

**THE EMERGENCE OF 1960S GENERATION OF
POETS IN ROMANIA, DURING COMMUNISM.
PROPAGANDA DISCOURSE: “UNDER THE SIGN
OF REVOLUTION”, “LENIN’S GENERATION”,
“THE GENERATION FIGHTING AGAINST
INERTIA” AND “THE GENERATION OF THE
IXTH ROMANIAN COMMUNIST PARTY
CONGRESS”**

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Summary:

The purpose of this study is to highlight the influence of cultural policies carried out in communist Romania in constructing the concept of "literary generation" between 1948 and 1965. Firstly, we focus on the militantly Marxist-Leninist discourse of official legitimization regarding a so-called “contingent” of poets who graduated from the "Mihai Eminescu" School of Literature and Literary Criticism in Bucharest between 1950 and 1955. In the second part of the article, we turn our attention to the ideological necessity of reinterpreting the phrase "young generation" in the context of the proliferation of the idea that writers are "builders of socialism" (1956-1960). Here, we focus on the polemical interaction between the "generation of the fight against inertia", represented by Nicolae Labiş (1935-1956), and the generation promoted "under the sign of the Revolution", represented by Nichita Stănescu (1933-1983), Ilie Constantin (1939-2020), and Cezar Baltag (1939-1997). In the last section of our discussion, we underline the dialectic between propaganda and aesthetics from which emerged what Romanian literary history records as the "(19)60s generation", and its references the 9th Congress of the Romanian Communist Party (July 1965) and Ion Pop's synthesis work *Poezia unei generații* ["The Poetry of a Generation"] (1973), in which the literary critic also includes Nicolae Labiş.

Keywords:

Communist Romania, cultural propaganda, Marxist-Leninist ideology, political poetry, literary generation, (19)60s generation.

In this paper, we bring several new arguments regarding how the political sphere dominated Romanian literature between 1948 and 1989. For this purpose, we emphasize that the concept of "totalitarian/authoritarian power" is central to our discussion. Therefore, we seek to revisit/ reconstruct/ restore the Marxist-Leninist concept of "literature," which led to the emergence, assertion and promotion of 1960s generation of poets including Nichita Stănescu (1933-1983), Grigore Hagiu (1933-1985), Florența Albu (1934-2000), Ion Gheorghe (1935-2021), Cezar Baltag (1939-1997), Ilie Constantin (1939-2020), Ion Alexandru (1941-2000), Constanța Buzea (1941-2012), Ana Blandiana (b. 1942), or Adrian Păunescu (1943-2010). On one hand, we will emphasize on how this group of poets emerged out of doctrinal "necessity", but also facilitated by several events, including: the establishment of the "Mihai Eminescu" School of Literature and Literary Criticism (1950); debates regarding the young generation indoctrinated by socialism, particularly concerning official labels applied; conferences of young authors (March 20-22, 1956); congresses of the Writers' Union of the Romanian People's Republic (R.P.R.) (June 18-23, 1956); interactions with older generations; the withdrawal of the Red Army from the territory of the Romanian People's Republic (R.P.R.) in 1958; congresses of the Romanian Workers' Party (P.M.R. – 1961)/ of the Romanian Communist Party (P.C.R. – 1965); the persistent promotion of the slogan advocating for the "fight for peace" (in the Soviet Union and its spheres of influence); the apparent destalinization of the cultural sphere, partly induced by the reconfiguration of the Leninist model following N. S. Khrushchev's report at the Twelfth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (C.P.S.U. – October 1961); discussions on socialist realism and its euphemistic version, "socialist humanism" after 1965, when the state's official name was changed into Socialist Republic of Romania (R.S.R.). On the other hand, we will explore the process through which communist propaganda manipulated literary assets – from protection, admonition, and paternalistic censure (nothing happened

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without the consent and knowledge of the totalitarian Party) to the distortion of the aesthetic value of poetry towards non-existent ideological meanings, aimed at showcasing the writers' allegiance to the regime, effectively demonstrating the control exercised by the State leadership over all activities.

In a nutshell, between 1965 and 1989, there were two tangential discourses on how this literary generation emerged. Firstly, at various commemorative moments, the press wrote extensively about the supposed duty of the group – narrowed down, for various reasons, to the core composed of Nichita Stănescu, Ion (Ioan) Alexandru, Ana Blandiana, and Constanța Buzea, joined by Marin Sorescu. They were supposed to be grateful to the Party-State for allowing them to feature prominently in the cultural life, at the same time with the Ninth Congress of the Romanian Communist Party. Secondly, there was the discourse of literary criticism of aesthetic orientation, practiced mainly by Eugen Simion (1933-2022) and Nicolae Manolescu (1939-2024), contemporaries of the poets, which consistently circumvented any interference from political decision-makers in the emergence, consolidation, and consecration of these authors. It is very instructive that, in a media system decisively influenced by censorship, these two modes of presentation coexisted in the press for approximately 25 years, leaving contemporary (literary) historians with the acute sensation that there was a free and pluralistic intellectual marketplace at that time.

Given the politicization of all domains under communism, it is necessary to make a few clarifications. The discourse about time iterated in Romania after the abdication of King Michael I (December 30, 1947) and the declaration of the country as the Romanian People's Republic (R.P.R.) revolved around the idea of "class struggle" as an inherent force of humanity aimed at imposing so-called historical realities, including: "people's democracy," "socialist democracy," "multilaterally developed socialist society." The utopian nature of the phrases circulating in the media at that time was the result of the manipulation orchestrated by the Romanian Communist Party (P.C.R.) / Romanian Workers' Party (P.M.R.). The establishment of this political structure on 8th May 1921, was celebrated every five years, reaching its peak in 1986, through the collections *Omagiu 65*.

Partidul Comunist Român ["Homage 65. Romanian Communist Party"] (Cartea Românească Publishing House) and *Cu glas de aur te cânt, țară* ["With a Golden Voice, I Sing to You, Country"] (Eminescu Publishing House). The praises followed the same pattern I. L. Caragiale exposed regarding the 19th century, through his character, Tache Farfuridi, in the comedy *O scrisoare pierdută* ["A Lost Letter"] (1883): "allow me – (wiping) just like at 21, allow me (wiping) at 48, at 34, at 54, at 64, at 74 and also at 84 and 94, and so on, as it concerns us... so that we can set an example even to our sisters of Latin descent¹". It is not a coincidence that Tudor Vladimirescu's 1821 uprising was taken out of its specific context and closely linked to the revolutionary movement of the proletariat. The history of the Romanian Communist Party (R.C.P), according to indoctrination standards, was heralded by distant events considered "democratic" in the sense that they anticipated the republican form of government. Despite its anachronism, the 1821 uprising was the best pretext supporting the century-old class struggle on Romanian land and a false proof of the fortunate coincidence among liberation movements. In addition to the manufactured history of the R.C.P., a calendar of the R.P.R./ R.S.R. had also been created, like the one approved by the French revolutionaries in 1792. The chronology of communist Romania began on 23rd August 1944, decreed as the "Day of Liberation" and also the national day, emphasizing its status as a decisive stage in the fight against fascism. However, since the only formidable opponent of fascism was communism and not the American or British "imperialism", the interpretations of the time established an alleged "law of historical evolution" imposed by Stalin during the Second World War. Those who lead the extermination against fascists – namely, the communists – must take power in the states that aggressed the Soviet Union between 1941 and 1945. So, August 23rd 1944 was celebrated every five years with great pomp. R.C.P. Day (May 8th 1921) and August 23rd were indispensable in the calendar, as

¹ I.L. Caragiale, 2011, *O scrisoare pierdută*, in *Opere*, vol. III (*Teatru; Scrieri despre teatru; Versuri*), second edition, revised and enlarged by Stancu Ilin, Nicolae Bârna, Constantin Hârlav, prefață de Eugen Simion, Academia Română, Bucharest: Fundația Națională pentru Știință și Artă, pp. 178-179.

was May 1st . Moreover, all the final digits of the years held political meanings. December 30th 1947, the Republic Day, was added, and gradually, January 26th , Nicolae Ceaușescu's Day, the Unification of Moldavia and Wallachia under Al. I. Cuza (1859), and the Unification of 1918.

It is in this time measurement system that we must understand the concept of "literary generation". The (19)60s generation seems to have been programmed according to a series of ideological measures applied to a group of young people born after 1930. Furthermore, the perpetuation, after 1989, of the generational system in the compartmentalization of post-war Romanian literature (the '60s generation, the '80s generation, and the 2000s generation) draws attention to the fact that Romanian literature cannot be divided according to the criteria of broad cultural currents. Ion Bogdan Lefter's attempt to refer to "neomodernism"² has some methodological inconveniences because this term is closer to literary trends and typologies, reminiscent of linguistic constructions such as "neoclassicism" or "neoromanticism," which indicate local and/ or temporary extensions of general European tendencies. Therefore, it would be preferable to explore the political climate that led to the formation of the (19)60s generation. The supremacy of aesthetics in the study of post-war Romanian literature is abusive because the editorial production was controlled by the state. In a totalitarian system, politics influence any attitude. Even the autonomy of literature assumed by the (19)60s generation meant a form of opposition to the Power. The elimination of multipartyism in 1946-1948 led to an extensive process of constructing several discourses evading the official one. Any language uninterested in propaganda automatically became a way to compete against uniformity.

