

BUCOVINIAN MEMOIR LITERATURE: LECA MORARIU IN THE LIGHT OF TIME

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Abstract

This study reintroduces an emblematic figure of Bukovinian memoir literature to contemporary readers, a figure capable of reshaping the historical and cultural memory, opening new paths for future intellectual endeavours. We began by acknowledging how Leca Morariu, through his journals, gave life to the world in which his personality was shaped. From historically grounded information to religious insight, all narrative threads are woven into an intuitive understanding of his era – while also anticipating the future. His journals can be read equally by literary scholars and by ordinary readers eager to learn about the life and challenges of a remarkable man. Through his confessions, Leca Morariu becomes a reflective lens through which the external world is perceived, filtered through the ideals and convictions by which he lived. The events he recounts help to re-create the atmosphere of a time that allows us to better understand not only his personality, but also the historical consciousness of Bukovinians – a time within time, fused with memory and history.

Keywords: *Leca Morariu, history, mémoire, journal, culture.*

A man of culture in the full sense, Leca Morariu proved to be a fine connoisseur of the deep meanings of existence, building his intellectual identity on solid foundations, such as the constant concern for language, history and national identity. The complexity of these concerns did not go unnoticed at the time, attracting the attention of the critics of the time, who emphasized: “If taken on each dimension, folklorist, dialectologist, literary historian, composer and cellist of talent, Leca Morariu did not reach maximum heights, his personality in its entirety deserves attention, as a point of interference.” (Ciopraga, 1998)

It is often said that you do not have a biography until you recognize yourself in the other. We could add that you don’t have a biography even when you don’t (re)know and value your own

history and culture – an essential stage to later access the understanding and appreciation of the other. Only if you remember who you were can you truly say that you are. The biography of a man arouses interest in itself, as an adventure of the spirit, as a chronological unfolding of an individual destiny. When it comes to an exceptional destiny, such as Leca Morariu’s, the attention naturally turns to its structure, to its lines of force. Even if these coordinates do not directly explain the work, they can justify a lifetime. Leca Morariu’s existence is, in fact, part of his work. The scholar transformed his own existence into an assumed spiritual experience, and this experience became, over time, a true act of conscience. He sought to harmonize life, action and writing with the moral dimension, thus forging an authentic ethical act, exemplary in its complexity and coherence.

Alexandru Morariu, the future Leca, was born on July 13/25, 1888, in Chernivtsi, in a family representative of a space such as occupied Bukovina, torn from the womb of Moldavia, having a deep understanding of the national and cultural destiny: “After the Hurmuzăchești family - says Mihai Iacobescu, [...] the Morariu-Andrieș family is the second one that stands out for the large number of scholars and for the relatively significant role it plays in the Romanian culture in Bukovina, from the second half of the nineteenth century until late, during the period of integration of this territory into the Romanian state” (Iacobescu, 1995).

The starting point of the rise of the Morariu family is the figure of Metropolitan Silvestru Morariu, a prominent personality of Bukovina, who exerted a profound influence on an entire generation of descendants. The descendants of

this family – actively involved in almost all the cultural manifestations of the region – contributed decisively to the configuration of a Romanian intellectual climate, which would reach its peak with the actions that led to the Union with Romania in 1918.

The author's father, Constantin Morariu (1854–1927), parish priest in the localities of Toporăuți, Cernăuți and Pătrăuți on Suceava, stood out for his tireless activity, marking the cultural and social life of the community through his actions. He initiated campaigns for the establishment of houses of culture, supported the creation of popular banks for peasants, made his contribution to Romanian literature through translations from German, poems and by elaborating the first sketch of the history of the province's literature, entitled *Parts of the History of the Bukovina Romanians*. He was an active collaborator of important cultural publications, such as "Romanian Life," "Literary Conversations," "Romanian Dawn," "Family," "Family Friend," "Bukovina's Voice," "Candela" etc. Between 1893 and 1896, he edited the gazette "Deșteptarea," which had a strong impact on the public opinion of Bukovina, becoming a vector of the affirmation of the national consciousness. His love for simple people, his attachment to Romanian values, but also the persecutions suffered by the authorities in Chernivtsi, contributed to the shaping of a legendary aura around his personality, being rightly nicknamed "The Saint of Pătrăuți." A man of a chosen culture, Constantin Morariu kept alive the flame of patriotism and culture in the provinces under foreign domination, becoming a true symbol of the struggle for the rights of Romanians. From his mother, Elena, he received as an inheritance the idea of blood sacrifice for Romania (one of his brothers, Sergeant Constantin Isopescu, was the first Romanian soldier to fall in the War for Independence in 1877, in Calafat) (Nistor, 1927).

