

“Books: on the one hand, and on the other hand”¹
–Adrian Grănescu–

Raluca SOARE
“Lucian Blaga” Central University Library

As a physical object, but also as spiritual value, the book is the symbol of culture. The book fascinated different societies being the instrument of transmission towards posterity of the information preserved throughout the course of centuries. Although it has been subject to continuous altering until it became accessible to each person, and even if it follows a track of variability regarding its material support as well as its significance – we can hardly imagine a contemporary society without books.

Adrian Grănescu talks about this physical, and also symbolical entity in his work entitled *Books: On the one hand, and on the other hand*. Benefiting from a wide experience accumulated in the surrounding of books, as a writer, as graduate of the Faculty of Letters at the Babeş-Bolyai University, as a former editor at the Dacia publishing house, – in the present being a librarian at the “Octavian Goga” County Library, the author manages to present in his book a world, in which the main protagonist is represented by this genuine *forum* of culture, and everything that is connected to it – the writer, the library and librarian, the second-hand bookshop and shopkeeper, the bookfair and the book saloons etc.

Structured on two distinct parts, *Books: On the one hand, and on the other hand* appeals to the passionate reader from the very beginning. “*Amor librorum nos unit*” are the words that accost the reader at the beginning of his lecture. On the other hand this is also the sentence that gives the title of the preface, which relates some of the author’s memories and experiences related to books from the time he was at the Dacia publishing house, but also accounts on the different experiences of the librarian profession. Can you imagine a library where reading is forbidden? Certainly not! This is also the author’s impression, when he ironically describes the situation in a Romanian library, where the director recommended the employees not to read during their office-hours. Nevertheless, the continuous professional formation of librarians presumes documentation, therefore implicitly requires lecture. And, forbidding reading, inclusively during office-hours, represents the

¹ Adrian Grănescu: *De-o parte si de alta a cărtilor*, Cluj-Napoca, Editura Limes, 2005.

condemnation of somebody or something to mediocrity. The accumulated culture through reading can prove highly important for the institution that it belongs to.

Is the sentence “*Amor librorum nos unit*” just another sentence beside all the others that refer to the books, lecture and reader like: “*Libri multi magistri sunt*”, “*Lectio quae placuit decies repetitita placebit*”, “*Lectori salutem*”? This is the question that this preface attempts to answer.

The same sentence is used for the title of the book’s first part, which reunites articles published in periodicals like *Vatra* (The Stove), *Apostrof*, *Complement* and the *Tribuna* (The Tribune). “*Cartea maghiară în România*” (The Hungarian Book in Romania), “*Profesorul Mircea Zăciu*” (Professor Mircea Zăciu), “*Scriitori evrei din România*” (Jewish Writers from Romania), “*Hasid, hasidimi, hasidism și povești hasidice*” (Hasid, Hasidim, Hasidism and Hasidic Stories), “*Sărbători fericite*” (The Season’s Greetings) are only a few titles of the articles that describe to us moments of childhood, of the period of adolescence, of studentship; thoughts and feelings experienced at certain moments of the spiritual and professional evolution of the writer.

The article “The Hungarian Book in Romania” underlines the idea, that a culture cannot be considered famous without having accessible literature. In order to be familiarized with the culture of a people, one must not necessarily be acquainted with its language, but must absolutely necessarily be acquainted with its cultural values. And if there are no translations in your language about valuable works from other languages, like in the case of the present article – translations from Hungarian – you can easily neglect an important book and ignore the name of the author that is representative for that folk.

Starting from the inquiry realized by the *Vatra* periodical, on the theme “*Cum poate fi cineva scriitor român evreu?*”, (How can one be a Romanian Jewish writer?), the author tries to find an answer in the article “[*Nimeni nu m-a lămurit*] scriitori evrei în România”, ([No one had made it clear to me] Jewish writers in Romania). Through a comparison between Jewish writers, the author distinguishes those who write in Romanian, trying to manifest in this manner their national affiliation, and those who write in different languages such as Old Hebraic, Ladino, Yiddish, they manifest thus their religious affiliation. In his article he reminds of such rabbinic wisdom, but further on he returns with a more complex article in which he clarifies terms like Hasid, Hasidim, Hasidism. He does not forget to remind you about the Hasidic stories either.

