also *Real-Encyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft*<sup>127</sup>, where some scholars' *voces* speak about Alexander the Great. We also have to mention the monographs by Droysen<sup>128</sup> and Hogarth, those of Benjamin Wheeler<sup>129</sup>, as well as G. Radet<sup>130</sup> and U. Wilcken<sup>131</sup>, A. Weigall<sup>132</sup> and of course H. Berve's great work<sup>133</sup>. Obviously, the ancient historians of Alexander's time, whose works

<sup>121</sup> Obviously, my speculation is unsustainable if we think that reading Hogarth was suggested by Pippidi to Sebastian who might have had difficulties in writing his play? On the one hand, because Hogarth suggests an original chronology which sets tensions between Andronic and Magda. On the other hand, we may consider that Sebastian's desire to find Anglo-Saxon literature led him to Hogarth, and his reading gave him the idea to introduce this 'unprecedented' chronology in *Ultima oră*.

<sup>122</sup> They were published as monographs about Alexander the Great or as chapters in the great general history works published in Germany, France and Great Britain.

<sup>123</sup> At a time when scientific connections and the free circulation of books and journals almost stopped.

<sup>124</sup> G. Glotz-P. Roussel-R. Cohen, *Histoire Grecque*. IV.1. *Alexandre et l'hellénisation du monde antique. Alexandre et le démembrement de son empire*, Paris, 1939.

<sup>125</sup> R. Cohen, *La Grèce et l'hellénisation du monde antique*, Paris, 1934<sup>1</sup>; Paris, 1939<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>126</sup> Where W. W. Tarn published the chapters XII-XV: *CAH VI*, Cambridge, 1927, 352-505; 590-609.

<sup>127</sup> Cf., e. g., the erudite vox of J. Kaerst, one of the experts in Alexander the Great and the Hellenistic World: *RE I.1* (1893), 1412-1435.

<sup>128</sup> Droysen, *Geschichte des Hellenismus*. I, 263, 274 (Reprint of Tübingen Edition 1952-1953, Ed. Erich Bayer, which was based on the second edition, Gotha, 1877-1878, edited by Droysen). Obviously, Sebastian found it more at hand the French translation of Droysen's work, i. e. *Histoire de l'hellénisme I-III*, Transl. by A. Bouché-Leclercq and Revised by J. G. Droysen, Paris, 1883-1885, which could be found in all Romanian University libraries, as the French translation of *Römische Geschichte* by Mommsen.

<sup>129</sup> *Alexander the Great, The Merging of East and West in Universal History*, New-York, 1900 [Reprint: Freeport, New-York, 1971], 1: 'No single personality, excepting the carpenter' son of Nazareth, has done so much to make the world of civilization we live in what it is as Alexander of Macedon'.

<sup>130</sup> *Alexandre le Grand*, Paris, 1931. To this, we need to attach his valuable *Notes critiques sur l'histoire d'Alexandre*, Bordeaux-Paris, 1925.

<sup>131</sup> *Alexander der Grosse*, Leipzig, 1931 = *Alexandre le Grand*, Paris, 1933.

<sup>132</sup> *Alexander the Great*, London, 1933 = *Alexandre le Grand*, Paris, 1934 = *Alexander der Grosse*, Leipzig, 1941.

<sup>133</sup> *Das Alexanderreich*, I-II.

could be found in annotated editions or translations in all big libraries in Bucharest, had the same status.

**Which of these works were really used by Sebastian?**

I must say there are two clues for the identification of the 'hidden' historians Sebastian read.

The *first clue* could be the bibliography of the great syntheses and monographs mentioned earlier. It is hard to believe that Sebastian had access to Spiecker's study that was difficult to find even in the German libraries and quoted, as far as I know only by Berve<sup>134</sup>. I am almost sure that the title of this work and probably that of J. J. Bernoulli, were taken over by Sebastian, without reading them, from Berve, who mentions them in *Literaturverzeichnis*<sup>135</sup>.

I also consider that Sebastian took over from Berve<sup>136</sup> the title of Th. Schreiber's study which would become the title of Andronic's Ph.D at Göttingen. Could Berve's misspelt but more attractive mention<sup>137</sup> of Bernoulli's<sup>138</sup> title have stirred Sebastian's interest in this valuable contribution to Alexander's iconography? Had Sebastian read Bernoulli he could have 'borrowed' from him the title of Andronic's doctoral thesis.

On the other hand, Berve does not quote Hogarth<sup>139</sup> and von Wartenburg<sup>140</sup>. Therefore, Sebastian is supposed to have read them more or less due to Pippidi or to the bibliography of other historians whom I will try to identify.

<sup>134</sup> I think Berve is the only who used Spiecker's study, because, except for the latter's being quoted in *Das Alexanderreich* I found it only in the bibliographical list made by Nancy Burich. Cf., *supra*, n. 115-116.

<sup>135</sup> Berve, *Das Alexanderreich*, XIII-XVI.

<sup>136</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>137</sup> *Supra*, n. 117.

<sup>138</sup> Whom Tarn, *CAH* VI, 599, names Bernouilli! As well as Rolfe, *Introduction*, in Q. Curtius, *History of Alexander II*, Transl. by John C. Rolfe (Loeb Classical Library), London, 1962, XXXIV; Lauffer, *Alexander*, 277.

<sup>139</sup> Tarn, *CAH* VI, 595, quoted him not with the mentioned monograph (used by A. W. Pickard-Cambridge, *CAH* VI, 582-3, the author of the chapters *The Rise of Macedonia; Macedonian Supremacy in Greece*), but with other important studies: 595: *The Army of Alexander*, *Journal of Philology* XVII (1888) 1 sq.; 599: *The Deification of Alexander the Great*, *Engl. Hist. Review* II (1987) 317 sq., and *Alexander in Egypt and Some Consequences*, *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* II (1915) 53 sq.

<sup>140</sup> He was quoted by Tarn, *CAH* VI, 595. Nowadays, these authors are rarely mentioned. Cf., however, A. B. Bosworth, *CAH* VI, 1994<sup>2</sup>, 934 f., where Hogarth is indicated, *Philip and Alexander* and, obvious, Radet with *Alexandre* and some other studies, and, of course, Wilcken, *Alexander*, in English edition by E. N. Borza (New-York, 1967).

A second clue for the identification of the historians read or used by Sebastian could be the presence of the place name of **Prophtasia**<sup>141</sup> which appears as the fallacious **Protar** in *Deșteptarea's* pages. Thus, we also have to take into account the following scholars: Droysen<sup>142</sup>, Kaerst<sup>143</sup>, Hogarth<sup>144</sup>, Wheeler<sup>145</sup>, Radet<sup>146</sup>, Jouguet<sup>147</sup>, Tarn<sup>148</sup> and Cohen<sup>149</sup>. Obviously, the number of those who comment on the name **Prophtasia**, given by Alexander the Great to *Phrada*, the old capital of Drangiana, is limited. So, only Tarn<sup>150</sup> and Radet<sup>151</sup> can be brought into discussion. As the characters Magda and Andronic do not make any direct reference or any hint at the significance of the toponym **Prophtasia**, I believe the limitation to Tarn and Radet is unworkable. On the other hand, the use of such a criterion would leave aside Hogarth, whom Sebastian undoubtedly read as he followed his chronology and assigned it to Andronic.

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The comparative-stylistic analysis of Sebastian's play and of the ancient and modern historians who wrote on Alexander the Great can offer some *bibliographical supplementa*. Undeniably, its results should be cautiously considered because of the difficulties in detecting the ineffable mechanism of artistic transfiguration, specific to any literary work.

<sup>141</sup> About **Prophtasia**, cf. Strabo, 11. 514; 15. 723; Steph. Byz. s. *Phrada*; Plinius, 6. 94; Plutarch, *De fortuna Al.*, 1. 5. For all the discussion about Prophtasia's identification see Fr. Schachermeyr, *Alexander der Grosse*, Wien, 1973, 315, n. 362.