² Ion Bogdan Lefter, 1997, „*Literatura anilor '60-'70: experimentul ca despartire de neomodernism (schită tipologică și scurt inventar)*“, in vol. Monica Spiridon, Ion Bogdan Lefter, Gheorghe Crăciun, *Experimentul literar românesc postbelic*, Pitești: Paralela 45, pp. 21-34. Other observations regarding the difficulty to use the term of „neomodernism“ in Romanian literature can be found in Ștefan Baghiu, *Bătăliile postmodernismului românesc: Ion Bogdan Lefter, „Postmodernism. Din dosarul unei «bătălii» culturale*“, *Transilvania*, no. 11, 2016, pp. 73-78 (https://revistatransilvania.ro/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/16_Stefan_Baghiu.pdf).

In line with these observations, we note that the propaganda apparatus left its mark on the (19)60s generation, sometimes overemphasizing its duties and significance. Thus, at regular intervals and under various rhetorical forms, it emphasised the fact that although the process had begun during the Dej era, it was only when Nicolae Ceaușescu became General Secretary of the Romanian Communist Party in July 1965 that this type of literature was labelled:

„During the Ceaușescu era, there was turmoil regarding the spirit of the 9th Congress of the Romanian Communist Party, which was supposed to have been the origin of a true literature after a decade and a half of dogmatism. The Congress that brought Ceaușescu to power had, in turn, benefited from the process of de-Sovietization”³.

In practice, despite inherent exaggerations in any attempt at legitimization, at that time, nothing was allowed to remain unpoliticized (see the case of the Socialist Unity Front, a phantom organization established in 1968, into which every non-member adult citizen of the Romanian Communist Party was automatically enrolled). Not even literature unengaged in official themes could remain an evasive, isolated, or nonpartisan mode of expression, being claimed as a right granted, but not necessarily guaranteed, of a so-called freedom of creation. But if this literature did not attack politics - directly or through subversions - then its claim to autonomy was denied. Sometimes it was transformed into an argument for pluralism within socialism. In other words, although it refused connections with the civil life dictated by party discourse, literature was not exempted from it. The cultural system survived thanks to the norms, rigor, and dispensations of the political regime, the tendencies towards autonomy of the intellectual milieu constituted facilities granted by the State leadership. The key question that arises is: why does literature hold such a significant weight in propaganda? The simplest answer would be that it possesses immense educational potential, which, if necessary, is confiscated.

There was an ambiguous relationship between the communist power in Romania and the literary community. On one hand, as intellectuals with a

³ Nicolae Manolescu, 2008, *Istoria critică a literaturii române: 5 secole de literatură*, Pitești: Paralela 45, p. 1001.

humanistic profile, writers were excluded from the working class, which was used in propaganda discourse as a legitimizing factor of the political system and, consequently, of the harsh measures against other professional structures. On the other hand, despite not being part of the proletariat or the peasantry – which were "allies" only at an ideological level – writers were not entirely susceptible to acts of subversion. As it was not considered a social class, according to the Marxist-Leninist perspective, the guild of poets, novelists, playwrights, and critics could not be judged in a Manichean manner. Thus, the literary community entered the sphere of uncertain socio-economic structures. They were potential "enemies of the people" because they could spread "reactionary" writings: either subversive (printed; circulating in the samizdat), or bypassing socialist realism, which was considered an act of opposition against the system. However, at the same time, writers represented a potential ideological asset of the regime, a source of power among the citizens, as literature contains inherent social, civilizational, and educational dimensions:

„Young people today – I am thinking especially of those aged between 17 and 25 – enter life in an era of unparalleled wealth. On the one hand, it is the era of immense conquests of the human genius, the era of atomic energy and interplanetary exploration, and on the other hand, it is the era of the decisive stage in the economic competition between the socialist and capitalist systems, the era in which the U.S.S.R. – the first and most powerful socialist country – has entered the phase of the comprehensive construction of communism. In a few years, the global socialist system will become dominant globally. All these create extremely favourable conditions for our country to experience an accelerated pace of socialist construction. The generation we are referring to is the generation that will have to harness all its enthusiasm in the gigantic task of perfecting the construction of socialism”⁴.

⁴ Mihai Novicov, „Generația constructorilor socialismului”, in: *Luceafărul*, II, no. 6 (17), 15 March 1959, p. 1. Mihai Novicov (1914-1992) was director of the „Mihai Eminescu” School of Literature and Literary Criticism (1950-1951), deputy-director of the „G. Călinescu” Institute of the Romanian Academy (1955-1973), and, at the time of this article, dean of the „Maxim Gorki” Pedagogic Institute Bucharest.

However, writing for the masses proved a more effective way of spreading the civic ideal of "people's democracy" than political education, indoctrination through misinformation in the newspapers ("Scântea," the central press organ of the C.C. of the R.C.P.) or in publications reserved for party cadres ("Lupta de clasă" magazine). According to this logic, the literary community was drawn to power because the context favoured compromise. As apolitical attitudes were rejected from the beginning, the literary community found itself compelled to resort to stratagems – such as public adherence, participation in the dictatorship's festivities, involvement in various state-controlled structures, and the justification of an active(ist) role. This is how writers managed to survive on the labour market until 1962 when, the collectivization process completed, social classes tended to be eliminated from the ideological discourse, giving way to the broad, vague, and non-conflictual term of "worker".

The writer was a public figure. This situation offered two possibilities for action, which sometimes overlapped. Any social stance was firstly marked by public and media exposure, in a desire to initiate or to show solidarity with various movements. Common ways of expression included: hunger strikes, open letters, or the so-called "drawer" literature read in small circles. However, as the researcher carefully notes, writers took advantage of another side of their image, namely the role of negotiators of intellectual property. Between 1948 and 1989, depending on the regime's needs, books played the role of official tribunals or spaces for conversations, full of innuendo:

„Extremely complex, the manifestations of the literary environment in the last years of communism can hardly be subsumed to a single attitude. The compliance of most writers, though real, is insufficient to describe the varied range of manifestations in the guild's history. Beyond the undeniable cultural achievements, we cannot fail to notice the relatively small number of those who initiated endeavours of increased social relevance”⁵.

⁵ Ana-Maria Cătănuș, 2014, *Vocația libertății: forme de disidență în România anilor 1970-1980*, National Institute for Totalitarian Studies Bucharest, p. 213.

The permanent distinction between citizen and writer, which had been citizen-writer only in the Stalinist era (because the phrase stood for unconditional affiliation to "people's democracy"), led to the impure notion of courage/opposition/dissidence, which we do not have the right to label as opportunism. The Securitate, the censors, and the book editors all used suspicions of subversion through language as diversionary tactics. Sometimes, the complementary effect is seen today in the desire to exaggerate the presence of allusions referring to the negative social utopia of the 1948-1989 period. The philological complicity between writer and audience – known as "lizards," because the animal, once caught by a predator, can shed its tail, and grow it back afterwards – and political concessions complicate explanations, because, at that time, literature detached itself, without always completely breaking away from ideology and, obviously, without openly fighting abuses and repression:

„Having special means of expression at their disposal, most writers preferred either to remain in an abstract creation, whose direct connections with society's problems were to be deciphered, or to attempt to 'resist,' by creating works with hidden meanings that would pass censorship and, eventually, be discovered by readers. These were necessary subterfuges in a totalitarian society, but they were complemented to an extremely small extent by gestures of dissidence”⁶.

According to Ana-Maria Cătănuș's research, writers belonged both to the system and to any form of counteraction against it. We must accept that it was precisely this dual relationship that forced the regime to delegate a series of attributions to language professionals, no matter how much it tried to confiscate the discourse about society. Now, these intermediaries resorted to double standards, participating in the mandated political affairs, with the dictatorial message in mind and with their own ideas at heart. Although the spirit of competition was generally encouraged in agriculture or industry, serving governance, the need to find a territory free from surveillance nevertheless gave rise to efficient rivalry. Once printed, books were simultaneously agents of (counter)propaganda.

⁶ *Ibidem*

Therefore, in Romania, strategies to avoid politicization stemmed from the (in)voluntary desire to escape ideological control. The result was the establishment of specialized jargon. On one hand, it used the dictatorship's favourite terms, such as "generation", from (anti)socialist, nationalist, and Marxist perspectives. On the other hand, it proposed concepts of literary theory, intended to legitimize either connections with a cultural framework or a broader context, as in the case of "postmodernism"⁷, or national creativity in initiating directions, as in the case of "aesthetic dreams"⁸. However literary they may seem, these reactions represent, without exception, "para-political" actions, as shown in a dialogue between Iosif Chişinevschi (1905-1963), the first secretary of the Central Committee Secretariat of the Romanian Workers' Party, and Mihai Beniuc (1907-1988), the first secretary of the Writers' Union of Romania, on July 13, 1955:

Comrade Beniuc: "I heard people discussing on the tram that R. Tudoran's book *Toate panzele sus* ["All Sails Up"] has been published, and is finally a book without politics which will please everyone."

Comrade I. Chişinevschi: "Those who say this are pursuing certain politics against us."

Comrade Beniuc: "So there is foreign pressure trying to divert writers from reflecting reality"⁹.

