

EMINESCU'S JOURNALISTIC WORKS – EDITING APPROACHES AND READING PATTERNS

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Abstract Despite the vast volume of Eminescu's journalistic work, this field has only been either approached tangentially or neglected altogether by specialists in Eminescu studies. Specialists have displayed various and occasionally thorough attempts to produce glossaries, failing however to exhaust the thematic and expression-related potential of the journalist's works. This article provides an overview of the main endeavours of editing Eminescu's journalistic works as well as its reception directions by emphasizing, wherever the case, possible shortcomings in the editing process or misinterpretations that marked the journalist's work.

Keywords Mihai Eminescu, Journalistic Work, the 19th century, Journalistic Editions, Reading Patterns.

Although less known to the larger audience, Eminescu's journalistic work remains an important dimension of his writings. Besides his literary activity, Eminescu conducted, for over seven years, an intense journalistic activity, signing a significant number of articles in publications such as "Familia" (The Family), "Federațiunea" (The Federation), "Curierul de Iași" (The Jassy Courier), "Timpul" (The Time), "România liberă" (Free Romania) and "Fântâna Blanduziei" (Blanduzia's Fountain). Standing out due to his erudition and rigour, his diverse and refined means of expression, his encyclopaedic knowledge and the firm voicing of opinions regarding the realities of the 19th century, the journalist had a great contribution to the modernization of the Romanian journalism discourse, which was in its very first stages of development at the time. The complexity of the topics he approached along with the solidity of the arguments he brought forward clearly distinguished Eminescu's journalistic discourse at the time, imposing it as a landmark in the history of the Romanian press.

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Eminescu was remarked by his fellow journalists and his readers as soon he joined the editorial office of “Timpul” (The Time), yet his journalistic debut had taken place much earlier, in his years as a student in Vienna, in close connection with the cultural and political life of the Romanians who were studying abroad. Thus, on 7/19 January 1870, the poet published in Vincențiu Babeș’s “Albina” (The Bee) an article entitled *O scriere critică* (A Critical Writing), in which he defended professor Aron Pumnul against the accusations formulated by D. Petrino. His debut as a journalist was followed by a collaboration extended over several years with Iosif Vulcan’s “Familia” (The Family), which began with an editorial entitled *Repertoriul nostru teatral* (Our Theatrical Repertoire), published in the 18th issue of the journal on January, 30, 1870. This text was part of an extended campaign meant to support the foundation of the national theatre, emphasizing the need of elaborating a national dramatic repertoire and issuing a publication that would offer young writers the opportunity to publish their literary creations. The texts published during his journalistic debut testify for the mature thinking and expression of the journalist who bravely voices criticism against the members of the political class, regardless of their political appurtenance. In this respect, D. Vatamaniuc notes: “The three articles with which Eminescu makes his entrance in the world of journalism, *O scriere critică* (A critical Writing), *Repertoriul nostru teatral* (Our Theatrical Repertoire) and *Strângerea literaturii noastre populare* (Collecting Our Folk Literature), which remained a manuscript, were elaborated concomitantly and are impressive as his critical discourse was perfectly adapted to the discussed topic.”¹

Eminescu’s political journalism was inaugurated with the article entitled *Să facem un congres* (Let Us Assemble a Congress), published in “Federațiunea” on April 5/17, 1870. In this article, Eminescu pleads for the solidarity between the Romanians and other nations under the Austrian-Hungarian Empire, in their fight for regaining national independence. *Să facem un congres* (Let Us Assemble a Congress) is more than a newspaper article, even more than an editorial. Its structure, its conclusions structured on several points, the vivid critical discourse, the imperative proposals and the concentrated, short formulations rightfully entitles one to regard it as a political manifest.² Eminescu published in “Federațiunea”, the journal of the Romanians in the empire, other two articles: *În unire e tăria* (Strength rests in the Union) and *Echilibrul* (The Balance), which continue his campaign against dualism, pleading for the federalization of the states ruled by the Austrian-Hungarian Empire. Following the publication of *The Balance*, Eminescu was sued for his criticism against dualism and the constitutional legitimacy of the Austrian-Hungarian state.

¹ D. Vatamaniuc, *Publicistica lui Eminescu 1870-1877* [Eminescu’s Journalistic Works 1870-1877] (Iași: Junimea Publishing House, 1985), 40.

² Ibid., 48.