<sup>142</sup> Droysen, *Geschichte des Hellenismus*. I, 263, 274.

<sup>143</sup> Kaerst, *RE*, I. 1 (1893), 1426.

<sup>144</sup> Hogarth, *Philip and Alexander*, 220.

<sup>145</sup> Wheeler, *Alexander*, 387: '... he entered the province Drangiana ... Here, probably at its capital city, Phrada (Prophtasia), came to light an ominous conspiracy in the very heart of his own camp'.

<sup>146</sup> Radet, *Alexandre*, 237.

<sup>147</sup> P. Jouguet, *Alexandre le Grand et l'hellénisation du monde antique*, Paris, 1926, 44, 122.

<sup>148</sup> Tarn, *CAH VI*, 390.

<sup>149</sup> Glotz-Roussel-Cohen, *Histoire Grecque*. IV.1, 134: 'L'affaire de Philôtas eut des conséquences de toutes sortes. Alexandre changea le nom de Phrada, la ville où avait été dénoncé le complot, en celui de Prophtasie'.

<sup>150</sup> Tarn, *CAH VI*, 390: '... Alexander found a city at Phrada which was, perhaps later, named Prophtasia, "Anticipation" – a curious allusion to the conspiracy'.

<sup>151</sup> Radet, *Alexandre*, 236-237: 'Une preuve de la certitude qu'eut le roi d'avoir échappé en Drangiane, par une répression foudroyante, à un péril mortel, est la désignation singulière dont fut revêtue, à la suite du procès, la ville où la drame se déroula. Par une sorte d'allusion mystique à la façon dont avait été prévenu le complot, Phrada s'appela dès lors Prophtasia, "Anticipation", et ce nom lui valut une physionomie distincte parmi les fondations macédoniennes dont le vainqueur de l'Asie, providentiellement sauvé, jalonna les marches de l'Extrême-Orient'.



Of course, one can wonder whether Sebastian, the existentialist – an advocate of ‘life for life's sake’, of Gide, or rather of Nae Ionescu's<sup>152</sup> – acted in Alexander the Great's case as he did in his novels where he transfigures his own experiences. In other words, did Sebastian – in order to achieve **authenticity** – took, directly, passages from Alexander's historians texts – considered as **slices of reality** – or are these texts only a pretext for his own artistic chemistry?

Obviously, comparing some sentence structures of ancient and modern historians of Alexander to others, such as those likely to be analyzed in *Ultima oră*, can lead, in spite of any refinement, only to uncertain results. Besides, one who ventures in making such an analysis must be aware of all the risks, and first of all, of the fact that the results mainly depend on one's own knowledge of Alexander the Great's time.

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As we have already seen, the alexandrologic discourse in *Ultima oră* unfolds on several levels dominated by those of Magda and Andronic's. The insignificant discourse relative to the perception of Alexander by the editors and the editor of *Dimineața* or by Bucșan can be ignored.

The two major discourses are built by Sebastian as a confrontation between *Vulgata*, on the one hand, and the literary tradition represented by Ptolemaios, Aristobulos and Arrianus<sup>153</sup>, on the other hand – the two trends in Alexander the Great's perception in Antiquity.

<sup>152</sup> On the whole cultural context of the between-war period, in which the Romanian existentialism was a version of the French existentialism see, first of all, Călinescu, *Istoria literaturii române*, 943 sq. and 953-954; on Nae Ionescu's existentialism see also Ed. Kanterian, *loc. cit.*, 8: ‘Sie (*scil.* ‘the younger generation’) verehrten den Existentialisten Nae Ionescu, der in fesselnden Vorlesungen den "Primat des Geistigen" heraufbeschwor und die Jugend zur unbedingten Suche nach einem authentischen Leben jenseits sinnentleerer Widersprüche und Konventionen der modernen Existenz aufforderte’; 11-12: ‘Die Anknüpfung an Gide sollte nicht wundernehmen. Rumänische Literaten orientierten sich seit jeher an Frankreich, und das galt auch für Sebastians Generation ... Gides Theorie des *acte gratuit*, der unbegründeten, reiner Freiheit entspringenden Handlung ..., wirkte nachhaltig auf Sebastian, Eliade, Cioran und (Camil) Petrescu. Sie alle waren vom Ideal der "Authentizität" fasziniert, einem Begriff, der damals nicht nur in Rumänien hoch im Kurs stand’.

<sup>153</sup> Cf., only Ed. Schwartz, *RE* IV.2, 1871-1891, *s.v.* Curtius Rufus; idem, *RE* V.1, 663-704, *s.v.* Diodoros; F. Jacoby, *RE* XI.1, 622-654, *s.v.* Kleitarchos; Glotz-Roussel-Cohen, *Histoire Grecque*. IV.1, 38; Tarn, *Alexander II*, 1 sq. = *Alexander der Grosse II*, Transl. by Gisela Spreen-Héracourt & W. Héracourt, Darmstadt, 1968, 157 sq.; Seibert, *Alexander*, 1-61; P. Goukowsky, in Diodore de Sicile, *Bibliothèque Historique. Livre XVII*, Ed. P. Goukowsky, Paris, 1976, XIII f., but especially, G. Wirth, *Der Weg in die Vergessenheit. Zum Schicksal*

The reading of *Ultima oră* clearly reveals that Magda has ‘feelings’, she ‘sees’ Alexander and ‘speaks’ to him. Her ‘feelings’ are extremely vivid: ‘You see, for you Alexander the Great is a problem, an object to be studied. For me he's something quite different. A man. A friend. More than that even. A passion ... I know him, I am acquainted with him. I've seen him, I sometime see him ... are moments when I see him very clearly, I could speak to him ... Look! We're in June, 323 ...<sup>154</sup>. ... For me, they (*scil. gesta Alexandri*) aren't the past. For me they are living. Still alive ... I know Alexander. Sometimes I see him. I know his voice, I know the look in his eyes, the burning look of his soft, moist eyes ... But not one of them saw him as I have seen him. You haven't seen him either. Never ... Sometimes, while attending your course and listening to you speaking about him, I should have liked to interrupt you, I should have liked to scream. You talked so indifferently about such enhancing, lovely things. How could you be so cold, so remote? ... Still, there were moments during your course, when you seemed to understand, to see ... There were moments of your course, when things seem to come to life ... You spoke of Alexander's departure for Asia. You looked bored, remote. And, all of a sudden – I don't know how it happened – you started. You raised a hand with a movement like lightning – a movement that opened the gates of Asia, the gates of dreams. Your voice quivered. There was a great light in your eyes ...<sup>155</sup>. ... But not in life<sup>156</sup>. Alexander knew it. He went with his hands free, his eyes closed, straight ahead, into the unforeseen, to adventure to the very end. Alexander is a flame. You won't extinguish it. In spite of all your plates, index cards and books! You won't extinguish it! He is stronger, more alive, and more beautiful. He is so beautiful!<sup>157</sup>.

As a consequence of these *Erlebnisse*, when Andronic asks Magda where she has seen Alexander, her straightforward answer is: ‘**in my dreams**’<sup>158</sup>, showing her contempt for the Andronic's knowledge ‘**from books**’.

At this point, an analysis of the scientific origin of Magda's ‘feelings’ should be made, as beyond her juvenile exaltation there are her significant readings.

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*des antiken Alexanderbildes*, Wien, 1993, 10 f., for a subtle analysis of the origin of the different views on Alexander the Great.

<sup>154</sup> *Ultima oră*, 298 = *Stop News*, 55.

<sup>155</sup> *Ultima oră*, 321 sq. = *Stop News*, 90 sq.

<sup>156</sup> *Ultima oră*, 326 = *Stop News*, 98, as a response at Andronic's statement: ‘In science everything can be explained’.

