

vidual and to overcome the investigators' brutality. Beyond the psychological data, the heroine of this book is also an exceptional witness and confessor. Her story is simple, clear and bright. The book is a tribute to those who tried and succeeded to resist communism in the Romanian mountains, at the cost of a ruined life.

From a documentary point of view, her testimonies show us the greatness of those who resisted communism, as well as of those who filled the prisons. Seeing themselves released from the commitments signed when released from prisons after the fall of communism in Romania, relieved from the fear of terrible repercussions on their families, the former political prisoners step up and begin to create a new history. Thus, "without the constraints of the communist political power, the present testimony is a deposition about the crimes of communism." If some people wrote their memoirs by themselves, others have been helped to recount their past through the journalistic method of the interview.

Aristina Pop-Săileanu seems fascinated, in her stories, by the lesson in humanity she learned behind bars from her fellow female prisoners and from the doctors who treated the serious illness she was suffering from. Her testimony is that of a human being who, after having defended her freedom gun in hand, learned over time to defend her inner freedom with the weapons of spirit and faith.



(Translated by ARISTINA POP-SĂILEANU)

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GHEORGHE HOBINCU

Memorii. Vol. 1, Frumoasele zile din

Aranjuez. Vol. 2, Omul sub vremuri

(Memoirs. Vol. 1, The beautiful days of Aranjuez. Vol. 2, A poor man under the rule of the times)

Ed. LAVINIA SEICIUC, introduction by RADU FLORIAN BRUJA

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ENVISAGED AS a fragment of memory, attitude and perspective of the *autobiographical detention literature* (Hobincu 2: 241), also known by its less fortunate name, that of *prison literature* (*ibid.*), the book written by the physician from Fălticeni, Gheorghe Hobincu, is much more than that, it represents the ample expression of a committed generation, the only one that assumed the destiny of its own people, becoming, in fact, a true "river of anger" (Hobincu 1: 121), subsequently latticed, discouraged and annihilated by "our enclosure" (Hobincu 2: 201 sq.), in which "the days passed one after the other, gray and sad" (*ibid.*, 158). It means passing "with elephantine steps and a bent body as if it carried all the pains and the weight of the world" (*ibid.*, 143), even though it maintains the "features of a literary discourse in which the author's voice reduplicates in a permanent oscillation between the mature writer, marked by the spiritual scars of suffering, and the character of his own memory, caught in an emotional swirl, sometimes optimistic, sometimes despairing, never defeated" (*ibid.*, 241).

To all this, thus to the late revisitation, the notoriety of the epoch is appended, not always true, but launched as propaganda rumors of the time and inherited

as such, an example being “the queen suffering an injury during a dispute between her two sons” (Hobincu 1: 195), when it is well known that Queen Mary died of cancer at Pelișor, and not because of the wound received at Cotroceni. Conversely, Gheorghe Hobincu also reports well-guarded secrets of the time, intentionally ignored by history, such as the fact that “in 1946, Professor Pătrașcu, as the adjutant of Horia Sima, negotiated with Ana Pauker and her accomplices, Nikolski and Teohari Georgescu, some sort of non-aggression pact” through which “the legionnaires committed to withhold from any propaganda in favor of the Peasant Party during the elections and from any hostile activity against the regime,” the Romanian Bolsheviks promising in exchange “to release all the legionnaires convicted by Antonescu, as well as those convicted or institutionalized after August 23rd. In order to accomplish this, some sort of amnesty decree was issued and was only made known to the relevant authorities, without making it public” (Hobincu 2: 114–115).

The publication itself contains in fact two perspectives: i) that of the committed generation and, therefore, itself profoundly committed; ii) the fully scientific one, exhaustively elaborated by the author’s granddaughter and editor, Lavinia Seiciuc, which includes a “Note on the Edition” (Hobincu 1: 9–17), an admirable “Postface” (Hobincu 2: 241–251), a “Biographical Note” (*ibid.*, 259–267), as well as the explanatory footnotes, but also an erudite “Introductory Study” by the historian Radu Florian Bruja (Hobincu 1: 19–27).

Without any doubt, the intelligent complementarity between the two perspectives singles out Gheorghe Hobincu’s

Memoirs, conferring them the status of real and indisputable history, his innate narrative talent reaching erudition, unfolding without any inhibition, but at the same time without any trace of arrogance, as a confession, in which the moral coordinates are enclosed within the rhetorical limits of “we have paid for our mistakes and no one has the right to judge us for our past” (Hobincu 1: 229) and of “That is all I could do” (Hobincu 2: 239), in fact the limits of humility, because Gheorghe Hobincu shone throughout his existence as an idealist as well as a professional in the healing of both the human body and soul. This man, sincere as a confession, was the voice and the conscience of a generation, the sole generation of Romanians that tried to assume the destiny of the nation, paying abominably for the courage of having dignity and responsibility: “In the darkness of the cell I break/under the heavy mute tiles/and burdened by longings I cry/over lost memories./The snow scattered by the wind / blows through the lattice/and this prison seems to be/the tomb of my youth” (Radu Gyr).