Even though aesthetics gained supreme value, we must note that this victory of the 1960s generation was assimilated/confiscated by the leadership structures. Aesthetics did not remove socialist realism, the cult of personality, and patriotic ecstasies, but merely found its place among them. Ideologists immediately reclaimed it, if it suited them, including aesthetes into politics. The Manichaeian thinking of Marxism-Leninism establishes the coexistence of two possibilities: either political affiliation – meaning acceptance of Party

⁷ Note the file on postmodernims in „Caiete critice“ magazine, issue no. 1-2, 1986; authors Eugen Simion, Nicolae Manolescu, Marin Sorescu, Livius Ciocârlie, Mircea Cărtărescu, Adrian Babeţi, Ion Bogdan Lefter, Mihaela Simion Constantinescu or Mircea Mihăieş.

⁸ Note the debates in the „Amfiteatru“ magazine, issue no. 12, 1986, with Leonid Dimov (1926-1987), Daniel Turcea (1945-1979), Laurenţiu Ulici (1943-2000), D. Ţepeneag (no. 1937).

⁹ *Conferinţa (secretă) a Uniunii Scriitorilor din iulie 1955*, edition by Mircea Coloşenco, Forward by Pavel Ţugui, Bucharest: Vremea, 2006, p. 43. This meeting was followed by a writers' congress in 1956.

and State decisions, or adherence to dictatorial politics – meaning anything that could represent disinterest in governance, "bourgeois" apoliticism (indolence, non-involvement, insincerity, avoidance of adherence discourse), sabotage by avoiding imposed themes (evasion and parable), or opposition:

„The change in the creative climate was possible only because special circumstances and major political events led the Party to open the valves and reduce the crushing pressure of ideology. It was not the use of methods and the changing of generations (biologically speaking) that determined the course of literature, but rather political events with ideological implications. Regardless of their age or the direction they believed they represented, writers responded, deliberately or not, to the challenges of the political factor in a way that organized their literary destiny.

Theoretical controversies (which have never ceased) regarding the existence and succession of generations or even «promotions» (in the formula of the late Laurențiu Ulici) seem meaningless to me when a regime of terror grouped writers based on criteria other than strictly aesthetic ones, of normal times”¹⁰.

The 1960s generation owed its easy creation, harmonious development, and consecration to a protective father they had not never met. After 1965, literary criticism supporting the "autonomy of the aesthetic," through Cornel Regman, Eugen Simion, Matei Călinescu, Nicolae Manolescu, Mircea Martin, or Dan Cristea, intentionally neglected the administrative constraints on conformist works. They did the same with valid literary creations that were published only because, indirectly, the political Power suggested their potential simply because, although they avoided politics, they did not oppose it. Thus, there was a perception that the (19)60s generation (Nichita Stănescu, Cezar Baltag, Ilie Constantin, Ion Alexandru, Constanța Buzea, Ana Blandiana), formed in a cultural and organic way as if they were trying to recover modernism between the two World Wars – illustrated then by Tudor Arghezi (1880-1967), Ion Barbu (1895-1961), George Bacovia (1881-1957), Lucian Blaga (1895-1961), Alexandru A. Philippide (1900-1979), and sometimes Ion Pillat (1891-1943) – without the

¹⁰ Eugen Negrici, 2010, *Literatura română sub comunism: 1948–1964*, Bucharest: Cartea Românească, pp. 14-15.

frustrations caused by communist repression (isolation/incarceration of non-conforming intellectuals; banning undesirable books; purging libraries). In fact, in the attempt to identify and recover value, not necessarily aesthetics, criticism acted deliberately in a reductionist way, inadvertently falsifying the literary field. By assisting writers, critics were defending their own status:

„In the desire for normalcy and ignoring the distortions generated by political interference, critics credited a sequence of generations, among which the first and most important would have been the '60s generation – composed of young people then, such as Nichita Stănescu, Marin Sorescu, Ana Blandiana, Ioan Alexandru, Nicolae Breban. However, it would not have been born if it were not for the change in the RWP's politics (discreetly prepared but officially announced through the Declaration of April 1964) and if the priorities of propaganda had not been modified”¹¹.

In retrospect, there was an illusion that, at least for half of the communist period (1965–1989), aesthetics remained the only valid factor for historical recovery. According to post-war Romanian chronology, Nicolae Ceaușescu, as General Secretary of the Romanian Communist Party (from 1965 until 1989), took care of the re-literalization of literature. Furthermore, it could be insinuated that the deformed image of literature during communism was censored by autonomist criticism. Consequently, the axioms of neo-modernist criticism constitute a means of avoiding debate about the literary dependence on politics:

„Poetry was the first literary genre to awaken from dogmatic slumber. Paradoxically, because it had suffered the most from ideology. Not by chance: it was, on one hand, the genre with the least adherence to social-political and moral reality; on the other hand, it had the most selective audience. Censorship therefore operated selectively, but not without a clear understanding of the risks of this more lenient approach to treating literature”¹².

The observations made by Eugen Negrici and Nicolae Manolescu are correct and well-grounded. However, they are insufficiently supported by

¹¹ *Idem*, 2008, *Iluziile literaturii române*, Bucharest: Cartea Românească, p. 130.

¹² Nicolae Manolescu, *Istoria...*, ed. cit., p. 1001.

evidence. We intend to confirm the hypotheses of these two scholars by providing the necessary factual additions. We consider that the affirmation of the (19)60s generation complies to Marxist-Leninist dialectics. An ideological conflict occurred in the laboratory of progress, and a retrograde element was invented. In Romania, the (19)60s generation rose to fame with the announcement of the transition from "people's democracy" to "socialist democracy." The project dates to the Second Congress of the Romanian Workers' Party in 1955. However, the idea of class struggle continued vigorously against the landowners and the bourgeoisie. The project was postponed until the Third Congress of the Romanian Workers' Party in 1960. By then, the literary environment was prepared for a confrontation between old and new, applying the double standard of ideological language, which does distinguish between denotation and connotation:

„Once decreed as a principle of historical progress, class conflict is immediately transformed into literary conflict. And, in the early stages of Romanian communism, literary conflict involves a clear opposition between the progressive characters/forces and the negative, counter-revolutionary ones. Belonging to a progressive class automatically transforms you into a positive character”¹³.

The Politization of the concept of literary generation.

First stage (1944-1955)

The decisive moment in the transition from fiction to reality and vice versa, against the backdrop of the confusion between ideology and practice, was the withdrawal of troops from the territory of the People's Republic of Romania (R.P.R.), in 1958. The departure of the Red Army triggered another wave of repression against intellectuals – a method through which the first secretary of the Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party, Gheorghe Gheorghiu Dej, sought to convince Nikita Khrushchev of the RPR's loyalty to the U.S.S.R., the so-called "friendly and neighbouring country". It also led to the emergence of a new group of young writers, free from the flaws of the "bourgeois-landlord regime" condemned by the propaganda,

¹³ Eugen Negrici, *Iluziile...*, ed. cit., p. 141.

disregarding the fact that the state was ruled by monarchy, not by a capitalist democracy prior to 30th December 1947. The new form of administration – the "people's democracy" – had become tired of the servility of intellectuals who were known to accept Party commands only out of self-interest, to avoid poverty. Between the two world wars, the literary elite, Mihail Sadoveanu (1880-1961), Tudor Arghezi (1880-1967), or G. Călinescu (1899-1965), had been necessary because, due to their prestige, they legitimized communist power. But their time, both biologically and functionally, was about to expire. Communism was celebrating 15 years, given that, according to Stalinist principles of rewriting history, the official calendar of left-wing totalitarianism began on 23rd August 1944. Not even communist allies such as Mihai Beniuc (1907-1988), Geo Bogza (1908-1993), Eugen Jebeleanu (1911-1991), or Maria Banuș (1914-1999) could still provide guarantees, as they too approached socialist realism out of opportunism, realizing that it was the only means of expression for writers. They also expressed their allegiance under the pretence of anti-fascism. Always interested in the present, in current events, ideology relied on youth. However, not even those joining the ranks in 1948, such as A. E. Baconsky (1925-1977), Nina Cassian (1924-2014), Victor Tulbure (1925-1997), Dan Deșliu (1927-1992), or Eugen Frunză (1917-2002) could meet the required standards anymore. The power had convinced itself, through specific informational means, that all of them were faking their hatred, agitation, instigation to violence against the "class enemy," denouncing American "fascists," praising the peace brought by the Soviet Union, and glorifying the Romanian Communist Party. Some of these writers used limited tactics. The situation was known to both writers and critics:

Comrade [unidentified]: „I want to ask comrade Șelmaru. He stated that in Frunză's poetry there is great agitational, combative value. Is this great value of an artistic nature as well, and does it have the desired effect if it has only combative, but no artistic value? I believe we are no longer in 1945, but 1955, 10 years have passed”¹⁴.

¹⁴ *Conferința (secretă)...*, ed. cit., p. 261. Eugen Frunză and Dan Deșliu wrote together the lyrics for the Romanian state hymn, *Te slăvim, Românie!* (1953-1977).