<sup>157</sup> *Ultima oră*, 326-327 = *Stop News*, 98-100.

<sup>158</sup> *Ultima oră*, 324 = *Stop News*, 95.

From the beginning, I have to show that such ‘feelings’ are triggered by Sebastian, by means of quotation and free interpretation of Plutarch, the only ancient historian mentioned *expressis verbis* in *Ultima oră*. Andronic brings him into discussion when Magda freely portrays Alexander: ‘I know the look in his eyes, the burning look of his soft, moist eyes ... How proudly he raised his brow to the stars! How defiantly he bent back his neck!’<sup>159</sup>.

Curiously enough, Andronic confirms Magda's observation about Alexander's glance: ‘You're right. He had moist eyes. Plutarch agrees about it... The moistness that gushed from his eyes...’<sup>160</sup>, but disagrees with the other one: ‘That's inaccurate. In this, you're mistaken. He used to bend to the left. Plutarch says: ‘His neck was slightly bent towards the left shoulder’. All the authors agree’<sup>161</sup>.

With all Andronic's goodwill, Plutarch can not provide alone the essence of Alexander's image in Magda's mind. Obviously, Sebastian combined Plutarch's narration with other portrayals of Alexander the Great made, first of all, by Droysen and Radet. Here is the enthusiastic portrait made by Droysen: ‘Er liebte mehr seine Mutter als seinen Vater; von jener hatte er den Enthusiasmus und die tiefe Innigkeit des Empfindens, die ihn in der Reihe der Helden alter und neuer Zeit unterscheidet. Dem entsprach sein Äußeres: sein scharfer Gang, sein funkelnder Blick, das zurückfliegende Haar, die Gewalt seiner Stimme bekundete den Helden; wenn er ruhte, bezauberte die Milde seiner Miene, das sanfte Rot, das auf seiner Wange spielte, sein feuchtaufblickendes Auge, das ein wenig zur Linken geneigte Haupt’<sup>162</sup>.

Equally enthusiastic is Radet's portrayal of Alexander: ‘Voyez-le combattre: vigueur d'athlète à la fougue magnifique, port altier de la tête, avec le front robuste et large sous une chevelure léonine, regard étincelant

<sup>159</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>160</sup> *Ultima oră*, 325 = *Stop News*, 95-96.

<sup>161</sup> *Ibidem*. For accuracy, I quote Plutarch's words: *Alexander*, 4 (Plutarch's *Lives* VII, Transl. by B. Perrin, Cambridge - London, 1956, 231-233), about some physical features of Alexander the Great: ‘The outward appearance of Alexander is best represented by the statues of him which Lysippus made, and it was by this artist alone that Alexander himself thought it fit that he should be modeled. For those peculiarities which many of his successors and friends afterwards tried to imitate, namely, the poise of the neck, which was bent slightly to the left, and the melting glance of his eyes, this artist has accurately observed ... Whereas he was of a fair color, as they say, and his fairness passed into ruddiness on his breast particularly, and in his face. Moreover, that a very pleasant odor exhaled from his skin and that there was a fragrance about his mouth and all his flesh, so that his garments were filled with it, this we have read in the *Memoirs* of Aristoxenus. Now, the cause of this, perhaps, was the temperament of his body, which was a very warm and fiery one ...’.

<sup>162</sup> Droysen, *Geschichte des Hellenismus* I, 66-67.

qui, pareil à l'éclair déchirant le nuage ... On ne sait ce qu'il faut admirer le plus, de l'esprit si riche à la sève originale fécondant la culture acquise, des yeux à la caresse humide, des traits à la vivacité frémissante, des joues que veloute un tendre incarnat, ou enfin, dissymétrie chère aux artistes, d'une certaine flexion du cou, légèrement incliné sur l'épaule gauche'<sup>163</sup>.

In my opinion, Weigall's portrayal should also be mentioned because it contains many elements which might trigger Magda's '**feelings**': 'Philipp scheint gefürchtet zu haben, der Knabe könne ein Weichling werden, denn trotz seiner muskulösen, schlanken Gestalt waren seine Züge weich und seine Haut von einem Weiß und einem Rosa überzogen, wie die eines Mädchens; auch hatte er die Angewohnheit, den Kopf ein wenig seitwärts zu halten, und seine Augen blickten träumerisch... Er (*scil.* Alexander) hatte sich zu einem sehr schönen jungen Mann herangebildet; er war stark und gesund und blond wie der goldhaarige Apoll ... Wegen seiner unerschrockenen Tapferkeit flogen ihm die Herzen der Soldaten wie von selbst zu, und sein einnehmendes Äußere, das blonde Haar, die zarte Hautfarbe, die athletische Gestalt erregten allgemeine Bewunderung. Er war tatsächlich der junge Held der Sage, wie der in die Wirklichkeit zurückgekehrte Achill; besonders, wenn er seine glänzende Rüstung und den federgeschmückten Helm trug, entsprach er ganz der kriegerischen Vorstellung des jugendlichen Peliden; auch seine Bewegungen und seine ganze Art hatten etwas Übermenschlich-Heldenhaftes. Kein Wunder, daß sich in die allgemeine Zuneigung auch etwas wie abergläubische Furcht mischte'<sup>164</sup>.

If I were to say which of the three authors has 'generated' Magda's '**feelings**', I would take into account, as far as sentence structure is concerned, Droysen and Radet's portrayals first. In other words, I assume that, from Droysen's statement '*sein feuchtaufblickendes Auge*' and Radet's '*port altier de la tête*'<sup>165</sup> sprung Magda's cry with Sebastian: 'I know the look in his eyes, the burning look of his soft, moist eyes... How proudly he raised his brow to the stars! How defiantly he bent back his neck!'

<sup>163</sup> Radet, *Alexandre*, 34-35.

<sup>164</sup> Unfortunately, for quotations, I must use the German version, A. Weigall, *Alexander der Grosse*, Transl. by Dr. Ruth Weiland, Leipzig, 1941, 70, 89, 167, because I have lost the English version.

<sup>165</sup> I consider these three portrayals more suggestive than Tarn's, *CAH VI*, 353 (= *Alexander the Great I*, Cambridge, 1948, 4 = *Alexander I*, 4): 'In appearance, Alexander was fair-skinned, ruddy, and clean-shaven; Lysippus' portrait-statues rendered famous the inclination of his head to the left side and *the soft, upturned eyes...*' and Glotz – Roussel – Cohen, *Histoire Grecque*. IV.1, 42: 'Ce qu'il est permis d'affirmer, c'est que le sculpteur officiel représentait le roi la tête légèrement penchée sur l'épaule gauche, le regard brillant d'une "douceur humide", et lui donnait un aspect léonin par une chevelure retombant en crinière et un masque farouche autant que majestueux'.

Except for Plutarch<sup>166</sup>, Sebastian does not mention any other ancient historian, so Andronic and Magda hint only vaguely at the literary tradition on Alexander<sup>167</sup>. The vigour of Magda's existentialist discourse surpasses the balanced portrayal of Alexander made by Plutarch. Her discourse obviously originated in *Vulgata* which only the novelistic and panegyric accents were extracted from.

What is interesting that none of these historians is not brought into discussion. If Diodorus and Pompeius Trogus/Iustinus were and are still relatively unknown to the Romanian cultivated public, things are different with Q. Curtius Rufus<sup>168</sup>. This is why I find strange the absence of any reference to him in *Ultima oră*, even if Plutarch's notoriety surpasses Rufus' in the Romanian culture<sup>169</sup>.