The Leca child grew up under the protective sign of parental love, imbuing himself with the dominant nationalist spirit in the family of the one who edited the newspaper "Deșteptarea" and having around him the basic cultural elements – the library of his grandfather, Constantin Morariu-Andrievici, which remained a legacy. About the beautiful years of his

childhood, we find out from Leca Morariu's notes: "And now – last goodbye to the parental house! Dominic Street, no. 4 and 9 Sf. Ioan Street! And $4 + 9 = 13$, and my favourite number! Old priestly house – which can also be seen from the thickness of the walls – older than the neighbouring towering palace of the Metropolitan Residence (which comes from 1864–1875) – and which also bypasses it, restricting itself with its enclosure in a large concave arch," the memoirist thus stopping, through the technique of detail, on some significant aspects, which make up his identity puzzle. His past is recovered by memory, in a specific note, with reflexive-interrogative accents: "And which cherry or walnut tree, and which bush of gooseberries or gooseberries, jasmine and rose, and which threshold and step and which ladder does not await you with its memory?! [...]" (Morariu, 2001).

Under the sign of the time of confessions, other memories are inscribed, illuminated by the charm of the early years, in which the emblematic icon of Father Iraclie Porumbescu is outlined. His memory is evoked in a sequence with a deep affective charge: "After lunch, all in the porch, the porch open on four brick balconies, open onto the huge garden in front and on the right, ours. Father Porumbescu (that's what we call him, knowing that he is the father of Ciprian Porumbescu, whose songs Father taught us with tears in his eyes), talking, moaning, sighing, crying". The sequence sensitively reconstructs the atmosphere of a time of beginnings, projecting on it an aura of harmony and balance, in which the tutelary figure of the father becomes a moral and affective landmark. Such memories strengthen the narrative structure of memory and anchor identity in the family and cultural space of childhood.

In the summer of 1896, by forcibly moving Father Constantin Morariu to Pătrăuți on Suceava, in order to break him from the nationalist movement of Chernivtsi, which he influenced through total involvement, Leca Morariu became a schoolboy in Suceava (in the years 1896–1898), having Andrei Pașcan as his teacher. Strips of events are also recorded from these years, such as the one related to Christmas Eve, when he met again the family atmosphere so much loved: "the sweet Mămucuță with her sleeves sunken from the dough ones, making a dough benghi 'at the top of your

nose' that 'dripped a eaves' and with the scent of fasting pies, with onions and dried mushrooms and grain and bean bowls and borsch with sponges and fasting dumplings and the saucer with sauce and the bottle of apple juice and the Vica and Luțcu sisters with their cheerful chirping of leaves".

We enter the realm of certain and documented information with the beginning of the high school studies of the young Alexandru Morariu, enrolled in the first grade at the prestigious *Gr. or. Gymnasium* from Suceava, where his brothers also studied. The school transcripts from that period prove relevant not only for the biographical reconstruction, but also for the identification of the young Leca's early inclinations – especially for the Romanian language, the German language and music. These documents also provide an image of an exceptional teaching staff, which included teachers who would become outstanding figures of Romanian culture: Vasile Bumbac, Arcadie Dugan, Samuil and Octavia Isopescu, Simion Florea Marian, Ioan I. Nistor and others. With some of them, Leca Morariu will resume contact over the years, in contexts marked by deep affective and symbolic meanings. It is memorable to meet again with his German teacher, Arcadie Dugan, tenderly evoked during the First World War, in a sequence of affective remembrance spent in Vienna: "Our German teacher Dugan! A teacher who knew how to stimulate us, to raise our morale, to awaken in us the awareness of how much of the mist of the 'qualities' we would have had, with assiduous readings in private, and even with ample free theses ("Freie Vortrage"). The recollection of the high school years alternates between two distinct affective registers. On the one hand, the painful episodes related to material deprivation, difficult living conditions and successive hosts, but also the contact with a society that is often refractory and discriminatory towards young Romanians are recalled. On the other hand, these difficulties are balanced by bright moments, charged with adolescent enthusiasm and cultural effervescence. These include participation in the activities of a secret society of students, a natural form of symbolic resistance in the social and political context of the Empire. Thus, the author notes: "And so I return to Suceava with Alexandrescu, with whom I started my conferences, as a high

school student, in the little house in Alishevici's (Doschevici's) yard, at the secret society of students. Alexandrescu, from which we recite on the ruins of the Fortress the stanza: 'Of the shadow towers' (Morariu, 1925).