In the fall of 1874, following Titu Maiorescu's recommendation, Eminescu was appointed librarian at the Central Library in Iași, a position he held until June 1875, when he was appointed school reviewer, with the support of Maiorescu, then minister of Religious Affairs and Public Instruction. After the members of the Conservative party joined the opposition, he lost his position as a school reviewer, joining the editorial office of "Curierul de Iași" (The Jassy Courier), in June 1876. The official journal of the Court of Law in Iași, with the subtitle "Foaia publicațiunilor oficiale din resortul Curții Apelative din Iași" (The official publication of the Court of Law in Iași), "Curierul de Iași" (The Jassy Courier) contained four pages and was issued three times a week. His activity at "Curierul de Iași" (The Jassy Courier) turned him into a professional journalist: in exchange for a symbolic salary, Eminescu coordinated the official issue of the publication and elaborated its political-literary section, including cultural articles, artistic and theatrical reviews. Of the four pages of "Curierul de Iași" (The Jassy Courier), only one page was dedicated to non-official information, where the journalist could express himself. Although this publication was far from rewarding him with either material or spiritual satisfaction, he took his job seriously and carefully elaborated all the materials included in those issues.

At the beginning of October 1877, in a telegram sent by Maiorescu, the poet is presented with the offer to join the conservative publication in the country capital: "You are offered a collaboration with *Timpul* (The Time) – Maiorescu wrote – together with Zizin Cantacuzin and Slavici, for which you will receive 250 francs monthly. Rosetti and I urge you to accepted and leave for Bucharest immediately.³" Persuaded by Slavici, who had no resources to continue his activity at "Timpul" (The Time) and Maiorescu, Eminescu leaves Iași, where he edited "Curierul de Iași" (The Jassy Courier) and comes in the capital as an editor for the conservative publication, "Timpul" (The Time). For the following six years he conducts his most intense activity as a journalist, as an editor, then editor-in-chief and responsible for the political section. At "Timpul" (The Time), Eminescu proved to be one of the most virulent journalists of his time, being remarked for both his extraordinary erudition and his refined means of expression. In December 1881, Eminescu was driven away from the editorial board of "Timpul" (The Time) by the "coalition of the opposition" that included liberals and members of the Junimea movement who, hoping to win the elections in 1883, take over the journal appointing Gr. G. Păuceanu editor-in-chief.

A comparative analysis of the journalistic issues and topics approached at "Curierul de Iași" (The Jassy Courier) and "Timpul" (The Time) reveal a change of focus from the debate on foreign politics to the discussion of domestic political affairs, in the context of the political movements and mutations at a national level. Eminescu's editorial activity at "Timpul" (The Time) is remarkable due to his ever-

³ See D. Vatamaniuc, *Publicistica lui Eminescu, 1877-1883, 1888-1889* [Eminescu's Journalistic Works, 1877-1883, 1888-1889] (Bucharest: Minerva Publishing House, 1996), 13.

increasing polemic vividness, his freedom of thought and expression, his refusal to align his style to the ideology and interests of the conservative group that offered financial support to the publication.

After a gap of over five years, Eminescu returns to journalism in November 1888, when he started his collaboration with “România liberă” (Free Romania). The poet begins his collaboration with “România liberă” (Free Romania) with the articles *Iconarii d-lui Beldiman* (*Mr. Beldiman’s Icon Makers*) and *Iar iconarii* (*Icon Makers Again*), a reply to the material entitled *Iconarii* (*The Icon Makers*), published by Al. Beldiman in “Voința națională” (The National Will) on 11/23 November 1888, in which the author reveals that the tsar’s and his family’s portraits were being distributed as pro-Slavic propaganda elements. Eminescu had apparently promised to issue a weekly article in “România liberă” (Free Romania) and even to elaborate its editorials. However, because of the lack of proper evidence, the authorship of those articles could never be established beyond doubt and consequently they were excluded from the complete edition of Eminescu’s works.

Towards the end of the year 1888, the poet started his collaboration with “Fântâna Blanduziei” (Blanduzia’s Fountain), a political and literary publication issued by a group of Transylvanian journalists. The editors asked Eminescu’s support for the promotion of a new journal: “We asked him for a single article – confesses one of the editors – in which he could draw people’s attention upon us. In his infinite kindness, he promised us to collaborate on a regular basis; he accepted to have his name made public on top of the editors’ list on one condition – which we obviously enthusiastically accepted – namely to revise our manuscripts and approve, adjust or reject them accordingly.”⁴ Eminescu signs the program-article and his texts entitled *Formă și fond* (*Form and Substance*), 1888 and *Ziua de mâine* (*Tomorrow*), issued on the 11th and 25th of December 1888, and the 1st of January 1889. His materials are based on the same topics he approached when writing for “Curierul de Iași” (The Jassy Courier), including criticism against what he called “forms without substance” and the introduction of western institutions in our country. The journalist proves to have a subtle understanding of the events occurring on the international political stage; his article entitled 1888 performs a through analysis of the political situation in France, Germany, Italy, Russia and Spain.