Under these circumstances, I believe that Sebastian read neither of the three ancient historians mentioned but he extracted the essence of *Vulgata* from Radet's monograph, where Kleitarchos and Curtius are frequently mentioned. My assumption is grounded in the fact that Radet's enthusiastic style can be traced in the shaping of Magda's discourse: 'Scrutez le génie du héros macédonien: le fils de Philippe et d'Olympias apparaît comme le magnifique confluent d'une hérédité qui allie ses contrastes. Ascendance étrange! Le père y représente le type accompli du fondateur d'empire. Netteté de la pensée, ampleur de l'observation et justesse du calcul, réflexion et prévoyance, esprit de suite et rapidité de décision, ordre méthodique, patience opiniâtre, habile emploi de la souplesse caressante ou de l'énergie brutale ... A cet admirable équilibre intellectuel de l'époux s'oppose, chez son ardente compagne, un débordement sans frein de la sensibilité. La reine était une princesse d'Épire. Dans son pays natal, la religion dionysiaque provoquait la même ferveur qu'en Thessalie, en Macédoine et en Thrace ... Aucune des femmes que Dionysos troublait de son fluide n'égalait en frénésie la mère d'Alexandre ... Tel est le couple royal. Il donne naissance à un véritable enfant du miracle ... Le rejeton d'une double lignée de héros porte à leur apogée les qualités si diverses qui lui viennent de ses parents. Il unit et

<sup>166</sup> Weigall, *Alexander*, 70, n. 73, notes that Plutarch, *Pompeius*, 2. 2, made another interesting remark about Alexander's features, as a result of *imitatio Alexandri*: 'and this, with the languishing motion of his eyes, seemed to form a resemblance in his face, though perhaps more talked of than really apparent, to the statues of the King Alexander' (Transl. by John Dryden). Cf. și G. Wirth, *Der Weg in die Vergessenheit. Zum Schicksal des antiken Alexanderbildes*, Wien, 1993, 32.

<sup>167</sup> *Ultima oră*, 325 = *Stop News*, 96: 'All the authors agree'.

<sup>168</sup> Fragments from Curtius were translated in the 17<sup>th</sup> century by the Romanian historian Miron Costin, see Lica, *Alexander in Rumänien*, 59 sq., 67.

<sup>169</sup> *Ibidem*, 51, 59.

concilie ces deux pôles contraires: le sens lumineux de l'action positive et concrète, la hantise religieuse de l'infini ... Si, face à l'ennemi, il combine et calcule, dès que la décision est acquise, cette même imagination qui lui a suggéré les moyens de la victoire l'entraîne à les dépasser. Il s'élançait vers un monde de chimères. Le fougueux cavalier du Granique a quitté le sol. Il ne tient plus les rênes de Bucéphale: il galope, hors du cercle des horizons terrestres, sur le dos ailé de Pégase, à travers un mirage divin qu'illuminent des espoirs infinis<sup>170</sup> etc.

At the beginning of the play<sup>171</sup> Magda outlines a portrait of Alexander while he was in Babylon, at the beginning of June 323, some days before his tragic death: 'We're in June the 2nd, the 3rd, the 4th, 323. Oh, the hot summer nights in Asia! The tents still keep the day's heat. Forty thousand men are lying asleep, holding their swords in their hands, their heads resting on their shields. One man alone is awake under the white stars, and among these stars, there's his own which has not yet fallen. He is thirty-three. He has conquered half the planet and his hands are unpolluted. Long, white, youthful hands. At dawn, he will make a sign and all the forty thousand men will start moving again to conquer what is left of the earth...'

This portrait seems to stem from Hogarth's inspired lines: 'It was already summer. The Army of the West was organized; dock and ships were ready ... The Emperor had fixed the 19th of the current month (*scil. Daisios*) for the start of the division ... He woke after a few hours in a high fever, but insisted none the less on offering the daily sacrifices, and talking with the generals over details of the Expedition, decreed to start in three day's time ... he had to put off the setting forth of the Expedition first by one day, and then definitely to the 23rd. On the 21st and 22nd he convened the generals again, to remind them that all must be ready; but he was now very ill, and, needless to say, on the 23rd no corps moved from Babylon<sup>172</sup>'.

If Sebastian did not imitate Hogarth's<sup>173</sup> rhythm of Alexander's portrayal by Magda, did he at least take over the main idea of it? Or could

<sup>170</sup> Radet, *Alexandre*, 10-13; obvious, his suggestive inspired style was more suitable for Sebastian than the warm moderate style of *Histoire Grecque*. IV.1, 42-43: 'Au moral, au tempérament impulsif, d'ordinaire tenu en bride par l'éducation et la volonté ... Il est énergique et brave comme pas un sur le champ de bataille, aussi bien qu'endurant dans les expédition longue et pénibles ...' etc.

<sup>171</sup> *Ultima oră*, 298 = *Stop News*, 55-56.

<sup>172</sup> Hogarth, *Alexander*, 273-274, who follows the ancient literary tradition.

<sup>173</sup> In Hogarth's favour could stand Sebastian's reading his book with a view to improve his knowledge of English.

this be Sebastian's own idea coming from the synthesis of the various data provided by ancient<sup>174</sup> and modern historians of Alexander the Great?

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Andronic's discourse is more complex and elaborated than Magda's linear one. At the same time<sup>175</sup>, Sebastian manages to convincingly suggest a historian aware of his profession requirements. An earnest historian with serious studies at Göttingen<sup>176</sup> where he defended his Ph. D thesis, Andronic seeks to balance the discussion using with adequate methodological overtones. To cope with Magda's aggressive existentialism, the professor maintains that the only way to get to know Alexander is the study of sources: 'What could you expected? I'm a professor. I've no visions. I don't meet Alexander the Great at night, in my dreams ... I'm a man of science. I search for the truth. I try to find it'<sup>177</sup>.

Andronic is a supporter of the dominant opinion of the positivist century concerning the unfailing confidence in the possibilities of science '*In science everything can be explained*'. This contrasts with the war cry of the existentialist century, claimed by Magda, '*but not in life*'<sup>178</sup>. But Alexander is an extraordinary personality to whom nobody can resist and, at some point, Andronic confesses that: 'I've always been rather afraid of him'<sup>179</sup>.

Does this confession echo Sebastian's readings from Wilcken's<sup>180</sup> work? Or should we see in it only his preoccupation to establish an

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<sup>174</sup> From their own statements it is known that Plutarch, 76. 1-9 and Arrianus, 7. 25. 1- 7. 26. 3 used *Ephemerides* to present the circumstances of Alexander's death (for the problems under discussion see also J. R. Hamilton, Plutarch, *Alexander. A Commentary*, Oxford, 1969, 210-211). *Breaking News* proves Sebastian did read Plutarch. Is it possible that for the complete achievement of the **authenticity of feelings** he preferred Plutarch just because he accurately follows the official documents of his time?

<sup>175</sup> Cf., *supra*, n. 73-74.

<sup>176</sup> Could this be considered a posthumous tribute to Nae Ionescu who also studied in Göttingen?

<sup>177</sup> *Ultima oră*, 325 = *Stop News*, 99.

<sup>178</sup> *Ultima oră*, 326 = *Stop News*, 98.

<sup>179</sup> *Ultima oră*, 327 = *Stop News*, 100.

<sup>180</sup> Wilcken, *Alexander*, VIII: 'Aber die Hauptschwierigkeit unseres Problems liegt doch um Alexanders Persönlichkeit selbst, einmal in der Kompliziertheit seines Wesens, das unvereinbar scheinende Gegensätze in sich schloß, dann aber in der Tatsache, daß eine dämonische Genialität in ihm steckte, das Genie aber letzten Endes immer etwas Unerklärliches, immer ein Wunder für uns bleibt. Mit rationalem Denken allein wird man dem Rätsel seines Lebens nicht beikommen können, denn neben seinem klaren, nüchternen Verstande war auch viel Irrationales in ihm. Wer ihn nur als den kühl berechnenden Politiker faßt, übersieht die romantischen und mystischen Züge seines Wesens'.

approximate consensus between Andronic's methodological claims and the tone of his radio conference, taken *ad litteram* from Radet<sup>181</sup>?