We notice an entire survival kit for writers in the campaigns organized by cultural officials. If the writer was a worker (sometimes an actual worker¹⁵), then he belonged to the ruling class. If that was the case, there were no suspicions from the authorities hovering over him. The pen could join the ranks of communist emblems, alongside the sickle and hammer. Writing, in its pretended role of subservient force, played a major part in the successes invoked by the authorities. As time went by, the propaganda had the opportunity to draw up assessments regarding the achievements of this community. The notion of a "literary generation" came to be legitimized by and through the political factor. And since politics did not accept deviations from the decreed norm, then each generation existed through the grace of the Party-State. Despite any possible rebellions, debates, and equivocal literary attitudes¹⁶, ideologues brought the disobedient back to the fold, occasionally showing them how writers were formed through the Party's benevolence. Therefore, "generation" is a fluctuating concept, confiscated by the Power. Its usage turned it into an instrument with amphibious traits. In the 1940s-1950s the ideologues forged it in the image and likeness of centralist paternalism. They perturbed, displaced, and eliminated modernist factions, proposing, instead of the plurality of forms, the method of socialist realism. They attracted both young and old, through various public honours, establishing a

¹⁵ We mention here Today, your country is your home ["Azi țara ta e casa ta"] competition, organized in 1950-1951 by the "Almanahul literar" magazine, Cluj, whose winners were Ion Marian – "worker" and Ștefan Petruț – „Romanian Railway worker“ (both from Cluj) and Ion Drăgănescu „worker“ from Constanța. Their job is in inverted commas because these so-called writers were invented by the magazine journalists, out of ideological need, as it had happened before, according to one of the collaborators of the magazine: "Let us go back to the beginning of the «Almanahul literar» magazine, where I worked for 5 years, until the end of 1955. I signed maybe, very many articles, mostly of criticism, in many of the issues. This isn't obvious by simply reading those issues. This is due to the fact that we were forced to use pseudonyms, a sort of quarantine certain names were under, for shorter or longer periods of time. In my case the quarantine lasted for more than six years, but even from its first year «Almanahul literar» was full of name – poets and critics – which almost doubled the rather small pool of collaborators. Real names would disappear at the same pace – but this was unknown to the readers of the time" (Cornel Regman, 1982, „La «Almanahul literar»...”, in: vol. *Noi explorări critice*, Bucharest: Eminescu, p. 247).

¹⁶ Eugen Negrici notes the poets' preference for an indirect lyricism (*Iluziile...*, ed. cit., p. 147).

generation that was imposed, rather than born through gradual accumulations and distillations:

„There are authors of all ages, from all poetic areas. There are poets converted from deeply intimate, hermetic lyricism, etc., towards social poetry, for the time being without visible political commitment. There are those who continue an interwar orientation, more or less prominent, finding themselves in the sensitivity of the new paradigm. There are debutants, and not at all few in numbers. Thus, there are poets of the '23rd August generation,' to use a phrase of the time”¹⁷.

In fact, we are discussing about the contributors to the anthology *Poezia nouă în R.P.R.* ["New Poetry in the Romanian People's Republic"] (1952), in which the typological criterion unified age differences, serving socialist realism. The climax of this solidarity is the poetry collection *Generația mea* ["My Generation"] by Veronica Porumbacu (1955), which can be considered a recapitulative manifesto of the anti-fascist attitude and action, a decade after the end of the Second World War. The event was, involuntarily, the swan song of these servile writers. On 21st July 1955, Gheorghe Apostol (1913-2010), the First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Romanian Workers' Party (RWP), demonstrated to the authors who had requested a meeting with him that even they acknowledged their weak commitment:

„As many of you have noticed, despite all its achievements, our literature is still not up to the standards of our Party and our people. In our literature, there are still many mediocre and impoverished works, some of which distort reality, which proves that our writers still do not sufficiently know the reality of our life, its rich content, and the truth of life”¹⁸.

¹⁷ Ana Selejan, 2007, *Poezia românească în tranziție. 1944–1948*, Bucharest: Cartea Românească Publishing, p. 202. The inaugural character for 23 August 1944 and its status as national day explain why Dumitru Micu and Nicolae Manolescu published *Literatura română de azi: 1944–1964*, Tineretului Publishing, Bucharest, 1965. This was the first official analysis of poetry, prose and plays. It was reviewed and enlarged (with ideological and aestherical comments, including writers that were ostracized by the system, having been imprisoned for political reasons: Ion Caraion, Ștefan Aug. Doinaș, Constant Tonegaru) with the title *Prelegeri de literatură română contemporană: autori și opere, 1944-1974*, Tipografia Universității din Bucharest, 1974.

¹⁸ *Conferința (secretă)...*, pp. 362-363. This type of criticism, without examples is characteristic for the dialectic perspective of marxism-leninism. If the enemy is not directly

Disclosing the lack of devotion was more than just a warning or guidance for the future. Participants in the Party meetings were shown that the Party could spare their services. Gheorghe Apostol's attitude highlighted the need of the leadership to move away from the generation with autonomist tendencies – which only raised personal issues in relation to higher authorities – towards "our generation." In fact, the process of replacing writers who emerged before 23rd August 1944 (even before the start of the Second World War) was rooted in the ideological pluralism they had experienced during the monarchy period in Romania. Knowing other administrative and economic forms, regimented writers were susceptible to opportunism, lack of sincerity, and "lack of principles" (in Marxist-Leninist terms). So, the problem boiled down to biology. Writers were born and raised in bourgeois environments and joined the radical left out of interest. Not being responsible for guiding them, the Party considered moving them to the rear. The premises of a new conflict were established by asserting the intention of change. It remained to be determined who the antagonists would be. Setting up the "Mihai Eminescu" School of Literature and Literary Criticism (1950–1955) was the first experiment. Young writers or aspirants, enrolled in university, or high school dropouts, from the editorial offices of magazines or members of local literary circles, were selected or sent to professionalize themselves in writing for the masses. Contrary to the reality of culture, the participants came from working-class and peasant families, without decent intellectual opportunities, and those who had some talent were natives – Nicolae Labiș (1935-1936), Ion Gheorghe, or Florin Mugur (1934-1991). Anyway, Labiș did not move beyond the level of possibility, while Ion Gheorghe and Florin Mugur proved their worth after 1965. Alongside the three, we can

named or does not exist, he must be invented and and listed. At the end of 1955, Gh. Gheorghiu-Dej says in his report on the Second Congress of the RWP: „Many of the great topics and fundamental aspects of the heroic struggle of workers to build socialism, as well as the history for the last decades were included only to a small extent in literature and art. Some works simply reality and present it only briefly, which leads to poor artistic representation of the superiority of the new, of defeat of the old. The characters who build this new society are simply lifeless in some of these works “ (*Congresul al II-lea al Partidului Muncitoresc Român: 23-25 December 1955*, Editura de Stat pentru Literatură Politică, Bucharest, 1956, p. 157).

mention participants of the School of Literature who also studied philology, such as Aurel Rău (b. 1930), Ion Acsan (1932-2013). To this group we can add Tiberiu Utan (1930-1994) and Toma George Maiorescu (1928-2019) former students at the "Maxim Gorki" Institute of Literature in Moscow. According to statistics, the dream of producing qualified writers was ruined. Poetry required culture. However, the School of Literature graduates and participants were not satisfied with the status of worker-versifiers. They felt the need to enrich their knowledge. So, Nicolae Labiș, Ion Gheorghe, Florin Mugur, Rusalin Mureșanu (1932-2001), Mihai Negulescu (1936-2006) enrolled in philology faculties. Apart from Labiș, who died prematurely, the others obtained their bachelor's degrees. Gheorghe Tomozei was the only well-known one who did not pursue higher education. For Alexandru Andrițoiu (1929-1996) the School of Literature was as a backup solution. After three years at the Faculty of Philology in Cluj (1948-1951) he was sent by the regional leadership of the RWP to Bucharest, dropping his university studies. The need for information, assimilation, processing, and filtering reveals the failure of the communist project. But the ideal of the writer dedicated entirely to the masses did not perish. Nicolae Ceaușescu invoked it with imperative regret in the famous Theses of July 1971:

„At the Ninth and Tenth Congresses, we explained what we expect from writers, from other artists, from creative unions, whom art should serve, what should be its source of inspiration. Today, I could only repeat the same thing, so I recommend to comrades to read passages from the documents of these congresses, as well as the speech given at the last meeting with art creators because there I said everything I would like to say today. We want art and literature to be in the service of the people, to be written and created for the working class, for the peasantry, for the intelligentsia, for all working people. We are for diversity of styles and forms in literary-artistic creation. But, as I said before, the conception, the ideology must be only one – the revolutionary ideology and conception of the working class. Art must serve one purpose: socialist, communist education”¹⁹.

¹⁹ Nicolae Ceaușescu, *Propuneri de măsuri pentru îmbogățirea activității politico-ideologice, de educare marxistă leninistă a membrilor de partid, a tuturor oamenilor muncii: 6 iulie 1971. Expunere la Consfătuirea de lucru a activului de partid din domeniul ideologiei și al activității politice și cultural-educative: 9 iulie 1971*, Politică Publishing, 84

Like the "23rd August generation", the School of Literature generation also had an uncertain fate. There was a conflict between the two, especially since the RWP protected the younger and newer ones. They were placed in various editorial offices, given the chance to write and promote socialist realism. Most of them worked for the "Tânărul scriitor" magazine (1951-1957). We believe that the decision of the Writers' Union to establish "Gazeta literară" in 1954 was not accidental. Until then, the Union had only one magazine in Bucharest – "Viața românească", spelled with "î", against any linguistic or traditional argument, emphasizing the "new scientific" approach, which ignored that Romanian is a Romance idiom. It was also a way to hire new personnel. However, the generation prepared to take control was born with enough deficiencies. Some will be corrected along the way. What is certain is that cultural expectations were deceived. These writers did not meet the standards of the time: partisanship, themes, stylistic means, mobilization, aesthetics. They were also prepared for the Young Writers' Congress (March 20-22, 1956), greeted in the press with a "proletarian" perspective, in line with the mentality of the time:

„Here are some of the books by young writers currently in preparation at our publishing houses. SPHLA will publish volumes of poetry by the poets Ștefan IUREȘ, Mihai GAVRIL, Rusalin MUREȘANU, Al. ANDRIȚOIU, Ion BRAD, Aurel RĂU, Gh. TOMOZEI.”²⁰

The Myth of the Young Generation

At that time, the State Publishing House for Literature and Art (SPHLA) monopolized printing of books by Romanian-language writers. Ștefan Iureș (1931-2013), Rusalin Mureșanu, Al. Andrițoiu, Aurel Rău (b. 1930), and Gheorghe Tomozei, whose books were to be published, had gone through the "Mihai Eminescu" School of Literature and Literary Criticism.