Between 1898 and 1906, Leca Morariu attended the Gymnasium in Suceava, benefiting from the guidance of prestigious teachers, representative of that era. Among them are Simion Florea Marian, a professor of religion and a prominent personality of Romanian spirituality, Ion Nistor, a future historian and politician, who taught him history, as well as his brother, Victor Morariu, a German language teacher. Among his classmates there are names that will become, in their turn, remarkable figures of Romanian culture and politics, such as Ion Grămadă and D. Marmeliuc – the latter a future militant for the Union with Romania, university professor, deputy and senator. A defining moment for the spiritual and national formation of the young Leca Morariu was the participation, on July 16, 1904, in the great national celebration in Putna, organized on the 400th anniversary of the death of Prince Stephen the Great and Saint. Within this manifestation of deep symbolic significance, he witnesses the fiery speech given by Gheorghe Popovici, one of the most respected figures of the Bukovina elites of the time. The presence of the family of priest Constantin Morariu at such an event was not only natural, but also necessary, if we take into account his firm national commitment. A memorable formulation of his identity creed illustrates this dimension of his consciousness: "I am like a sponge saturated with national water and no matter how you squeeze it, only national water would come out" (Morariu, 2001).

The family atmosphere had a decisive impact on Leca Morariu's formation. Many of his later achievements are developments and continuations of previous concerns of the members of his entourage. Future personalities of the elite of Bukovina gravitated around the house of the saint from Pătrăuți: I. G. Torouțiu, future m. c. of the Romanian Academy and future husband of Elvira, Vasile Grecu, future academician and husband of the second sister, Victoria, Vasile Loichiță, future university professor at Chernivtsi Theology, Ion Grămadă,

schoolmate of Leca, journalist and writer. In this elevated environment, of writers and performers sensitive to different musical instruments, the young Leca could not fail to develop harmoniously, both as a man of culture and as a true Romanian nationalist.

His older brothers, Victor and Aurel, also stood out over time, first as a German teacher - first at the gymnasium in Suceava, then as a university professor in Chernivtsi; the second, as a lawyer, deputy and coordinator of the newspaper "Glasul Bucovina," which, until the Union, had militated for the rights of Romanians oppressed by Austrian rule, whose book with the title *Bukovina: 1774-1914*, published in 1915, is a reference for the "national iridentia."

But his preparation for life was not limited only to the lessons and examples coming from an exemplary family coexistence, because the schools he attended were also elite. Between 1906 and 1911, Leca Morariu continued his studies at the University of Chernivtsi, as a student at the University of guidance of Professor Sextil Pușcariu. Right from the first year of his studies, Leca Morariu followed in the footsteps of his older brothers, entering the "Junimea" Academic Society, the successor of the "Arborosa," in which his father had also worked and whose president was his brother, Aurel. Indelible memories also link him to this stage of life:

"In the afternoon - in the cabinet (reading room) of the 'Junimea' Society: stripping off all Austrianism! You know them, former librarian of 'Junimia,' the place of each book in the rich shelves of the eight or so cabinets of books and periodicals. There were then three oases in Chernivtsi where you renounced the satan of Germanism-Judaism: the 'Junimea' Society, the courses of Sextil Pușcariu and the 'Armonia' Society. The same Stefan Voevod, the same Trajan's Column, the same Metropolitan Silvestru Morariu, the same map of Romania! Oh, golden times! And not too far away! Maybe not too far in the future either..." (Morariu, 2001).

There are as many memorable sequences from which he had expectations in accordance with his idealism. But a true school of Romanianism, the "Junimea" Society, in which those who were to carry out the Union of 1918 were preparing, is evoked in a special light: *"And how many, God, how many memories and guides from our student*

days we don't get over now! We don't steal spontaneously and for free - even electoral agents for the socialist deputy Gheorghe Grigorovici - because he was Romanian - and we go to the wind with his own lordship, Iancu Prelipean, for the 'Romanian' Grigorovici, forgetting that we are still serving a parsimonious cause?!" (Morariu, 2001)..