Here and there Sebastian artfully takes us to the very core of Andronic's hypothesis development process: 'Even all these military operations which history accepts as being definitely established, might be called in question and, in any case, deserve to be reexamined ... Even in cases where historians agree, thus seeming to make any doubt impossible, we have a right to examine the facts, as we do not possess precise documents'<sup>182</sup>. Definitely, Andronic's methodological exaggeration comes from Radet's problems in pinning down ancient Troy<sup>183</sup>: 'Did Alexander the Great's halt at Troy really occur in 334? One is justified in questioning it'<sup>184</sup>. The next fragment is stylistically, tributary to the same Radet<sup>185</sup>, even if the methodological difference is noticeable: 'The fact itself is even more questionable. Did the halt at Troy actually take place? Did it really occur? Tradition will have it that Alexander the Great bent over the tomb of Achilles. This legend is more than a tradition – it is a symbol. The epic poem encountering history, Homer's hero meeting Aristotle's pupil. This is an idea of great majesty, of infinite grandeur, but a man of science has no right to be deluded by such beauty, when the historic truth is uncertain, the more so, when it is decidedly false'<sup>186</sup>.

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Before analyzing Andronic's seminal statement that he brought 'an entirely new contribution to the history of Alexander the Great – a contribution I would say, absolutely new, if not revolutionary to the history of Alexander the Great, at least to a part of this history'<sup>187</sup>, some secondary statements of the professor should be clarified<sup>188</sup>. Magda's first entering the scene is determined by her strong indignation caused by Andronic's supposition that Alexander the Great took a part, himself maybe, in Parmenion's assassination<sup>189</sup>.

<sup>181</sup> *Ultima oră*, 310-313 = *Stop News*, 73-76.

<sup>182</sup> *Ultima oră*, 311 = *Stop News*, 75.

<sup>183</sup> Radet, *Alexandre*, 36.

<sup>184</sup> *Ultima oră*, 311 = *Stop News*, 75.

<sup>185</sup> Radet, *Alexander*, 30 sq.

<sup>186</sup> *Ultima oră*, 311 = *Stop News*, 75. Let's not forget another confession of Andronic: *Ultima oră*, 335 = *Stop News*, 111: 'I don't know of any crushing evidence in history. At the most... plausible, conclusive evidence'.

<sup>187</sup> *Ultima oră*, 288 = *Stop News*, 39-40.

<sup>188</sup> An error of historical geography of Andronic should be corrected too (*Ultima oră*, 344 = *Stop News*, 127), that consider Prophtasia 'an old town in Asia Minor'.

<sup>189</sup> For Parmenion, see Berve, *Das Alexanderreich II*, 298-306, nr. 306.



This hypothesis, Andronic seems to be so sure of<sup>190</sup>, is based on another one – a new chronology of Alexander's campaigns in Iran. This new chronology proposed by Andronic may involve that Alexander the Great might have been in Media in 330 B.C., when Parmenion was assassinated. Therefore, he might have partaken personally in Parmenion's assassination.

Etwaige Marschroute Alexanders des Grossen im Zentralasiatischen Feldzüge Juli 330 bis Winter 330/329 <sup>191</sup>		Important Events of Life of Alexander the Great <sup>192</sup>	
Etappe	Dist.	Events	Dates
Expedition nach Hyrkanien	350 km	Alexander Born	Early Oct. 356
gegen die Marder	300 km	Succeeds Philip	Sept. or Oct. 336
Marsch nach Mesched	330 km	Wins Arbela	Oct. 1st 331
Mesched–Gulfagar	160 km	Overtakes Darius	First days of August 330
Expedition gegen die Urier	110 km	Leaves Zadracarta	Oct. 330
Marsch nach Herat	200 km	Halts for winter in Seistan	December 330
Herat–Fuss des Hindukusch	700 km	Resume advance	Spring 329
	2150 km	Reaches Kandahar	Summer 329
<i>Also je nach der Art der Berechnung 143 oder 130 Marschtage bei Rund 150 Tagen Feldzugdauer</i>		Reaches Kabul	November 329
		Takes up winter quarters at the foot of Hindu-Kush	December 329
		Passes Hindu-Kush	Early spring 328
		Reaches Sir Daria	June 328

It is from Magda we learn that Andronic actually follows the chronology proposed by Hogarth and von Wartenburg in order to support his 'horrible' theory. The survey of the two historians mentioned by Magda shows that actually this chronology was put forward only by Hogarth and not by von Wartenburg as shown in the table below.

To my knowledge, Hogarth's chronology remains isolated within the research on Alexander the Great<sup>193</sup>. Besides, neither Tarn nor Glotz-Roussel-

<sup>190</sup> *Ultima oră*, 326-327 = *Stop News*, 98-99.

<sup>191</sup> Maximilian Graf Yorck von Wartenburg, *Kurze Uebersicht*, 44.

<sup>192</sup> Hogarth, *Alexander*, 304.

Cohen or Wilcken, whom Sebastian read, do not acknowledge this chronology<sup>194</sup>.

From Magda's discourse one can clearly see that Sebastian was familiar to both chronologies. So, we can conclude that Sebastian **deliberately** used Hogarth and his 'iconoclast' chronology for dramatic construction reasons. This explanation is obvious. As a result of Hogarth chronology, Sebastian attributes Andronic an entirely exaggerated assertion which distorts historical truth: Alexander the Great personally partook of Parmenion's assassination! Nothing else could have made Magda become more aggressive in defending her hero that had been stained this way<sup>195</sup>.

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Finally, we reach the *cloue* of the play, the 'subtle' allusion at the great 'blackmail': **the famous 'monopoly in oats' of Alexander the Great.**

The only mention from the ancient literary tradition<sup>196</sup> that somehow touches upon this matter, is that which refers to the strange tribe of the **Ariaspi**<sup>197</sup> living in Seistan, an area the Macedonian army reached after the events caused by Philotas's conspiracy<sup>198</sup>.

Particular references to the Ariaspi and to the privileges that Alexander gave them made Diodorus, 17.81<sup>199</sup>, Curtius Rufus, 7.3.1-2<sup>200</sup> and

<sup>193</sup> For a rigorous analysis of Hogarth's chronology see Rolfe, *Introduction*, in Q. Curtius, *History of Alexander II*, XXVI-XXX.

<sup>194</sup> Cf., e. g., Tarn, CAH VI, 390; Radet, *Alexandre*, 214-216; Wilcken, *Alexander*, 147. Hogarth's hypothesis is also rejected by modern historical research: Wirth, *Alexander*, 143; Lauffer, *Alexander*, 241; Will, *Alexander*, 196.

<sup>195</sup> *Ultima oră* 296, 298-299, 321-322, 324, 326, 324-325 = *Stop News*, 52, 54-55, 89-90, 94, 98, 110, 112-113.

<sup>196</sup> Obviously, I am referring only to those historians that describe the **Prophtasia-Kabul** episode of Alexander's campaign.

<sup>197</sup> Cf. Tomaschek, *RE* II. 2, 821.

<sup>198</sup> For a detailed description of the 'Philotas' affair' circumstances see Droysen, *Geschichte des Hellenismus* I, 269 sq.; Schachermeyr, *Alexander*, 326 ff., etc.

<sup>199</sup> In comparison with Curtius and Arrianus, Diodorus gives further interesting details: Diodorus of Sicily, *Bibliotheca Historica* VIII, Transl. by C. Bradford Welles (Loeb Classical Library), London, 1983, 351-353: 'After his hands were free of this affair and he had settled things in Dranginê, Alexander marched with his army against a people who used to be called *Armaspians* but are now known as *Benefactors* for the following reason. That Cyrus who had transferred the rule from the Medes to the Persians was once engaged in a campaign in the desert and running out of provisions was brought into extreme danger, so that for lack of food the soldiers were constrained to eat each other, when the Arimaspians appeared bringing thirty thousand wagons laden with provisions. Saved from utter despair, then, Cyrus gave them exemption from taxation and other marks of honour, and abolishing their former appellation, named them *Benefactors*. So now, when Alexander led his army into their country, they received him kindly and he honoured the tribe with suitable gifts'.