Bucharest, 1971, p. 74. The quote is from the General Secretary's speech at the CC of the RCP on 9 July 1971.

²⁰ „De pe șantierul literar al tinerilor scriitori”, in: *Contemporanul*, no. 11 (493), 16 March 1956, p. 3.

Printing any volume complied with the rules stating that literary work had to resemble tending to agricultural land, ploughing, sowing, protecting from pests, and harvesting the most beautiful vegetables, cereals, and fruits. Art functioned centrally. Consequently, writers were expected to show utmost devotion. In this regard, it is interesting to mention that Ștefan Iureș' collection *În preajma lui Lenin* [In the Vicinity of Lenin] (1957) was not published 1956 as announced in the press. The title of the work denotes a change in the themes imposed by the RWP, in the years commemorating the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917.

Dan Costa (Cornel Regman's pseudonym, 1919-1999) talked about Nicolae Labiș and other colleagues' increasingly substantial presence in magazines and volumes in an article drafted according to a very precise code: the opposition of praise and blame. Daring to congratulate Rusalin Mureșanu, Doina Sălăjan (b. 1934), Leonida Neamțu (1934-1991), Nicolae/Niculae Stoian (1935-1990), Gheorghe Tomozei, Florin Mugur, and Ion Gheorghe with the epithet "The Youngest Poets"²¹ and placing them all under the patronage "of a talented poet like Nicolae Labiș, in whose verses (we hope, increasingly full of substance) their generation will not fail to recognize themselves"²² the author of the article highlights a worrying aspect for the entire group, namely that "the circle of their literary preferences is much too narrow."²³

Towards the end of 1956, in a more nuanced numerical and qualitative assessment, S. Damian (1930-2012) narrowed down the group of favoured poets:

„Verses by Nicolae Labiș, Alexandru Andrițoiu, novels by Titus Popovici, Francisc Munteanu, Szabo Gyula, plays written by Ana Novac and Al. Mirodan were received with praise. The young literary generation enriches the heritage of our socialist realist art, the literary exchange of the future inspires hope and real confidence. It is a great joy that this generation emerged under the socialist sign, that it matures under the guidance of the working-class party. The literary success of young writers, brought up during the people's democracy regime, are a strong argument, among other conclusive evidence, overturning the

²¹ Dan Costa [i. e. Cornel Regman], „Cei mai tineri poeți”, in: *Viața românească*, IX, no. 5, May 1956, p. 169.

²² *Ibidem*, p.171.

²³ *Ibidem*, p.183.

defamations of the prophets maintained by the bourgeoisie to declare the sterility of the socialist order. Young writers hold deep gratitude to the Romanian Workers' Party for the favourable conditions for creation, the wise and effective advice, and the firmness in defending the socialist future"²⁴.

Gradually, ideologists and critics were forced to abandon the triumphalist-festive rhetoric about the graduates of the School of Literature because, doctrinally speaking, they were obsolete. They had taken courses during the Stalinization period, which no longer corresponded to the direction set by the USSR. This path of removing Stalin's legacy from culture, through a manoeuvre of "purification" of some abuses and deviations, becomes apparent at the 22nd Congress of the CPSU (1961). It was then that N. S. Khrushchev brought back into focus two patterns of thinking, symbolized by Stalin and Lenin, respectively. On one hand, there was the tyrant, on the other, the impetuous revolutionary youth. On one hand, dictatorship prevailed, on the other, there was the promoter of the unfulfilled utopia. On one hand, there was the shadow of the Generalissimo, who had reached the heart of Europe with the Red Army. On the other hand, there was the emblematic figure of the politician who, according to anecdote, refused the emblem of the CPSU to be offensive-militaristic (represented by a "sword"), but rather preferred a defensive alliance of the "struggle for peace," of work discipline:

*„On the eve of the 20th Congress, the problem was as follows: either the party will openly condemn, in a Leninist manner, the mistakes and distortions taking place during I. V. Stalin's cult of personality period, and will reject those methods of party and state leadership that have hindered progress, or within the party, the forces clinging to what is old, resisting everything new and creative, will be disarmed. This was exactly how sharply the problem was posed.”*²⁵

The RWP felt the change of direction of the CPSU following Stalin's death (1953), and starting from 1956, it engaged in a debate about the legitimacy of the young literary generation. According to this dispute, lasting

²⁴ S. Damian, „Tânăra generație”, in: *Gazeta literară*, III, no. 49, 6 December 1956, p. 1.

²⁵ N. S. Hrușciiov, *Raportul de activitate al C. C. al P.C.U.S. prezentat la Congresul al XX-lea al Partidului Comunist al Uniunii Sovietice: 17 octombrie 1961*, Politică, Bucharest, pp. 130-131.

until the 9th Congress of the R.C.P (1965) when Nicolae Ceaușescu took power, literature functioned only as an argument to promote a messianic socialist imaginary in the Romanian press. Three groups participated in this debate, all part of the same front. Firstly, the young politicians promoted to positions of ideological responsibility, such as Dumitru Popescu (b. 1928), editor-in-chief of "Scânteia tineretului" magazine (1956-1960), nicknamed "God" during Nicolae Ceaușescu's time, for the influence he held in the printed media:

„Our organization shows young people that the future must be built with their own hands, by listening to and following the wise words of the party. The society in which they and their children will live tomorrow is being shaped today. Through hard work. And this is what our activists and the Union of the Working Youth (UWY) should make all our young people understand.”²⁶

The R.W.P once again assumed the role of undisputed leader, guiding people towards other digressions. It would start (and supervise) controversies, giving the impression there was meritocracy in the literary world, also involving graduates of the School of Literature and Literary Criticism. This led to an atmosphere of apparent normality. It was mainly poets who were called upon to debate the political and intellectual conditions once the CPSU left Stalin's figure behind, promoting instead Lenin's made-up personality. One of the turning points was Al. Andrițoiu's intervention, as he was one of the most visible graduates of the School of Literature and Literary Criticism. By including himself in *Generația noastră leninistă* [Our Leninist Generation]²⁷ the poet highlighted three slogans, stating that young writers in the R.P.R. benefited from "socialist economy," "socialist realism," and were an "integral part of the proletarian cause." Furthermore, the group of poets emerging after 1950-1952 was placed under Lenin's tutelage, who showed them the "compass" and to whom they owed "a unique masculine charm." Two other things are noteworthy in Al. Andrițoiu's statements. One was the

²⁶ D. Popescu, „Chemarea leninistă adresată tinerei generații”, in: *Scânteia tineretului*, seria a II-a, XIV, no. 2784, 22 April 1958, p. 3.

²⁷ Al. Andrițoiu, „Generația noastră leninistă”, in: *Luceafărul*, III, no. 8 (43), 15 April 1960, p. 1.

euphemism for de-Stalinization, by invoking Lenin's figure, the utopian revolutionary, misunderstood and disregarded by his immediate successor. However, in the literary space, socialist realism was still state doctrine, which meant that Stalinism had not disappeared. The other was an increasingly intense desire to be recognized, himself and his comrades, for the fact that it was only through the direct intervention of the R.W.P that they were pioneers among youth. The latter was born out of fear of the increasingly active presence in magazines and the official propaganda of another series of poets, mainly students and graduates of Romanian philology faculties. We assume that Al. Andrițoiu referred, even tangentially, to Georgeta Horodincă's (1930-2006) short study in which she proposed, with an impetuosity hard to imagine in a censored journalistic system, constrained by multiple unforeseen rigors, a theory about the presence of a fresh and compact group of poets who, without an indisputable leader or peaks, impressed with their thematic solidarity and letting go of the uncertainties and searches characterizing the initial stages of class struggle:

„In the past year, a generation of young poets has emerged, a new cohort eager to make its own contribution to the literary arena, but which has not yet asserted itself through a more resounding name than others. [...]

The debut and activity so far of these young poets, among whom we currently focus on Darie Novăceanu, Cezar Baltag, Florența Albu, Nichita Stănescu, Modest Morariu, Petre Stoica, Constantin Ilie, Aurel Storin, Matei Călinescu, George Radu Chirovici - generally reflect, however, the advantages and disadvantages of their starting point in the great and dramatic adventure that is a poet's career. [...]