In October 1912, the period of fulfilling the military service at the 41st Regiment (mostly Romanian) in Chernivtsi began, with the taking of the oath in German, on November 1, 1912, and with the exams for the rank of corporal, "on 10-12 April 1913," and the next day he left with 14 more comrades-in-arms to Leow, where he would remain until June 1, 1913. An interesting record dates from this period, which anticipated the heartbreaks during the war: *"Suddenly you see yourself perched like a star in a pine tree that didn't even dream of you. I don't know how 'Long live the King' comes to mind... How much you lose because you're not in another army"* (Morariu, 2018). This period is marked by several military events: the decoration with the "cross of Austrian diplomacy" (July 12, 1913), the practical officer exam (September 23, 1913) and the discharge (September 27, 1913), enthusiastically noted in the *Diary*: *"The evening of the last Kameradschaftsabend, by now you are done, hypocrisy! Long live the Great and Holy Freedom!"* (Morariu, 2018).

In the summer of 1913, Leca Morariu found out that he would be a substitute teacher at the foreign gymnasium in Gura-Humorului, although he would have liked a chair in Chernivtsi. The year spent in the city influenced by the German culture, on the Moldavian shore, does not divert him from the concerns of recent years - the valorisation of folklore. He visited the monasteries of Voroneț and Humor and wrote some texts in the newspaper "Viata nouă" and the pages of the notebook "La Voroneț," which appeared later in the brochure. Outside of his activity at the department, Professor Leca Morariu looked for and found ways of culturalizing a population that was at risk of losing its national identity. On the occasion of a trip to Voroneț, on April 6, 1914, Leca Morariu notes in his diary: *"This is how we learn our history, feeling it in spite of all the German schools that want to hide it from us"* (Morariu, 2018). These concerns would be interrupted by

the outbreak of World War I and its mobilization. The outbreak of the First World War hijacked his entire course of life, being forced to put on the uniform of an officer of the Austrian Empire and leave for the theatre of operations of the war, on August 18, 1914. Wounded several times, a prisoner of the Serbs, he returned to Bukovina in 1919, with the thought of completing his career.

His interest in the cultural space and literature did not cease even during the war, when he acquired books by Romanian writers, translated into German, and completed his prose volume of prose *From us*, recording, on July 24, 1914, with satisfaction: "Five stories ready to be printed," preoccupations interrupted (admittedly, for a short time) by the mobilization of the cadet, with the outbreak of the First World War (details can be found in the correspondence with I. E. Torouțiu, his future brother-in-law, correspondence at the Library of the Romanian Academy). Back in education, at the "Aron Pumnul" High School in Chernivtsi, he enrolled and defended his PhD thesis in Cluj (summa cum laudae), under the guidance of Sextil Pușcariu, in 1921, with the thesis *Morphology of the Romanian predicative verb*, after which he climbed the steps of university education, becoming dean of the Faculty of Letters.

When Leca Morariu arrived home (in the spring of 1919), Bucovina was faced with the problems of integration within Greater Romania, a fact noticed by him, whose first action was to write the article "Wake up, Romanian!" (only within two weeks of arrival), in which he x-rays the state of affairs in which the country finds itself:

"I found the country good: beautiful like no other country and above all, free [...] Admittedly, perhaps from where we had arrived on a gloomy day, the roads and villages seemed more deserted than before, the people thinner, the houses more sad. We also see some of them burned to the ground, without fences and without the usual household fences, dilapidated churches, deserted targets, graves without crosses."

In a way, these testimonies are a form of documentary attestation of a reality cut from the chronology of the historical time of Bukovina, supporting the authentication of the dramatic destiny of the province. But what dissatisfies him the most is the mood of a part of the population, thinking about *Benefits* foreign domination,

which contrasts with the ancient monuments that testify to a common Romanian past and which "tremble and enjoy today the liberation of Bukovina," the indignation culminating in the comparison: "The stone deaths are more alive today, than those living dead among Romanians, who do not want to understand that we are a body and a soul today with all Romanians in the world!". It should be noted here how the author is always accompanied by history, in an attempt to fix the past in a form of collective memory.

Thus begins the lifelong campaign of culturalization of the alienated masses, of bringing them back to the power of understanding and appreciation of the ancient Romanian values. In the spirit of these ideals, he participated, on June 18, 1919, in the activation meeting of a research cohort, convinced that a campaign in support of the idea of saving the being from the abyssal mists should be started. Being elected to lead it, as commander of the Bukovina scouts, Leca Morariu is an active presence at all their manifestations, writing articles in the newspapers and participating in the meetings to set up new cohorts.

The year 1920 brought him one of the greatest satisfactions, having the opportunity to increase his cultural horizon on the occasion of a European itinerary, on the occasion of the London Jamboree. Thus, between June 25 and August 15, as a *Romanian Scout Master*, sets off together with the Romanian scout team on a generous route (Constantinople, Athens, Messina, Capri Island, Naples, Pompeii, Rome, Genoa, Turin, Paris, London), having the opportunity to admire impressive tourist attractions: Hagia Sophia, Acropolis, Vatican, San Pietro, Pantheon, Notre-Dame, Versailles, Vincennes, Louvre, St. Paul's Cathedral. On August 23, Leca Morariu is back in Chernivtsi, with a notepad full of feelings, impressions and feelings.