Arrianus, 3.27.4-5<sup>201</sup>, while Pompeius Trogus/Iustinus, 12.5.9 only mention their name<sup>202</sup>. However, Plutarch does not mention them at all.

Historians of Alexander do not establish any connection between the agricultural resources of the Ariaspi's territory<sup>203</sup> and the Macedonian army's provision. The Ariaspi might be of interest to these historians only because once they provided supplies to Cyrus the Great's army<sup>204</sup>. This event is very important in their accounts as it determined Alexander the Great's benevolent attitude towards them. Through his generous attitude, the young king wanted to emphasize that he had to be considered a real descendent of Cyrus the Great<sup>205</sup>.

It is easy to see that modern historians<sup>206</sup> such as Hogarth<sup>207</sup>, Jouguet<sup>208</sup> or Tarn<sup>209</sup> do not attribute any role to the Ariaspi in their

<sup>200</sup> Q. Curtius, *History of Alexander II*, Transl. by John C. Rolfe (Loeb Classical Library), 143-145: 'When these matters had been thus arranged, Alexander ..., ordered a march to be proclaimed against the *Arimaspi*, whom even at that time they called the *Euergetae*, having changed their name from the time when they had aided with shelter and supplies the army of Cyrus, when it was almost worn out by cold and lack of food ... . He himself set in order the race of the *Euergetae* within sixty days, and gave them a great sum of money because of their splendid loyalty to Cyrus'.

<sup>201</sup> Arrian, *Anabasis Alexandri I*, Transl. by P. A. Brunt (Loeb Classical Library), London, 1976, 319: 'Alexander ... arrived among the people formerly called *Ariaspians*, but later also nicknamed *Benefactors*, because they assisted Cyrus son of Cambyses in his Scythian expedition. Alexander honored this people for the services their ancestors had done to Cyrus and from his own observation that they were not governed like the other barbarians of these parts, but also claimed to follow justice as much as the best of the Greeks: he therefore granted them freedom and added to their territory as much as they asked for themselves of the neighboring country ...'.

<sup>202</sup> 'Inde Drangas, *Euergetas vel Arimaspos, Parapamesadas ceterosque populos qui in radice Caucasi morabantur, subegit*'.

<sup>203</sup> Cf. Schachermeyr, *Alexander*, 315.

<sup>204</sup> Weißbach, *RE. Suppl. IV*, 1155; P. Goukowsky, *loc. cit.*, 232; G. Wirth, in Flavius Arrianus, *Der Alexanderzug. Indische Geschichte*. Greek and German, Eds. and Transl. by Gerhard Wirth & Oskar von Hinüber, München-Zürich, 1985, 886, n. 106; D.W. Engels, *Alexander the Great and the logistics of the Macedonian Army*, Berkeley, 1978 etc.

<sup>205</sup> Schachermeyr, *Alexander*, 315; 315, n. 364; Wirth, *Der Weg in die Vergessenheit*, 10 sq.

<sup>206</sup> Obviously, I consider only those modern historians whom Sebastian might have been read.

<sup>207</sup> Hogarth, *Alexander*, 297: '... that he (*scil.* Alexander) made a halt among the "Evergetae", according to one authority (Curtius) of not less than sixty days ...'.

<sup>208</sup> Jouguet, *Alexandre*, 45: 'Quand Démétrios fut exécuté, l'armée était chez les Ariaspes, peuple de cultivateurs paisibles, appelés "bienfaiteurs", depuis qu'ils avaient aidé Cyrus dans son expédition chez les Scythes. Ils accueillirent amicalement les Macédoniens qui, de chez eux, passèrent en Arachosie'.

<sup>209</sup> Tarn, *CAH VI*, 390-391: '... Alexander ... went on from Phrada to the Helmund, where he found a people (perhaps the almost extinct Reis tribes) called the Benefactors because they

supplying with cereals Alexander the Great's army. As far as Radet and Wilcken<sup>210</sup> are concerned, they totally ignore the ariaspian episode.

Still, it seems impossible that Alexander, who gave so many privileges to the Ariaspi in order to help Cyrus, imposed on them any kind of contribution which might have impinged on the entire *apparatus* meant to present him as the greatest Achaemenid's successor!

Before raising the question of the origins of Sebastian's hypothesis, we should mention that in Antiquity, oats cultivation did not have the importance it would acquire later. According to the literary tradition, in Alexander's time, oats did not constitute one of the food supplies worthy of mention<sup>211</sup>.

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**If literary tradition and modern historians do not mention any 'monopoly in oats' of Alexander the Great, what made Sebastian to introduce such a hypothesis in *Ultima oră*?** Were reasons of dramatic construction or a contemporary event which could easier be told to the public if it was attributed to Alexander the Great?

At this point I believe contemporary history makes itself present again. In such a concrete situation, Sebastian uses Antiquity to bring a contemporary event into prominence. It seems to me that Sebastian<sup>212</sup> made a hint at the political and economical situation of Romania which was then under Germany's full pressure during The Second World War. That is why I believe that the 'monopoly in oats' – which Andronic assigned to Alexander the Great – actually substitutes **the monopoly in oil and cereal imposed to**

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had once aided Cyrus with supplies. They are represented as an innocent folk enjoying a golden age of righteousness, and he exempted them from satrapal rule and tribute for helping his predecessor Cyrus ...'.

<sup>210</sup> Wilcken, *Alexander*, 147, speaks about Alexander's advancement in the Helmund Valley, but without mentioning the Ariaspi. From this point of view, Wilcken follows Tarn [*CAH* VI, 390: 'He apparently never took winter quarters at all in the winter of 330-329 B. C.; he was anxious to reach Bactria, and he had to ensure Bessus' isolation from the south...], he considers too that Alexander '... in diesem Winter (330/329) keine Zeit zu einem längeren Winterquartier gefunden hat'.

<sup>211</sup> See Hugo Bretzl, *Botanische Forschungen des Alexanderszuges*, Leipzig, 1903, 200-203; Orth, *RE* VII.2 (1912), 2182-2188; N. Zamfirescu, V. Velican, N. Săulescu, *Fitotehnie* I, București, 1964<sup>2</sup>, 299 sq.; Maria Contoman, *Bazele ecotehnologice ale culturilor agricole* II, Galați, 2005, 43.

<sup>212</sup> Andronic's elaborate presentation of the oats history clearly shows that Sebastian was well informed on the matter, so his ignorance of the subject is excluded.

**Romania by The Third Reich**<sup>213</sup>. Sebastian could not be indifferent to the economic reality surrounding him – his *Journal* shows his concern with the development of war<sup>214</sup> – because Romanian oil played a major role in Hitler's military policy.

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**Which was Sebastian's reason for choosing Alexander the Great and attaching him special importance in *Ultima oră*?** Unfortunately, his *Journal*<sup>215</sup> does not offer any clue except for the annotation about his having watched a film that gave him the idea of a two-character play about Alexander the Great.