The existence of a person who guides his steps can be especially important for a writer. However, there are writers who are lucky to be guided throughout their literary evolution by such persons, sometimes even personalities, and again, there are others, who start alone on this road. The latter situation is the situation of the author who wished for the guidance of a spiritual master in the person of one of his former professors. In the article suggestively entitled “[Ca un maestru] Profesorul Mircea Zăciu” ([As a master] Professor Mircea Zăciu) in which some of his thoughts are exposed related to his professor whom he wanted as master.

But Professor Zăciu is not the only one arousing his memories. The article “*Buick-ul negru și teatrul de păpuși*” (The black *Buick* and the Puppet-show) was written at the suggestion of Marta Petreu, and it narrates events from the author’s childhood related to Petru Dumitriu’s episode from Cluj.

He talks about the book read in certain moments of the year in his article entitled “*Carte de vacanță, sau pur și simplu carte*” (Vacation Book, or Pure and Simply the Book), and about the reference books and the ones in French in the last article of the first part - „*Les Livres Français. Pe limba lui Voltaire*” (Les Livres Français. In Voltaire’s Language).

The second part of the book has the title *Books: On the one hand, and on the other hand* and contains six themes: „*Plimbându-mă prin Cluj pe strada Echinoxului*” (As I Walked in Cluj on the Street of Echinox), „”, „*De-o parte și de alta a cartilor I*” (Books: On the one hand, and on the other hand I), „*De-o parte și de alta a cartilor II*” (Books: On the one hand, and on the other hand II), „*Saloane de carte, târguri și iarmaroace*” (Reading rooms, Markets and Fairs), „*Casele scriitorilor – memoria nealterată a înaintașilor*” (Houses of Writers – The unaltered memory of the forerunners), „*Preliminarii legate de carte între modernizare și globalizare*” (Preliminaries Related to the Book between Modernization and Globalization).

There are words, which have significant impact on us, on our memories, simple names can sometimes arouse memories of entire sets of past events, from the period of childhood, from the studentship, from the period of youth and not only. The word *Echinox* implies for the author a special connotation by denoting a beginning. In „*As I Walked in Cluj on the Street of Echinox*” he describes his first impressions that he experienced, when he passed into the fifth grade of the Emil Racovița General School, situated on the street, which in the author’s imagination

bears the name of the editorship, where later, he would be making his apprenticeship as editor, and when he met those who would become his friends and colleagues. As a matter of fact, through this chapter an incursion is made into the youth, which cannot lack the information on the general school, his admission to the university, followed by his joining the editorship of the Echinox periodical. We learn thus also about the atmosphere from this editorship, about the memories of his studentship when he shared his time with his friends Vasile Sav and Ioan Marcoş Livian, his genuine professional blunders characteristic to each beginning, his evolution at the Dacia Publishing house.

And if with the first theme of the second part the reader is put in the situation of the tacit listener of a „confession” about the moments of formation of the author, but also a listener of the formation of others, with the second theme of *Books: On the one hand, and on the other hand* the reader infiltrates more and more into the real or imaginary universe that the book represents. Can we talk about the book as if it was a living being? – wonders the author. I wonder if the book has a birthday? And if it has, which day is it – the moment of creation or the publishing date? But if before 1990 the evolution of a book was a steady one, in the sense that it passed from the manuscript stage towards the publishing stage, in present the manuscript stage might not exist. However these stages of books “how are books written”, “how are books made”, “how do books live” and “how are books read” outline four sub-themes through which an analysis is made from different angles. The information about the lives of the writers, about the relation between writers and editors, the information about second-hand bookkeepers, about collectors, about bookshops, about librarians, about editors, about public or private libraries, about random or programmed reading, about entertainment [hobby] reading, information about the result of the lecture – personal culture, are lined up in these four sub-themes, helping the reader realize an overall look upon the book and its connecting elements.