Scarred by the theft of his youth, being imprisoned on two occasions, under the Antonescu regime (14 months) and under the Bolshevik regime (6 years), Gheorghe Hobincu tried, through his writings, to revisit his youth, so the pages that describe his life “before” and “after” the imprisonment are very few (40 pages being dedicated to his life after the release until June 1961). The youth of this doctor, who was educated in Iași, has two icons: that of his children, Mona and Ducu, who “slept innocently and were as beautiful as angels” (Hobincu 1: 124) and that of the *Saints* of his generation, known through their remarkable works: Radu Gyr, Ernest Bernea, Teohar Mhadaș

(with whom he always compares his memories), Virgil Ierunca or Paul Goma.

The fraternal friendship with Virgil Bănulescu brought the young medical student Gheorghe Hobincu close to politics, not in the sense of actual politics, but in the appraisal of elements pertaining to the national doctrine (Hobincu 1: 148) and, upon discovering issues that were incompatible with his humanist beliefs, he related with unconcealed bitterness: “we had joined the circle and we had to dance, even if we did not like the music” (ibid., 153). After the first imprisonment in Chişinău (after passing through the prisons of Botoşani, Suceava, Fălticeni, Buzău, and Văcăreşti), in the “worst prison in the country” (ibid., 205), upon his return home, the young doctor from Fălticeni was labeled by the chief of police as being “more of a legionnaire than when he left” (ibid., 221), despite the fact that Gheorghe Hobincu had only spiritual and intellectual ties and was not a genuine legionnaire, the humanism of his medical calling defining him completely, despite the constant timidity with which he analyzes his own merits. If the term had not become obsolete, I would call this humanism a comradeship, manifested also towards patients, towards the damned of the Earth, towards his generation and their ideas and aspirations. Moreover, this comradeship manifests itself as a national solidarity with all the generations of Romanians, in pages filled with confessions, in which his former youth is depicted either self-ironically or dramatically, also through the narrative attempt from after 1989, while the depiction of the youth is validated by the way he relives it, always “in the light of the unreal beauty under which it appeared to me then” (ibid.: 99), every

human being’s youth is, in fact, an non-recurring cathedral of the human soul.

I am not certain to what extent *The Beautiful Days of Aranjuez* represents a trial of the twentieth century, the author being born “on 20 February 1917, when the First World War was at its worst, and when the canon shells of the *Aurora* were the signal of the bloody revolution in Russia” (Hobincu 1: 33), the entire century being terribly bloody, stigmatized with blood and suffering. Shedding blood and suffering for nation and country, Gheorghe Hobincu was awarded the “Military Virtue” on the Eastern front, but was subjected to unfair imprisonment and experienced the loss of the years of his youth, “as iron entered my soul” (ibid., 229). There is a philosophical resignation, certainly not a traditional Romanian one, in every sentence of the confession made by a man who carried along the sufferings of an entire century, except for the physical torment, because his intellectual appearance, which inspired nobility, almost mystically restrained his torturers, who acted as under the effect of a spell. This ineffable nobility, both innate and achieved through education, can also be felt in the structure of the book, the author’s sinuous destiny leading to the meaningful choice of chapter titles for both volumes, made by Lavinia Seiciuc, the author’s granddaughter. *The Beautiful Days of Aranjuez*, the title of the first volume of the *Memoirs*, “refers to the first act of Schiller’s *Don Carlos*” and it is “one of the author’s favorite quotes, one that occurs several times throughout the volume, usually signaling turning points in his life” (ibid., 9). This ineffability was never defeated or even latticed. It is eternally victorious, under the stigma of blood and suffering of the transience of a

century whose days can only be joyful, albeit puzzling.

The very spiritual covers of the *Memoirs*, reinforced by the exegeses of Lavinia Seiciuc and Radu Florian Bruja, represent external perspectives, therefore a veritable judgment of history, which is always far less forgiving than the judgment of the victims, i.e. based on an inward perspective, but also analyzing the historical facts. Aiming to accustom the reader both with the personality of the author-character and with the troubled times he experienced, the exegeses deepen the condition of the “annihilated man” (Hobincu 2: 241), which is actually defined by the testimonies of those incarcerated in the prisons in the country, out of too much love for the future of this land. Although Lavinia Seiciuc is looking for the trenchant historical testimony in the “evocation of misery,” she discovers that Gheorghe Hobincu’s work “is sometimes too austere, clinically analytical, . . . since the author prefers to turn his confession into a fresco of the petty quotidian, of an absurd life in which people managed to build a routine that gave them the sense of normality,” the main features of these stories being “objectivity

and impartiality” (Hobincu 2: 249). Radu Florian Bruja also highlights “the aesthetic value of this text,” which presents “various aspects and hypostases of the past, many of which not materialized enough or historically focused” and justly believes that “the hero of these tomes is both part of his own life and part of the life of 20th century Romania, with all its avatars,” a necessary confession “in reevaluating the burden of history” (Hobincu 1: 27).

Between the two external perspectives, in which the scientific argumentation and the critical analysis of the whole determine the exegesis, there is something disturbing of a particular humanism, clearly inspired, on each final cover of the two volumes: “A child in love with nature, a teenager fascinated by the white hands of his beloved, a student hesitating between conscience and loyalty, a young man who becomes an adult between the walls of the prison, a doctor who on his return from the front envisages a life in the service of the people.” A life and a vocation which were always properly defined.

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