

GLOBALIZATION AND OTHERNESS IN THE PRESS. COULD THERE BE AN ORIGINAL VOICE OF ROMANIAN JOURNALISM?

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Abstract

The Romanian world of the nineteenth century, when the foundations of modern institutions of the country were laid, could not escape prevailing world trends. This critical mood was expressed in Titu Maiorescu's formula of *form without substance*. Today, compliance, respecting norms, the moral consensus of quality thresholds, the return of the talented and cultivated journalists, are ways to escape from desert. This possibility seems now, and maybe for a long time yet, just a *Fata Morgana*. We are different, our voice sounds different than that of most fellow Europeans, but it is a dissonant voice, sometimes downright false.

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Even if autarhism was in bloom, the Romanian world of the nineteenth century, when the foundations of modern institutions of the country were laid, could not escape prevailing world trends. There was no way of escaping or ignoring them, not necessarily trying to copy them, but to assimilate them. At that time, French influences were prevalent in the form of neologisms that expressed in most cases novel concerns and created an institutional system modeling that of developed countries. Spiru Haret cut forever the matrix of Romanian school, drawing on the design and operation of the French education. Of course, as I said, in terms of school, I had a *mot-a-mot* translation, but we were takeovers in spirit. Unfortunately, this modeling in many other areas was devoid of substance, did not attain organicity, which has generated quite rightly, strong criticism from the highest consciousness of the Romanian intelligentsia of the time. This critical mood was expressed in Titu Maiorescu's formula of *form without substance*.

The phrase has not lost its topicality and relevance even today, because now we are included, as a country and people, in a new

process of synchronization of Europeanization, at least at institutional level, which should include a profound change of mentality. This task of adjustment and control contamination often lacks internal, inner contaminations thus we fall in the original sin of form without substance. The problem that was presented to brilliant minds of Romania during its history was that of synchronism or autochthonism prevalence, trends that have had their coryphaei as Lovinescu for the first time and Hașdeu secondly. Coupling to Western models, grafting of such national bodies in our being, has generated more than once rejection phenomena. One has succeeded consonance when he or she managed to find the right position and suitability for specificity. This meant, on the one hand, modernization and on the other hand storing alterity in a global concert. Identity preservation efforts, the national coloration, accompanied by a steadfast approach of compatibility is thus an old effort, with success, but also with resounding failures, with passionate supporters and equally vocal opponents.

As a result of a process of synchronization was born in the first half of the nineteenth century the Romanian press, first the written press and then, decades later, the electronic one. The first newspapers, such as Asachi's "Bee" and the very first magazines, such as Mihail Kogalniceanu's "Literary Dacia" were made in Western inspiration, and in Moldova, to some extent, also Russian.

These press products have been configured according to the formats of the countries where they appeared for a while as newspapers and magazines. This creates a tradition and a climate of genuine freedom of expression with its readers more reluctant at the beginning yet

finally conquered when the gazette became the daily food. Architectural sites did not differ, as happens today with Western formats. Feature articles were placed on the first page of the left column, grouped together with news, attracting maximum interest. There was no lack of useful information, too from train timetables, to carriage timetables, interviews, including some fashionable ones of mundane events. Polemics were as ubiquitous as culture pages were. Was there any way to customize these newspapers and magazines, to make them different from the European ones? They could speak of a local color of course, the raw material, which was the Romanian reality, thus specificity was the revelator. Big issues facing society occupied ample spaces. Such issues were at the core stones of eternity since they are traceable to the fore in all ages and regimes. Not long time ago, in celebration of 75 years from the appearance of the magazine "Iași Notes", who was published under the guardianship of Sadoveanu yet targeted as a message by a great scholar of medicine, who was also a deep thinker and originated many developments in society, Gr. T. Popa, some noted that articles relating to what was happening in the Romanian world in those years from 1936 to 1940 seem to actually refer to our contemporary time and people.

The Romanian voice of the press is in fact indisputable, even though we were the beneficiaries of Western experience that beat us. Particular notice was generated by our peculiar way to pay attention to the unique characteristics of the city, as seen, understood and reflected in writing. Differentiation is mainly produced in the ethos plane of the mindset. Press campaigns crystallize around issues that stirred capital public Romanian problems. For example, the Hebrew issue, which was included in the broader European press of the end of the nineteenth century, took its own accents in Romania. They derived from the status of this community lacking real civil rights, as well as from the pressures of Europe to grant them equal rights, and the way some of the Hebrew manifested in the social field in the position of tenants or merchants. The polemical note,

sometimes incandescent, from articles belonging to Mihai Eminescu, is the result of a state of mind of our countrymen that nobody could ignore. It was not a racist approach, as called it detractors and critics postfestum Eminescu, but one of a social nature. The verb is put at the service of oppressed ones and they were not selected based on ethnicity.