This issue implies bringing into discussion the different interpretations proposed by literary historians and critics of Sebastian's work<sup>216</sup>. Among the interpretations concerning the message of his plays, most adequate are, in my opinion, those of his contemporary fellows, Felix Aderca and Camil Petrescu. Aderca's view is that 'Without realizing, Sebastian had become himself, a sort of Proustian character, a person of an old and somehow artificial fashion who lived intensely those events, relationships and friendships which normally, an intellectual of modest condition from Bucharest, could not really enjoy'<sup>217</sup>. Similarly, Petrescu looks at Sebastian's autobiographical transfiguration and considers Andronic: 'a self-caricature achieved with secret voluptuousness in which the skepticism of the man educated in European culture makes him discern, in which the dimension of apparently sacrificed depth subtly comes to life again as infinite distance and hence, the intellectual savour of this kind of drama'<sup>218</sup>. The interpretation of Sebastian's two contemporaries and friends is supported by his own text, published in 1935: 'The mask expresses and satisfies the need *to pass beyond*. It meets our instinct of evasion. It is an instinct like hunger, like

<sup>213</sup> For a relevant analysis of the situation see Hilgruber, *Hitler, König Carol und Marschall Antonescu*, 10 sq., 42 sq., 80 sq., 156, 200, 249-252 (for oil delivery) and 252-253 (for the delivery of Romanian food supplies in Germany).

<sup>214</sup> Previously, I have mentioned excerpts from the *Journal* which point to Sebastian's active participation in the Romanian Resistance.

<sup>215</sup> *Journal*, 463-464: 'So yesterday afternoon, while I was watching a film, I suddenly felt that I'd "found" it. I had an idea, a title (Alexander the Great), and two characters'.

<sup>216</sup> See Ștefănescu, *Mihail Sebastian*, 90 sq., 112 sq.; Grăsoiu, *Mihail Sebastian*, 180 sq., 193 sq., with literature.

<sup>217</sup> F. Aderca, *Secretul lui Mihail Sebastian*, Revista Fundațiilor Regale XII. S. N., nr. 4 (1945), 759, *apud*, Ștefănescu, *Mihail Sebastian*, 21.

<sup>218</sup> Camil Petrescu, '*Insula*' de Mihail Sebastian, Revista Fundațiilor Regale XIV. S. N., no. 10-11 (1947), 150, *apud*, Ștefănescu, *Mihail Sebastian*, 112.

thirst or love – a sumptuary instinct and, of course, luxurious and precious, but not less natural<sup>219</sup>.

Considering these texts, I believe that looking at Sebastian's drama as being 'one of lyrical evasion'<sup>220</sup> is entirely adequate.

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As far as I know, no literary historian has approached the presence of Alexander the Great in *Ultima oră* from the perspective of Antiquity posterity. For reasons of space I am limit myself to making a few observations from this perspective, obviously common remarks and lacking the literary critics' refinement but which, in my opinion, could complete and expand the interpretation presented previously.

In *Ultima oră*, through Andronic, Sebastian states his own conviction that Alexander became a myth impossible to render in all his greatness. So, Alexander the Great was – for Sebastian – that extraordinary realm which offered him the long searched-for *remotedness*, where he could totally unrestrained *pass beyond, into evasion*.

Moreover, the dramatic tension of the play is wonderfully achieved through Sebastian's appeal to Alexander the Great. I find it hard to believe that Magda could have fallen in love – with the same ardour – with the one-eyed Hannibal, with the bald C. Iulius Caesar or, with the chunky Napoleon! Which hero of the old and modern times could compete with the genius, the enthusiasm, the courage, the generous ideals and the physical beauty of the young god Alexander?

Equally, it is clear that Alexander's '**monopoly in oats**' was the perfect correspondence for Sebastian's allusion at a contemporary fact, thus complementing Magda's passion for Alexander and making the political allusions of the play even harder to unravel.

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I believe that all this *Fragenkomplex* determined the positive posterity of Alexander the Great in Sebastian's work. In spite of his terrible experience

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<sup>219</sup> M. Sebastian, *Omul și masca*, Rampa XVIII, nr. 5137 (1935), 1, *apud*, Ștefănescu, *Mihail Sebastian*, 95.

<sup>220</sup> Ștefănescu, *Mihail Sebastian*, 90, 118-119.

with war which could have made him place Alexander<sup>221</sup> in a negative light, the writer did not 'niebuhrized'<sup>222</sup>.

Furthermore, the existence of still other reasons that made Sebastian an admirer of Alexander is possible. For example, what could be traced is the influence of Tarn – which makes Alexander the author of a project for 'the Unity of Mankind'<sup>223</sup> – and of Radet, whose book is a real apology for the great Macedonian.

Judging by some notes in the *Journal*<sup>224</sup>, I believe that the positive posterity of Alexander in the Judaic literature<sup>225</sup> also drew Sebastian's

<sup>221</sup> An excellent account of various interpretations of Alexander the Great is provided by Alexander Demandt, *Geschichte der Geschichte. Wissenschaftshistorische Essays*, Köln, 1997, 1-39.

<sup>222</sup> Within this context we have to mention that, during the dialogue between Borcea and Andronic, Sebastian, *Ultima oră*, 332-337 = *Stop News*, 110-114, creates a very interesting *quiproquo* Alexander-Bucșan, which culminates with Magda's violent intercession in defense of her hero: '... *MAGDA*: But I have a duty. To prevent the moral outrage you are preparing! *BORCEA*: Moral outrage! Ha! You make me laugh. He'd also laugh if he heard you. A moral outrage against the greatest robber in the world! *MAGDA (violent)*: I forbid you to say such a thing! You haven't the right!'. These words which remind of Niebuhr's vocabulary make me think that Sebastian knew the negative aspects of Alexander's posterity.

<sup>223</sup> Tarn, *CAH VI*, 352 sq. = *Alexander*, 144 sq.

<sup>224</sup> These notes (*Journal*, 389, 484, 573) concern Sebastian's dialogue with his own Jewishness during The Second World War: 'I do not try to set right my Judaism': 'It seems to me that our relationships with the Judaism can be restored'. Along the same line of thought goes Sebastian's reading of Dubnow's already-mentioned book, *Geschichte der Juden*. Very important is also an interesting note (*Journal*, 373) about Thukydidēs: 'Only the element of anti-Semitic diversion was lacking in the war policy of the Greek city-states. A lack all the more glaring in that they were waging a war for economic interests but (like today) camouflaging it beneath a war in the name of ideology and public opinion. The Jews would have been very useful to them, if they had had any, but closer analysis might reveal who then served that function ...'. Obviously we cannot speak about the presence of the Jews during the Peloponnesian War. (See *Greek and Latin Authors on Jews and Judaism I. From Herodotus to Plutarch*, Edited with Introduction, Translations and Commentary by Menahem Stern, Jerusalem, 1974, 1 sq.).

<sup>225</sup> It is one of the most debated issues in Alexander's history, taking into account the political context within which there emerged the tradition generating Daniel's prophecies, Flavius Iosephus' narration and the later Jewish literature. A remarkable *Forschungsstand* till the beginning of the seventh decade of the XX century can be found in Seibert, *Alexander*, 103-107; 271-275. See also, Ursula Weber & Josef Wiesehöfer, *Das Reich der Achaimeniden. Eine Bibliographie*, Berlin, 1996, 674 [*Alexandros III. der Grosse (Beziehungen zum Judentum)*], nr. 4019, 4944, 4948-4949, 12763, 12926]. Mention must be made other remarkable studies: see Wilcken, *Zum alexandrinischen Antisemitismus*, Abhandlungen der Philologisch-Historischen Klasse der Königlichen Sächsischen Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften, XXIII, Leipzig, 1909; 783-840; E. Bammel, *Der Zeuge des Judentums*, in *Alexander der Grosse. Festschrift für Gerhard Wirth um 60. Geburtstag I*, Ed. W. Will & J. Heinrichs, Amsterdam, 1987, 279-288; E. Gruen, *The Purported Jewish-Spartan Affiliation*,

attention. Which were Sebastian's sources by means of which he found out Alexander's image in the Judaic world? Were they his family environment<sup>226</sup> or his own readings? Relative to the latter potential source Radet's work stands out because Radet is one of the few scholars admitting that Alexander visited Jerusalem<sup>227</sup>.

