

their twisted syntax, abstruse metaphors and un-referential words an extreme case of hermeticism and self-sufficient language typical of the High Modernism. On the contrary, by reading them against the background of a specific mathematical paradigm, Bogdan Suceavă proves that Barbu's poems are not merely hermetic, but have a precise substance and content, as they describe "an ideal axiomatic of the entire world". These subtle, grounded observations are no less than revelatory to Romanian literary history. All in all, they illustrate by a perfect example several theses Suceavă has been dwelling on all along the current essays: the creative side intrinsic to the scientific drive, the deep structural communication of domains, the irradiating force of mathematics and the possibility to assume it as a lived experience.

Written in the free style of remembrance and interrogation, Bogdan Suceavă's essays complete the profile of a complex intellectual figure and provide substantial topics of reflection. They deal symbiotically with the thematic of geometry and literature, both of which the author loves in full awareness. It is his pragmatic, albeit passionate approach that succeeds in persuading us that things look clearer, and closer to a "fuller version of reality", when we regard them from outside common confines of domains.

***O telenovelă socialistă* (A Socialist Soap Opera)\***  
– Review –

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*Those* who have already read Doru Pop's previous books will be surprised after reading his latest accomplishment, *O telenovelă socialistă* (*A Socialist Soap Opera*) an autofictional romance which unfolds during the last two decades of Ceaușescu's regime. Doru Pop is currently associated professor at the Faculty of Theatre and Television, UBB, and his books have covered a quite diverse list of topics and academic fields: theories of the mass media and its phenomena, ideologies and political discourses (*Mass Media și democrația* [Mass media and democracy], 2002; *Mass media și politica* [Mass media and politics] 1999), the philosophy of the visual perception and the history of its theories (*Ochiul și corpul. Modern și postmodern în filosofia culturii vizuale* [The eye and the body. Modernism and postmodernism in the philosophy of visual culture],

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\* Doru Pop, *O telenovelă socialistă* (A socialist soap-opera) (Bucharest: Cartea Românească, 2013), 238 p, ISBN 978-973-23-3000-5

2005). He has also investigated in his articles the Romanian New Cinema of the post-communist years and has published a satirical but accurate diagnosis on Romanian political leaders, and their representations in mass media (*Alegerile naibii. Fals tratat despre metehnele imaginarului politic autohton* [Elections like hell. A false treatise about the defects of the Romanian political imaginary], 2007). We could have well anticipated another book on ideologies and political messages, not an autobiographical *Bildungsroman* written in the first-person narrative, which also fulfils the initial expectation: *A Socialist Soap Opera* is, among many other things, an anatomy of the discourses from the Communist era, from the public sphere to the private, from its altered, ideologized fairy tales to the political jokes. It is also a parody of propaganda and an account of its intrusions in all the aspects of everyday life.

Those familiar with the latest Romanian autofictional accounts focused on the last years of the Communist era written by authors belonging to the same generation could expect certain nostalgia in *Telenovelă socialistă*, a playful and ironic nostalgia which was counterpoised by these young authors to the official condemnation of the Communist regime. However, Doru Pop's style tends to submerge the inevitable nostalgic tone into a more sombre and often sarcastic prose, which renders a bleak atmosphere, in spite of the comedy played on the surface, the comedy of the self. In this respect, it is useful to note that the book opens with two dark assumptions on death. The narrator places his confession under the imminence of death, as he realizes at a funeral a strange coincidence: all his male relatives, including his father, died when they reached their forties. The first chapter offers another important dimension of the plot of this *Bildungsroman*: the narrator's quest for his father, struck by a mysterious and premature death, an episode which is mentioned several times, but never fully described. The minute account of this essential scene is missing as the traumatic event escapes the direct visualization and it is postponed several times during the narration. The narrated time revolves around the year 1975, the year of this crucial event which also has the function to structure the entire web of memories.

To write an autobiographical novel is a risky and difficult endeavour, mainly because of the subject matter, which is difficult to be put in a structured narration. The complex labyrinth of remembrances tends to dissolve the narration and fragment it. In the absence of powerful characters and events, the narration becomes an exploratory essay on various topics regarding the archaeology of Communism. Doru Pop brilliantly surpasses this centripetal impulse of the autobiographical and the essayistic drive towards reconstructing a long lost era, skipping swiftly through various types of discourses, changing the tone and rendering the characters through their words: the stepfather is present with a short anthology of his favourite expressions ("Dicționar de tată vitreg"/ "Dictionary of a stepfather") and Rebeleş, another memorable character, offers a comic counterpart to the main plot with his interludes, sayings, and re-told fairy tales ("Interludiu de basm: Povestea lui Făt-Frumos"; "Scrisoarea lui Făt-Frumos către Harap-Alb").

Doru Pop manages to enact the analogy between the personal history and the history of communism. Its downfall is gradually dramatized in the discourse, and this becomes very clear in Chapter VIII, with a short fragment on hatred ("Cât de dulce gustul urii") which functions as a climax both for the structure of the book and for the personal account of Communism. Since the Stalinist purges, totalitarian regimes have

been traditionally linked with rituals of hatred in the history of their representations, but here Doru Pop offers a unique insight into the archaeology of a lost era, gathering almost all the characters of his story. The chapter also functions as an amplified metonymy for everyday life in Communism (and also for the entire book) through its favourite objects (toys, cigarettes - Carpati, cars - Dacia 1100), customs, food, dreams, images (cartoons - *Popeye, the sailor man*), games, teachers (the teacher of political economy), book collections.

Doru Pop had to surpass another difficulty, regarding the context of the past decade, when a long list of autobiographical accounts of the Communist era appeared and most of them were written by authors belonging to the same generation. Since 2006, the year of the official condemnation of the communist regime, this phenomenon was also reflected by the Romanian cinema, especially by the directors belonging to what was labelled as the “Romanian New Cinema”, from Cătălin Mitulescu’s *How I spent the End of the World* (2006) to the collective project, *Tales from the Golden Age* (2009). *A Socialist Soap Opera* stands apart from all these examples: it is a more radical examination of the past which leaves no room for the saccharine nostalgia; beyond the obvious talent of the author for comedy there is a more profound meditation on the passage of time, death and the difficulty of recovering the time lost.