The youngest generation of poets emerged in literature after the great struggle for the thematic and ideological orientation of artistic creation had been won; for, if this struggle is ongoing, it is against relapses, against isolated attempts to revive and apply, in one form or another, bourgeois concepts about art; hence they have emerged when Marxist aesthetics have obtained a decisive victory”²⁸.

Of course, Georgeta Horodincă's assessment is hasty and incomplete, due to its context. Given the title, it is impossible not to think of a polemical

²⁸ Georgeta Horodincă, „Cea mai tânără generație de poeți”, in: *Viața românească*, XII, no. 2, February 1959, p. 175.

attitude towards Dan Costa's study, *Cei mai tineri poeți* [The Youngest Poets] ("Viața românească", VI, no. 5, May 1956). Only four names, chosen from those mentioned above, were to become pillars of the 1960s generation, as it was perceived by literary criticism: Nichita Stănescu, Ilie Constantin, Cezar Baltag, and Florența Albu, one of whose poems was chosen as the title to the collection *Sub semnul Revoluției* ["Under the Sign of the Revolution"]. Petre Stoica (1931-2009), although he published his first volume – *Poeme* [Poems] – in 1957, a year earlier than what Georgeta Horodincă claimed, was not accepted into the literary paradigm illustrated by his peers. Circumstantially, the list above includes writers who debuted between 1956 and 1958 in the "Steaua" magazine: Petre Stoica, Modest Morariu, Cezar Baltag. At the same time, there are authors who, at the Faculty of Philology of the University of Bucharest, had mainly studied foreign languages: Modest Morariu (1929-1988) – French; Petre Stoica – German; Matei Călinescu (1934-2009) – English; Darie Novăceanu – Spanish. This subtly suggested a progress compared to many of the students at "Mihai Eminescu" School of Literature and Literary Criticism. Furthermore, it offered some clues about the atmosphere of political relaxation, with cosmopolitan inflections, in which many other writers were formed. Georgeta Horodincă's plea also considered the inauguration of the "Nicolae Labiș" Literary Circle of the Writers' Union of the R.P.R., on 16th February 1958²⁹. This was reserved for young writers, implicitly celebrating a crucial episode in the false history of the Communist Party of Romania's about its struggle in illegality (1924-1944), namely the workers' strike at the "Grivița" Workshops in Bucharest, which took place on 16th February 1933, with Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej among the participants.

²⁹ „Viața Uniunii Scriitorilor”, in: *Gazeta literară*, V, no. 7, 13 February 1958, p. 7. Teodor Mazilu read short stories and Petre Stoica poems, at the first meeting. The meetings took place on. Șoseaua Kiseleff no. 10, in a building that had hosted the "Mihai Eminescu" School. Another meeting was organised on 27 April 1958, during which Radu Cosașu read prose and Cezar Balag, poems („Gazeta literară”, V, no. 17, 24 April 1958, p. 2). In a note written by N.[icolae] Breban (n. 1934), close friend to Nichita Stănescu and Matei Călinescu, we find out that the literary circle „Nicolae Labiș“ gathered twice a month (*Viața literară*, "Contemporanul", no. 18 (656), 8 May 1959, p. 3). Other poets also read their works during these meetings: Nichita Stănescu, Florența Albu, Florin Mugur, Cezar Baltag and Ilie Constantin.

This coincidence placed an entire group of authors "under the sign of the Revolution" (a socialist one, of Leninist extraction), including writers who, by aligning themselves with Nicolae Labiș' personality, were part of the "the fight against inertia." Two vectors stand out in this discussion. The first one is the desire to find a spot to throw the anchor, so that the poet avoids drifting. This Ștefan Iureș' case, who advocated for socialist realism, taking on the role of an ideologue, stating that: "In a broad sense, our literature demands an agitational spirit everywhere, even in contemplation"³⁰. Writer and poet Alecu Ivan Ghilia creates an inventory in the same line - also for economic reasons - which does not place Nichita Stănescu, Ilie Constantin, Cezar Baltag, Ion Gheorghe, or Florin Mugur under the shadow of Nicolae Labiș:

„The generation of those around the age of 30, now in their first year of the 'six-year plan' – and which includes colleagues and friends of the late Nicolae Labiș' (undoubtedly the most generous and talented of us all) Titus Popovici, [Al.] Andrițoiu, [Al.] Mirodan, Tiberiu Utan, Pop Simion, N. Tertulian, [N.] Țic, [S.] Damian, Al. Oprea, Ion Dodu Bălan, [Teodor] Mazilu, [Radu] Cosașu, Ștefan Luca, Ion Horea, Ion Brad, Gheorghe Tomozei, Ion Lăncrănjan, Teodor Balș, Fănuș Neagu, Suito Andras, Fodor Sandor, Szabo Gyula, D. R. Popescu, Vasile Rebreanu, Cristian Maurer, Al. Simion, Lucia Olteanu, Petre Sălcudeanu, Bojidar Cherpinișan, Ion Grigorescu, Dan Grigorescu, Octav Pancu-Iași, Dan Hăulică, Mihai Stoian, Niculae Stoian, Corneliu Leu, V. Rîpeanu, Al. Lungu, Ștefan Iureș, D. Micu, N. Velea, Horia Bratu, Lucian Raicu, Marin Bucur, T. G. Măiorescu, D. Solomon, Ștefan Bănulescu, Eugenia Anton, Ilie Purcariu, I. D. Șerban, Costache Anton, M. Gavril, Traian Iancu, Dorel Dorian, Ion Băieșu, Georgeta Horodincă”³¹.

The close relationship with Nicolae Labiș, is presented both as a sentimental and valuable argument defining a generation – the "youngest poets" (Dan Costa, 1959), the "fight against inertia" (Ștefan Iureș, 1959), the "ones born in 1930" (Alecu Ivan Ghilia, 1960); and it was pathetically invoked by one of his closest acquaintances, who strove to defend his memory and aura:

³⁰ Ștefan Iureș, „Poezia tinerilor”, in: *Gazeta literară*, VI, no. 8, 19 February 1959, p 2.

³¹ Alecu Ivan Ghilia, „Răspunderea generației – răspunderea fiecăruia dintre noi”, in: *Luceafărul*, III, no. 24 (59), 15 December 1960, p. 1.

„I am from Nicolae Labiș' generation. It's up to the young writer, contemporary with the flights of 'Apollo,' to consider himself under the sign of the poet of the 'Fight against inertia' or not, but he must not forget the sacred weight of the verses in the books of the boy from Mălini”³².

It is worth mentioning that no journalists and ideologues from "Scânteia" (the newspaper of the Central Committee of the R.W.P) were recruited for the campaign of mentoring poets. For example, Mihai Gafița (1923-1977) was preferred, though, paradoxically and ironically, "he had a job at the School of Literature 'Mihai Eminescu' (1950-1955)"³³, but also had a prominent role in the literary space as the "secretary of the Writers' Union"³⁴. The young writers of the School of Literature were not immediately pushed out, but their visibility was significantly reduced. The case of Al. Andrițoiu, included in the first anthology of socialist realist poetry during Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej (New Poetry in R.P.R., 1952), but excluded from *Sub semnul Revoluției* [Under the Sign of the Revolution] (1959), although he was only 30 years old, should be seen as a litmus test for his entire generation.

When the *Sub semnul Revoluției* collection was published in 1959, on the anniversary of the R.W.P, and 15 years since 23rd August 1944, the day Romania exited the alliance with Nazi Germany in World War II to join the U.S., U.K., and U.S.S.R. there was a consistency of ideological judgment between the former students of the School of Literature, who had not yet published a book (Negoiță Irimie, Leonida Neamțu, Mihai Negulescu, Ion Acsan), students of philology faculties from around the country, born around 1940 (Ilie Constantin and Cezar Baltag), and high school students such as Ana Blandiana and Constanța Buzea. Nichita Stănescu, closer in age to the School of Literature generation, was only a graduate in philology. The substantial selection, listing 30 authors, left room for a dispute for honours,

³² Gheorghe Tomozei, „Lupta cu inerția”, in: *Luceafărul*, no. 10 (358), 8 March 1969, p. 1.

³³ Al. S.[ândulescu], in Eugen Simion (coordonator general), 2017, *Dicționarul general al literaturii române*, coordonare și revizie: Gabriela Danțiș, Gabriela Drăgoi, Teodora Dumitru, Victor Durnea, Laurențiu Hanganu, Mihai Iovănel, Remus Zăstroiu, Second Edition, revised and enlarged, vol. 3: D-G, Bucharest: Muzeul Literaturii Române Publishing, p. 796.

³⁴ *Ibidem*.

fuelled by both cultural officials and the few authentic literary critics. Regardless of age, they were claimed as youth shaped under the slogans of the "new man." Moreover, thanks to biological arguments, they formed a brigade of present-day versifiers and of ideologically and economically planned realities. This was emphasized by Ion Vîtner (1914-1991), one of the guides of Romanian literature towards socialist realism, in a review mentioning the horizon targeted by the political regime:

„And, perhaps, even more touching is the thought that young poets, singing about socialism's construction in our country, will have to tune their lyre to praise the construction of communism, the era of great dreams and aspirations of the working humanity”³⁵.