If Sebastian had known this side of Alexander's posterity, it cannot be traced in the portrayal of the young king, as made by Magda and Andronic<sup>228</sup>. Magda remains within *Vulgata's* framework, without entering the world created in *Alexander-Romance*.

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in *Transition to Empire. Essays in Graeco-Roman History, 360-146 B. C., in honour of E. Badian*, Ed. by R. W. Wallace & Ed. M. Harris, London, 1996, 254-270 and Klaus Bringmann, *Isopolieia in den Auseinandersetzungen zwischen Juden und Griechen in Alexandria*, Chiron 5 (2005), 7-22 who make a pertinent analysis of the whole historical context of the Jews' relationships with the rest of the world. An observation relative to this *Forschungsstand* that still is up-to-date, can be found in the same Seibert, *ibidem*, 104: 'Eine wirklich eingehende, wissenschaftlich fundierte Untersuchung wäre ein Desiderat!'

<sup>226</sup> Sebastian, in *De două mii de ani*, 79, gives us an idea about the roots of his maternal family: 'They have always lived in the neighborhood of synagogues'. In such an environment, did Sebastian become familiar with the posterity of Alexander by means of the rabbinical tradition of Talmud or, maybe, by means of *Alexandria*? As is known (see G. Cary, *The Medieval Alexander*, Cambridge, 1956, 10-11) the Romanian version of *Alexander-Romance* is the Recensio C of Pseudo-Kallisthenes, influenced by a Jewish author. Sebastian might also have read *Judaica. Forschungen zur hellenistisch-jüdischen Geschichte und Literatur*, Göttingen, 1900 by Hugo Willrich, an opponent of Flavius Josephus' credibility.

<sup>227</sup> Radet, *Alexandre*, 130 sq. This hypothesis is less accepted today. See, e. g. Solomon Zeitlin, *The Rise and Fall of the Judean State. A Political, Social and Religious History of the second Commonwealth I. 332-37 B. C.*, Philadelphia, 5724/1964, 41: 'As a matter of fact, Alexander did not visit Jerusalem either on his way to or on his return from Egypt. Both accounts, that in Josephus and that in the Talmud, are legendary'; Shaye J. D. Cohen, *Alexander the Great and Jaddus the High Priest According to Josephus*, *AJS Review* 7 (1982) 41-68; W. Jac. van Bekkum, *Alexander the Great in Medieval Hebrew Literature*, *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 49 (1986) 218-226; Jonathan A. Goldstein, *Alexander and the Jews*, *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research* 59 (1993) 59-101 etc.

<sup>228</sup> Gaza's mention in an enumeration of some important stages of Alexander's campaigns (*Stop News*, 104: 'Where is Gaza? Where is Gordium? Where is Prophtasia?') could be an allusion to the alleged relationships of the king with the Jews. Actually, neither Sebastian nor the one who was to sign the play *Ultima oră* for him could have afforded to make – during the war – a direct reference to the favourable attitude towards the ancient Jews of the Macedonian king, especially because Alexander was so praised by Hitler (see Demandt, *Geschichte*, 14 ff.).



So, through Magda and Andronic, Sebastian makes us understand that, in his view, Alexander represents not only an artistic experiment, but also a moral-normative ideal<sup>229</sup>.

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Finally, we should also raise this question: **To what extent does Mihail Sebastian artistically work out the personality of Alexander the Great?**

I believe that only a comparative analysis could reasonably solve this question. Accordingly, I will quote an excerpt from Marguerite Yourcenar, who suggestively reveals one of the secrets about the creation of *Mémoires d'Hadrien*: 'J'ai fait un jour une expérience curieuse, et bien simple. Un professeur m'a envoyé un devoir qu'il avait imposé à ses élèves (les malheureux ont dû me haïr, ce jour-là!): il s'agissait de prendre une page des *Mémoires d'Hadrien* et de la retraduire en grec. Fascinant. Je me suis dit: <Bon, faisons comme ces élèves; mettons-nous-y.> Immédiatement, je me suis aperçue qu'un certain nombre de phrases écrites en français passaient en grec, et qu'il y en avait une ou deux qui ne passaient pas, parce qu'elles étaient de moi et non d'Hadrien'<sup>230</sup>.

Obviously, *Ultima oră* and *Mémoires d'Hadrien* cannot be compared, in the sense that Sebastian could not even think of an *aere perennis* work, considering the circumstances, fully described earlier, in which he wrote this

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<sup>229</sup> In the same letter of February, 21, 2007, A. Pippidi wrote me: 'My father had also a French version of Klaus Mann's novel on Alexander. The character's description could be exactly what you look for'. After I read Sebastian's *Journal* and Klaus Mann's novel [*Alexander. Roman der Utopie*, first published in 1929, prefaced by Jean Cocteau; (Rowohlt, Hamburg, 2003<sup>9</sup>)] I believe I can make these statements: 1. in *Journal* there is no mention of Klaus Mann. Sebastian mentioned all the books that he had read. Moreover he was in Paris when Kl. Mann's novel was published; 2. Kl. Mann's Alexander is very different from Sebastian's Alexander – i.e. Magda's and Andronic's Alexander. Kl. Mann's very subtle combination of the historical literary tradition and *Alexander Romance* had a strange result: an Alexander dominated by loneliness, homosexuality and finally saved – as in *Alexander Romance* – in a diffuse Christianity; 3. Sebastian's Alexander – in Magda's dreams – is the young god, beautiful, pure and endowed with all possible qualities. Andronic's Alexander – though different from Magda's *Vulgata* – is another Alexander than Kl. Mann's Alexander. Andronic's Alexander is dominant, sometimes even ferocious – e.g. Parmenion's death – but far from being homosexual, or solitary etc. as in Kl. Mann's novel.

<sup>230</sup> Marguerite Yourcenar, *Les yeux ouverts. Entretiens avec Matthieu Galey*, Paris, 1980, 108. See also, Henriette Levillain, *Mémoires d'Hadrien* de Marguerite Yourcenar, Gallimard, Paris, 1992, *passim*; P.-E. Knabe, *Griechenland und Rom in den Mémoires d'Hadrien von Marguerite Yourcenar*, in *Rezeption und Identität. Die kulturelle Aus-einandersetzung Roms mit Griechenland als europäisches Paradigma*, Eds. Gregor Vogt-Spira & Bettina Rommel, Stuttgart, 1999, 388-395.

play. He only wanted to write a text which could bring him the money necessary for his subsistence.

Could Sebastian have written a work comparable to *Mémoires d'Hadrien*?

Methodologically, such a question should never and nowhere be raised relative to any artist or scholar ...

I believe that his artistic and philosophical *credo* can easily be inferred from the consistent presentation of the historical framework in which Sebastian lived and created. If we consider *Ultima oră*, *stricto sensu*, I believe that the long quotations which I deliberately included, highlight Sebastian's deep discontent with the 'final' draft of the play.

His last annotation – an extremely negative one – about *Ultima oră* in *Journal* makes me believe that, at that time, Sebastian considered the play unfinished and intended to go back to it some other time.

Why was he so discontented with the play? Was it because of its imperfect dramatic structure, of the way characters were built, of the insufficient exploitation of Alexander's personality and myth? Nobody can answer this question .... Only the reader, if he wishes, can finish what Sebastian had no time and chance to finish ...

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In my view *Ultima oră* is an interesting example of Alexander the Great and of his time's posterity, due to Sebastian's artistic transposition of the most fascinating personality in world history, **Alexander the Great**.

My attempt to give an account of Sebastian's view of Alexander the Great and his time could contribute to outlining a page of cultural archaeology and to completing our knowledge about Mihail Sebastian, one of the most important representatives of between-war Romanian culture.

At the same time, I hope I have turned another page of the history of the posterity of Antiquity in Romania, seen as a cultural and moral pattern and not as a simple passive 'depository' for literary motifs or for mere historical settings.

**Galați**