One of the main preoccupations of this period is that of a journalist at "Glasul Bucovina," a newspaper led by Sextil Pușcariu, of which he belongs, together with his brother, Aurel. In this periodical, in addition to the republication of some stories from the volume *From us*, contributions covering a wide thematic area: of literary history ("N. Gane in translation", "G. Sion poet and in his historical information," Al Vlahuță, C. Sandu Aldea, Rectifications in the

biography of D. Petrino), translations (from Goethe, P. Rosegger, H. V. Schullern), plastic profiles (Mișu Teișanu, Ștefan Popescu), musical chronicles, using the pseudonym Asra: *Anastasia Dicescu Concert*, *Viorica Ursuleac Concert*, *Anca Ștefureac* or signing simply, *Leca: Musical Chronicle. 150 years after Bethoveen's birth*, aphorisms ("Mozaic"), travel notes ("Wandering," "La Volovăț," "La Bădeuți"), memories of the war ("From the notebook of a Romanian, officer in the Austrian army", "Golgotha in the Carpathians"), history of Bukovina ("A rare profession that died out: The bell tower in Pătrăuți on Suceava," "How was the school in Pătrăuți on Suceava in the past," "The Last Fiddlers of Bukovina"), capitalizations of manuscripts ("The Pătrăuțean Codices and the Assassination of Grigore Ghica - An Unpublished Manuscript"). "From the time of linguistic heresies, An unpublished letter of Aron Pumnul," "An attestation from 1766 of the tax of the cunita"), reviews ("A long-awaited book [Gh. Adamescu, *Contribution to the Romanian bibliography*]" "A book of teaching and education": A. Procopovici, "Introduction to the study of ancient literature") etc. (Papuc, 2004)

The intense and rich publishing activity materializes especially through the volume *What once was: From Bukovina's past*. The prose included in this volume, of different invoices, but unified by the same cult of the Romanian land, were appreciated at the time (proof of this is the second edition published in the country's capital), certifying the writer's qualities, also captured by Simion Mehedinți in his book review:

"Rarely a writer, among young people, who has a sense of the Romanian language, like the author of this work. Five sketches, published in special sheets, are now gathered together and form the most sympathetic recommendation of Bukovina, for the one who has not seen this ancient land of Moldavian dismounting. The hundred or so sheets are read breathlessly, like a letter received from a good friend. Especially those who write tormented, to read the pages of the young man from Bukovina, who promises to occupy a special place in Romanian literature."

The beginning of his philological contribution dates back to this period, with the publication of the study *A new old manuscript: Voroneț's Isopy*. Added to this is the campaign carried out by the newspaper "Glasul Bucovina," which announces

the approval by the Minister of Public Instruction of the proposal made by the Faculty of Letters and Philosophy that Leca Morariu hold literature and folklore courses:

"Mr. Alexandru Leca Morariu distinguished himself through numerous and important works of folklore, literature, philology and history. Her literary and scientific activity has been attracting the attention of specialists for a number of years, and the articles she publishes through our leading magazines and newspapers have made her one of the most appreciated writers within the Romanian borders."

The work of the writer and the man of culture Leca Morariu must be rendered in its entirety to the reading public, not only for the fact that it has enjoyed the appreciation of some historians and literary critics (it is worth appreciating Liviu Papuc's effort to (re)construct the biographical route of the writer in the reference work *Leca Morariu. Monographic study*, a successful approach to the teacher's personality in multiple poses), but also because the reading of the work brings to the fore a life lived exemplary, in an effervescent cultural space, in difficult times, in which writing and the writer suffered the restrictions imposed by ideology. The sphere of influence of politics should also be added here, which made it impossible to bring out the multiple historical facets mirrored by the writer.

Unfortunately, we have become accustomed to returning quite rarely with the memory to the shadow portraits of some of our people of culture. We stop especially at "Spikes" and we look only casually at "The Hills" where so many and so many names of luminous presence walk unheard, those who, even if they have not reached the "crests," above all, have maintained, through their activity, a climate, a literary and artistic life in permanent movement and creative effervescence. Leca Morariu faithfully represents the era he has gone through, in which his creative activity is inscribed, essentializing it and this is why we consider it an element of mandatory reference.

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