In *Books: On the one hand, and on the other hand* the author settles his reader on an exercise of imagination. The book can be looked at from the front side of the shelf, as well as it can be looked from the back side of the shelf; just as if you were standing in front of a screen, or in the back of it, and not only horizontally but vertically too. Reading is different, it is related to the one who reads, both situation being to be found only at persons who practice reading. Some situations connected to reading are described at this theme: some of them hilarious, other ironical, other again paradoxical, while other situations are just simple.

The moment of starting the lecture is discussed, together with the importance of what you read. But an experienced reader cannot be imagined without a library. The way he creates and develops it is diverse; therefore we can talk about specialized libraries and about general libraries. And beside the particular libraries, the skilled reader gets into permanent contact with the public libraries, as institutions that help his formation. Starting from the importance of shaping the reader, the author analyses also the cases of the formation of libraries, indicating the fact that there are few situations when a library starts from zero funds, as it was the case with the library of the *Museum of Romanian Language* in Cluj, created by Sextil Pușcariu. In the majority of instances the funds of these cultural and research institutions are made up from successive donations of more or of less importance, and with the addition of other acquisitions, these turn into encyclopedic libraries.

Reading rooms and book-fairs are never absent from a man's life, they existed in the period before 1990 as well, in „Reading rooms, Markets and Fairs” the author realizes a comparative analysis on what such an event meant those days and what it means nowadays. The importance that these periodical events have, the participation of the representative publishing houses, their national or local [even] provincial character, their efficiency and utility are the element on which this analysis is based upon. Sometimes life puts us into situations that we never thought reaching, and then while being in it, we often recognize their importance. Visiting the house of the Petrescu family, after the death of the family arouses memories connected to the former professors, and in the “Houses of Writers, – the unaltered memory of forerunners?” he talks about the inheritance they leave beside their cultural creation. Representative places as the memorial house of Ion Creangă in Humulești, the house in Ciucea of Octavian Goga, or the Emil Isac memorial house are just a few examples that the author evokes.

A study dedicated to books might end without certain foresights dedicated to books, suggestively entitled “Preliminaries Related to the Book (and library) between <<Modernization>> and <<Globalization>>”. Though, he tries avoiding the cliché of “prevision”, the author does not stop expressing his ideas about the future of books, libraries and – why not – of librarians. Modernization brings up in his idea new mediums for the book, displaying the so-called hybrid editions, in which the text is accompanied by graphic images, audio or video, therefore setting up fast access to information through the Internet, however, this fact will not lead to the abolishment of the book from its traditional medium.

As regards globalization, this is accepted. The cultural borders may disappear, and universality does not seem to channel towards evil. However, the author implemented the concept of globalization, after the concept of “universal literature” had been accepted. Similarly as in arts, where a common language exists, and a work can transmit its meaning to the viewer regardless of language, in this way can culture and books be also understood.

In conclusion *Books: On the one hand, and on the other hand* is a work that fascinates those attracted to the world of books, starting from its title and throughout the entire lecture, presupposing numerous qualitative and quantitative analyses. The interpretations that can be extracted from the lines of the 286 pages are multiple and many-sided, the present review limiting itself to only a few aspects.

German Children’s Literature in Romania between 1944-1989:

A bibliography.¹

Boglárka DARÓCZI

“Lucian Blaga” Central University Library

The bibliography of German children’s literature in Romania, published under the auspices of three German professors from the University of Bielefeld, is the first synthetic work after the breakdown of communism on the literature of the German minority in Romania. Concomitantly it deals with a far less appreciated segment of literature: the one addressed to young readers.

The bibliography includes 1290 titles with ample bibliographical information, to which references are added leading to the reviews that appeared in the period’s German press. The CD annexed to the volume contains the bibliography reproduced *in extenso*, from which ensues the fact that the references to the literary critic are completed with extensive quotes from the reviews of the books, of the interviews realized with the

¹ Rumäniendeutsche Kinder- und Jugendliteratur 1944 - 1989. *Eine Bibliographie*. [Publishers:] Annemarie Weber, Petra Josting und Norbert Hopster. Köln, Weimar, Wien: Böhlau publishing house 2004 (=Schriften zur Lnadeskunde Siebenbürgens, vol. 29). XIV, pag.415., € 34,90. ISBN 3-412-19003-9 [including a CD-ROM with over 500 pages and several reproductions]