For a long time, Professor Liviu Leonte, the illustrious editor of Costache Negruzzi, used to tell me, the articles of this writer have not been republished. They were stopped by censorship because they were extremely critical of the promiscuity that prevailed in the boroughs of Hebrew Moldova. The texts in question were labeled anti-Semitic, which were in fact not; Negruzzi showing himself tougher in his writing about Romanians, whose decline he incriminated even harsher. Of course, such a reaction can be explained. It is the result of sensitivity of a minority nation, with the inevitable vulnerabilities, which emphasized the pain and worsen criticism from the majority.

Thus, the ethos of an era marked a decisive journalistic discourse. The journalist breathes the air of that place and time and its essences get to the top end of his or he This transfer of affection often has disrupting consequences thus the elementary rules of ethics are forgotten or discarded, those that should govern any journalistic approach. Entering the arena in such times, not only totalitarian times subscribe themselves to propaganda arsenal and are not part of the mission of the public servant who is the journalist. The tone is striking in these latest war years in the Romanian press, not to mention the communist era, when freedom of expression had disappeared altogether and powerful censorship ruled. But beyond such considerations, the crucial role of the personalization of media, in highlighting the peculiarities of one country or another is the journalist's gift. Talented, he brings alive a newspaper, a radio or television broadcast. Seal prints grace otherness, the unique and unrepeatably. The Romanian press, noted over time with a significant presence of writers, Orpheus of speech, gave press articles some of the attributes of art. In

terms of defining news, Romanians are rather persuasive nit informing. They put a higher price on feelings, not on cold justice and rationality, which r we, the pen people consider to be the characteristics if science and not of writing.

All these aspects of the media have reappeared on the horizon and were approached from the theoretical perspective since December 1989 with the question of reconfiguring the Romanian press. Freedom of expression was restored by the de jure and de facto remained to be. Achieving this goal has become a mission sometimes insurmountable, a part of every journalist and media institutions in turn. Synchronizing with the free world, democratic press, was done under very special circumstances. It happened from the beginning of the guild with a genuine literacy. Many teachers arrived in Romania in post-December. The Soros Foundation, and the Western European media representatives, from the BBC's television to French, Dutch, German media, were involved in professional training.

There have been shorter or longer research training stages in Europe and America and we embarked on the fly to the construction, with new people along with many of the old creating new media outlets. They have benefited from the 90s in an almost morbid consumer insatiety. The prospect of losing national coloration became palpable, due to increasingly global context, the internationalization of communication messages and delivery. Inclination to the story, at the expense of rationality and an emotional propensity analytical mind, have never achieved the previous periods in which I made reference to. This state of affairs was considered harmful, degrading, in the exercise of press diurnal and journalistic act often placed in a dangerous zone, of not serving the truth. The alienation of truthfulness not only removes what constitute the democratic core of the press. Unleashed passion has stifled free expression. Despite its notable successes and important critical campaigns against slippages in society, the results were not those to be expected. Treating news, events by heart and affections, has undoubtedly undermined the credibility of the journalistic approach.

But the saddest finding is that this symptom of unfortunate singularization did not represent the results of a general creative endeavors but the end result of tabloidization and of growing inclination to facilitate easiness at any price. With all efforts of the Romanian Press Club representative corporate rules were not established, and there is no consensuality by professional standards, especially the qualitative and moral ones what was once the glory of the Romanian press, his beautiful, masterly polished words placed in frames, diamonds of writing, remains but a sweet memory. Now the press representatives are illiterate, swinging in print and broadcast media the gates of vulgarity and sensationalism of any facture, at any price. It happens maybe due to the precarious financial, economic censorship, lack of public appetite for serious things. The weird thing is that Westerners, those who have taught us and wanted to connect us to the demands of modern journalism in the early post-December, have been promoters of the Romanian media after the 2000 thus promoters of tabloidization.

In particular Western trusts, which have taken over privatization, the main institutions of the Romanian press, have accentuated the desire of gain, this process of professional decay. In this way our voice in the media today since we are part of Europe as members of the European Union has its own tone, but lacks in the elevated areas of the field. It increasingly mudds itself in the tabloid press of scandal, which tends to be a preponderantly dominant in the Romanian media landscape. It's hard to get out of this morass. We are caught in a vicious cycle. Money, pelf, news feeds that filthy territory of Romania. Forms without substance mark us in a cyclical swing. Immorality and the removal of the book letter point us to isolation and not to singularization.

Compliance, respecting norms, the moral consensus of quality thresholds, the return of the talented and cultivated journalists, are ways to escape from desert. This possibility seems now, and maybe for a long time yet, just a *Fata Morgana*. We are different, our voice sounds different than that of most fellow Europeans, but it is a dissonant voice, sometimes downright false.