The previous quote also suggests the intensification of competition for the status of the official writer in an era of progress whose declared goal was the abolition of all classes of producers of goods. The fundamental idea conveyed here was the transformation of the writer into a civil servant who would account for progress. The entire professional development of these poets would have been due to the intellectual and editorial conditions created after 23rd August 1944. Their childhood was confiscated by propaganda, attaching it to the class struggle. Their memory retained almost nothing about the monarchy or the tradition of modernism between the two World Wars (Tudor Arghezi, Lucian Blaga, George Bacovia, Ion Barbu, Ion Pillat, Alexandru Philippide):

„Young poets - both those included in this collection and those with printed volumes, as well as those just starting out - grew up and were formed during the years of socialist construction. At the liberation, which we celebrate this year for the fifteenth time, most of them were in primary school, others - the fewest - barely in gymnasium. There were plenty who were just stepping through the school gates. So, they grew up with the successes of the country's new path, they lived along with them - we can say they emerged from them. It is a generation of socialism - and this explains why their inspiration, orientation, and ideal are almost without exception linked to the life of our people in the most recent period; linked to the party.

³⁵ Ion Vîtner, „O tânără pleiadă lirică”, in: *Luceafărul*, II, no. 22 (33), 15 November 1959, p. 11.

*The experiences they live are those of socialism; in literature, they have known no other paths than those of socialist realism. Rare have been the cases in our literature when the young generation of writers was so deeply anchored in the present, so strongly and convincingly optimistic, eager for life, ready to fight on the most advanced barricades*³⁶.

When the (19)60s generation was preparing to debut collectively, through the volumes of Nichita Stănescu (*Sensul iubirii* – ["The Meaning of Love"], 1960), Ilie Constantin (*Vântul cutreieră apele* – ["The wind over water"], 1960), and Cezar Baltag (*Comuna de aur* – ["The Golden Commune"], 1960), in the "Luceafărul" collection of the Publishing House for Literature (PHL), which had separated from S.P.H.L.A, another path of partisan rhetoric was opening up. Our Leninist generation, of which Al. Andrițoiu spoke, had a strong competitor in another one that had taken on a cliché of the era, starting from the title of a posthumous volume by Nicolae Labiș, *Lupta cu inerția* ["Fight against inertia"] (1958), unhesitatingly assuming one of the striking recommendations formulated by literary criticism of the time:

*„Young poet, like any young person, your creative ambition burns most vividly within you, and for you, perhaps above all, 'the fight against inertia' with which Labiș grappled, is one of the reasons for your vocation*³⁷.

Under the Sign of the Revolution was printed in 1959, a crucial year in the transition towards the crystallization of the (19)60s generation. Mihai Gafița's preface to this book, Georgeta Horodincă's article ("Viața românească", no. 2), and Mihail Petroveanu's paternalistic advice ("Gazeta

³⁶ Mihai Gafița, , 1959, *Cuvânt despre tinerețea poeziei* [prefață], *Sub semnul revoluției: 30 de poeți tineri*, Bucharest: Editura de Stat pentru Literatură și Artă, p. 6. A similar paragraph was published by the same author in the article *Tânăra generație a literaturii noastre*, "Contemporanul", no. 13 (651), 3 April 1959, p. 3. Ana Blandiana published: *Ploaia, Originalitate*. Constanța Buzea: *Flori în August, Bucurie, Vreau*. Ilie Constantin: *1907, February 1933, Din copilărie, Început de șantier, Laminor*. Nichita Stănescu: *Sirena lui Roaită, Când soarele viu..., Sfârșit de iarnă în treizeștrei, Dans pe tobe*. Cezar Baltag: *Sunt mândru, Să ne bucurăm de victorie, Coapsa caldă a pământului*.

³⁷ Mihail Petroveanu, „Scrisoare către un tânăr poet (I)”, in: *Gazeta literară*, VI, no. 16, 16 April 1959, p. 3.

literară", no. 16) heralded new group of writers who occupied the forefront of literary life, despite showing allegiance to political interference, such as Cezar Baltag in the poem *Lenin, noi suntem veșnic afirmația ta* [Lenin, we are forever your affirmation]³⁸.

The (19)60s generation, between an ethical and a sociological interpretation

Over time, Nicolae Labiș' angelic and exaggerated image faded. His concessions to the directives issued by the R.W.P. were sufficient to establish a mutual contract and a reading pact between the communist power and the poets. From a relationship of servitude, hardly contestable, they evolved to one of cooperation, founding a new covenant as God made with Noah after the flood stopped, and the ark rested on the shore:

„The young generation enters literature under the poetic rainbow of Nicolae Labiș – destined to remain, by an unfair decision of destiny, the youngest and most unfulfilled among the great Romanian poets. [...]

In several articles (critical portraits), generally judicious opinions have been formulated about the creations of poets such as Cezar Baltag, Nichita Stănescu, Ion Gheorghe, Florența Albu, Nicolae Stoian, Ilie Constantin, Miron Scorobete, Mihai Negulescu, Anghel Dumbrăveanu, etc. Of course, the poets mentioned here form only a small part of the large number of young people who have enriched combative poetry in recent years.”³⁹

The discourse confirming the (19)60s generation was continued by literary critics such as Eugen Simion, whose approximations are relevant for the intellectual context at the time. There were ways in which poetry would no longer be a Siamese sister with the politics imposed by the R.W.P. However, at the same time, no original style had yet emerged. Anything published in the press bore the signs of a great discovery. Therefore, alongside

³⁸ *Gazeta literară*, VI, no. 16, 16 April 1959, p. 3.

³⁹ Eugen Simion, „Stiluri și tendințe în poezia tinerilor”, in: *Gazeta literară*, VII, no. 51 (353), 15 December 1960, p. 1.

the established ones, a so-called battalion of aspirants appeared, noted with great kindness:

„Names like Gh. Tomozei, Leonida Neamțu, Florin Mihai Petrescu, Horia Zilieru, Florin Mugur, Negoiașă Irimie, Petre Stoica, Ion Rahoveanu, Grigore Hagi, Ana Blandiana, Darie Novăceanu, Corneliu Șerban, Constanța Buzea, Ion Crînguleanu, Emil Bunea, Sina Dănciulescu, Ion Cocora, etc., are now well-known.”⁴⁰

This enumeration reminds us of the extensive lists of promising young writers who embarked on the path of socialist realism. Paradoxically, this quantitative approach, based on exhaustive scruples, constituted a literary policy, which we can describe as the "small steps" policy. The regime was implicitly courted for the atmosphere favourable to the development of the vineyard's shoots. The laudatory tone tempered as writers with undeniable vocation distanced themselves from the platoon. As poetry conquered more and more impregnable citadels, literary criticism became increasingly brave and demanding in examining, without mercy, the entanglement of lyricism in the marshy ground of propaganda. The burst of lyricism – characterized by the substitution of collective, sometimes gregarious reactions, with individual attitudes, difficult to approximate – was an evident reality. However, from being a necessary condition for complete alienation from Marxist-Leninist ideology, it did not become a sufficient one. Therefore, not every discourse written under the impression of confession was automatically relevant. The retrospective view of literary history kept in the forefront only those who created valid poetic universes, who gave up compromises around their debut and continued to use an inner voice, sometimes oracular, completely detached from the voice of collective sentiments, devoted to causes enunciated by the R.W.P.:

„Looking back, one can notice that the 'Labiș generation' dissolved after 1960, when another group of the young generation (led by Nichita Stănescu, Marin Sorescu, Cezar Baltag, Ioan Alexandru, Ana Blandiana, Adrian Păunescu, etc.) entered the literary scene bringing another poetic formula. Some (Gh. Tomozei, Florin Mugur)

⁴⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 6.

*adapted to this new poetic style, while others disappeared from the attention of literary criticism.*⁴¹

The Romanian poetry of 1960 rediscovered the essential values of Great Romania (1918-1940): lyricism, metaphysics, the relationship with the macrocosm, philosophical conceptions, love raised to the rank of an eternal principle, meditation on the role of the literary creator, ontological dramas, histrionic behaviour. The substance of the discourse became denser, eliminating the superficiality of political rhetoric, which condemned bourgeois society and praised the providential intervention of the R.W.P. against "enemies" of the "people's democracy" of Romania:

*„One of the fundamental problems that will arise at this stage of the history of Romanian lyricism, determined by these realities, will be that of recovering lyricism, of restoring the temporarily distorted connections with the great modern tradition of poetry between the two world wars”*⁴².

Poetry embraced the hypothesis that it represents a cornerstone for a world born out of the unforeseen, rather than for the achievements assumed by the construction of socialism. These objectives, aesthetic rather than utilitarian, bewildered even the most receptive commentators, who, after reading the first volume signed by Nichita Stănescu, had different interpretations:

*„I would not dwell on these natural incongruities (common to a developing talent), if I did not add immediately that Sensul Iubirii [The Meaning of Love] brings a poet of indisputable originality and depth to our realistic-socialist lyricism”*⁴³.

Nicolae Labiș' poem, *Lupta cu inerția* [The fight against inertia], had a double meaning for the (19)60s generation of literary critics and poets. Firstly, it referred to the battle fought to conform daily reality to the norms of

⁴¹ E.[ugen] S.[imion], in: Eugen Simion (general coordonator), 2017, *Dicționarul general al literaturii române*, coordonation and revision: Gabriela Danțiș, Gabriela Drăgoi, Teodora Dumitru, Victor Durnea, Laurențiu Hanganu, Mihai Iovănel, Remus Zăstroiu, Second Edition, reviewed and enlarged, vol. 4: H-L, Bucharest: Muzeul Literaturii Române Publishing, p. 597.

⁴² Ion Pop, 1973, *Poezia unei generații*, Cluj: Dacia, p. 15.

⁴³ Eugen Simion, „Nichita Stănescu: «Sensul iubirii»”, in: *Contemporanul*, no. 3 (745), 20 January 1961, p. 3.

emerging socialism. Therefore, for Nichita Stănescu, *The Meaning of Love* is a public declaration of fidelity to the R.W.P. Secondly, a deeper significance was outlined, emphasizing the creator's attitude towards the surrounding natural matter, the process of artistic transfiguration. The lyrical representation of reality, through the mediation of an atrophied affective consciousness, was also an effort to tame reality. Therefore, we can understand why *The Meaning of Love* volume was praised by commentators:

„Young critics (and not only) praise it and do not hesitate to put the author's name alongside Labiș, considered then at the highest point in the hierarchy of young literature. Re-read today, the debut volume withstands through several pieces or isolated verses”⁴⁴.

Placing Nichita Stănescu on the same pedestal as Nicolae Labiș, considered the "guiding star of the younger generations"⁴⁵, was a cliché detectable even after Nicolae Ceaușescu organized the Ninth Congress of the Romanian Communist Party in July 1965. The shadow of the writer who died before his collection *The Fight Against Inertia* ["*Lupta cu inerția*"] was published was still looming large. In a favourable moment for syntheses, literary critic Ion Pop chose to highlight the specificities illustrated by 11 poets (Nicolae Labiș, Nichita Stănescu, Cezar Baltag, Ilie Constantin, Ion Gheorghe, Ioan Alexandru, Adrian Păunescu, Ana Blandiana, Constanța Buzea, Gabriela Melinescu, Marin Sorescu) whom he characterized collectively as the result of the "fight against inertia", understanding this as a context for "restructuring values, on one hand, and the symbolic incorporation of a new spirituality in the process of affirmation - on the other hand"⁴⁶. Such linguistic blockages are impossible to bypass in the Romanian cultural landscape, even after it seemed that literature had ceased communication with political factors.

The sociological interpretation grid, loyal to official slogans, did not immediately fade with the emergence of the (19)60s generation. Some residues persisted even at the beginning of Nicolae Manolescu's activity, in the preface of Ana Blandiana's debut volume – *Persoana întâia plural* [*First*

⁴⁴ Eugen Simion, 1978, *Scriitori români de azi*, I, second edition, reviewed and enlarged, Bucharest: Cartea Românească Publishing, p. 167.

⁴⁵ D. Micu, N. Manolescu, 1965, *Literatura română de azi: 1944-1964*, Bucharest: Tineretului Publishing, p. 140.

⁴⁶ Ion Pop, *op. cit.*, p. 21.

Person Plural] (1964) - the title having clear resonances with Veronica Porumbacu's *Generația mea* [My Generation]. The personal pronoun "we," unspecified but implied, signifies both an argument for self-inclusion in the ideological project of the Romanian People's Republic and the Romanian Communist Party, and for distancing from the larger group of those who were part of the participants in the experiment conducted at the "Mihai Eminescu" School of Literature and Literary Criticism which had been abolished a decade earlier: "Ana Blandiana's poems express the dignity of a generation that feels protected by socialism."⁴⁷ The poetry of the (19)60s generation is not just a spontaneous literary reaction stemming from a temperamental predisposition. Autonomism is a response to politics. And, as dictatorship does not allow opposition, writing, cleansed of ideology, had to defend the invasion of extrinsic command, through guerrilla fights. In his doctoral thesis written in exile in France, defended at the National Institute of Civilizations and Oriental Languages in Paris (1991), therefore after the fall of the communist regime in Romania, Ilie Constantin, as an insider, placed in a coherent and justified context the elimination of the residues of socialist realism and the protection against the assaults of socialist nationalism. Art transformed into fiction, escapism, and bookish utopia having served the immediate purposes of propaganda for more than 10 years:

„The establishment of the communist regime proves to be both deadly and, paradoxically, regenerative for lyricism! In the first ten years of the period studied in this work, poetry worthy of this name is put under siege. Power demands pure versified propaganda, edits it, and mass disseminates it; and thus, unintentionally, the regime contributes to the regeneration of poetry. [...]

There is a complex game taking place between power and the increasingly numerous literary public; the former, assured that it is not directly attacked, becomes more lenient; the latter (writers and readers) intoxicate themselves with symbols, with an entire coded language - where poets are naturally privileged”⁴⁸.

⁴⁷ Nicolae Manolescu, 1964, *Prefață* ["Preface"], in vol. Ana Blandiana, *Persoana întâia plural*, Bucharest: Editura pentru Literatură, p. 7.

⁴⁸ Ilie Constantin, *Complicitatea fertilă: poeți români. 1951-1973* [French edition 1992], translated by Liana and Valentin Atanasiu, Cluj-Napoca: Dacia Publishing, 1994, p. 7.

The cooperation between writers and ideology was not accidental, and if we consider the state's editorial monopoly, we realize that we are facing a natural situation of the time. Paying tribute to hold your own published book was a reenactment of Tudor Arghezi's poem *Testament* ["Testament"]: "I will not leave you any possessions after my death,/ Except for a name gathered in a book". Access to the status of writer was more important than paying the inevitable symbolic price. More diverse works were being published simultaneously, which suggested concern for national literature and for freedom of expression. However, one's debut did not necessarily mean a moment of personal glory, but rather a Pyrrhic victory or a Trojan horse, as was the case with Nichita Stănescu, Cezar Baltag, and Ilie Constantin.

*„Many critics of the Romanian literary phenomenon link the revival of literary life to the **appearance** of the debut collection **Luceafărul [The Evening Star]** (1960), a 'gift' given by the Party to the emerging youth, from which it expected a revitalization of the revolutionary spirit”⁴⁹.*

There is a similar opinion in the period referred to by Eugen Negrici:

*„In 1960, the Publishing House for Literature created a collection with a suggestive name, **Luceafărul**, intended for debut. In four years, nearly 30 volumes of poetry appeared in this collection. How many of them will remain? How many poets will leave a mark on Romanian literature? These are questions that have yet to be answered”⁵⁰.*

Some conclusions and perspectives

The confirmation of the (19)60s generation came in 1965, when Nicolae Ceaușescu, then the youngest communist leader in Europe, based his speech on promoting fresh energy in all fields of activity. For propagandistic purposes, to promote pluralism, the General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party insisted on the right to write and publish, without omitting the strong point of the matter: adherence to ideological norms. However, instead of explicitly announcing the

⁴⁹ Eugen Negrici, *Literatura română sub comunism*, ed. cit., p. 27

⁵⁰ D. Micu, N. Manolescu, *op. cit.*, p. 143.

abandonment of socialist realism which was the method of creation administratively established after 30th December 1947, after the abdication of King Michael I, Nicolae Ceaușescu broadened the term, hinting at the diversification of stylistic possibilities. The allusion was that poets had been given the chance to no longer use versified slogans. However, this privilege did not resolve the inherent contradiction of socialist realism, which did not allow any other form of expression than the party command, rendered without the use of metaphor or without the perspective of subjectivity:

„Literary-artistic creation must be filled with profound socialist humanism, reflecting the politics and activity of the party, dedicated to the flourishing of the homeland, the welfare of the people, and the happiness of man. Artists and intellectuals must dedicate all their best and most beautiful creation to the people, the true creator of all the riches of the homeland.

Art and literature are characterized by a concern for continuous renewal and perfection of artistic means of expression, diversity of styles: any tendencies of exclusivism or rigidity manifested in this field must be eliminated. It is essential for each artist, in their own style, while preserving their artistic individuality, to show high responsibility for the content of their work, to ensure that it finds a wide path to the minds and hearts of the people”⁵¹.

We have tried, to the best of our ability, to argue that literature was dependent on the political factor during the communist period by focusing on the emergence and promotion of (19)60s generation. At this point, we can affirm that the notion of a literary generation is not an organic one but rather imposed by the needs of the dictatorial regime. Writers were grouped according to the expression of triumphalism and socialist paternalism, which, in the public sphere, demonstrated concern for constructing the future. The (19)60s generation was conceived and guided on a conformist path, open to signs of cultural destalinization. Initiated during Gheorghiu-Dej, the process was completed by Nicolae Ceaușescu. Despite the liberation of poetry from the imperative of socialist realism, the (19)60s generation found itself, on various occasions, in the position of a decisive argument for the "reforms"

⁵¹ *Congresul al IX-lea al Partidului Comunist Român*, Bucharest: Politică Publishing, 1965, pp. 846-847.

brought about by Nicolae Ceaușescu's rise to power. Consequently, it can be said that, viewed with detachment, this very important wave of poets was used as a bargaining chip, useful both for aesthetic and ideological literature. Their situation in the history of Romanian literature during communism would be paradoxical because they were guaranteed creative autonomy while their intellectual stance was parasitized.

Nichita Stănescu, Ilie Constantin, Cezar Baltag, and others had confirmed their creative potential under intellectual auspices that seemed natural. The release of political prisoners (including some writers) in 1963 and 1964 and the reintroduction into the public and publishing world of certain poets (some of whom had disappeared in the meantime) were sufficient arguments that socialism had maintained a healthy atmosphere, thus prepared to recover the trajectory that had been abruptly interrupted in 1948.

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