The last stage of his activity as a journalist is marked by an attenuation of his virulent spirit his readers were used to, as well as by a more restraint space of his critical discourse. It is interesting to note that during that period he chose to sign his texts with the initials M.E., although during his entire career he had refused to do this or had made use of pseudonyms. Could this be the sign of his public acknowledgement of the social, political and cultural views that he had expressed

⁴ Ibid., 232.

throughout his career as a journalist or his way of admitting to a profession that often troubled his existence in a world in which “not everything was in its right place.”

Editing approaches and anthologization principles

The constant preoccupation for a new edition of his literary creation has always kept the editing of his journalistic works on the second place. Thus, after the poet's death, in 1891, Gr. Păucescu edited in Bucharest the first *Culegere de articole d'ale lui Eminescu apărute în Timpul în anii 1880 și 1881* (*Collection of Eminescu's Articles Published in Time in the years 1880 and 1881*). The edition included only 33 texts and lacked any serious selection criteria. Eminescu's co-editor at “Timpul” (The Time) and for a short while the director of the conservative publication, Păucescu chose to reproduce a series of articles with an anti-liberal bias in order to demonstrate the journalist's conservative political attitude. The tendentious nature of this edition, along with the editor's interventions in the body of the articles with various modifications performed in the titles taint this first edition of Eminescu's journalistic works.

Fourteen years after Păucescu's edition, in 1905, I. Scurtu compiles under the title *Scieri politice și literare* (*Political and Literary Writings*), vol. I, two of the articles published by Eminescu in “Federațiunea” (The Federation), the texts published in “Curierul de Iași” (The Jassy Courier), some of his materials published in “Albina” (The Bee) and “Familia” (The Family) in Pest, as well as a series of studies published in “Convorbiri literare” (Literary Talks). The first volume of Scurtu's edition included Eminescu's journalistic works in the period 1870-1877; the editor intended to include in the second and third volume, which were never issued, the articles published in “Timpul” (The Time) as well as the texts signed by Eminescu in the last years of his life. In order to establish the authorship of the materials the editor used testimonies of Eminescu's contemporaries, manuscripts and various other means of identification. The truncation or shortening of some of the articles, the modifications performed in some of the titles, the ambiguities related to the authorship of some of the texts, as well as the disregard for the chronological criterion used in the organization of the material are some of the shortcomings of Scurtu's edition.

In 1909, the six articles published by Eminescu in “Timpul” (The Time) at the end of 1877 under the title *Icoane vechi și icoane nouă* (*Old Icons and New Icons*) are re-edited under the same title at Vălenii de Munte. However, this edition, with a preface signed by Nicolae Iorga, is extremely short and fails to provide a real image of the complexity of Eminescu's journalistic works. In 1910, the Păucescu and Vălenii de Munte editions are re-edited by Minerva Publishing House, in the country's capital.

After 1905, when I. Scurtu emphasized the poet's vocation for political journalism, A.C. Cuza attempts the re-editing of a *Complete Works* volume that would depict Eminescu's geniality as “a thinker in so many fields”. Issued by the

Institute of Graphic Arts in Iași, in 1914, this edition includes a brief preface that notes a few of the features of Eminescu's journalistic style. As compared to the previous volumes, A.C. Cuza's edition includes six more important articles reproduced according to "Timpul" (The Time), the study entitled *Chestiunea israelită* (*The Israeli Issue*) and some lyrical creations found in manuscripts. Unfortunately, the biased selection of the materials aimed at emphasizing Eminescu's nationalism represents a shortcoming of this edition.

D. Murărașu's edition entitled *Scriseri politice* (*Political Writings*) published by Scrisul Românesc in Craiova, in 1931, finally comes to re-establish the complete texts that were truncated by the previous editions, while organizing the materials in the proper chronological order. By drawing the borderline between the political and the culture-bound topics of the articles D. Murărașu manages to include in his volume only texts belonging to the first category. Thus the 1931 edition includes articles from the years 1870-1883, accompanied by critical comments and an introductory study entitled *Eminescu ziarist și scriitor politic* (*Eminescu, journalist and political writer*).

"The editions that include the articles published by Eminescu in the press of his time were issued at large intervals, as Alexandru Andriescu rightfully remarked, and consequently, when they are not actually poorly compiled, they are still incomplete, regardless of the efforts made from one edition to the next in order to add new texts.⁵" Besides the very modest dimensions of the above-mentioned volumes, the main shortcomings of those editions result from: the lack of rigorous selection criteria; the intrusions made by their authors in the actual body of the texts by modifying titles, truncating or summarizing some of the articles; the lack of certainty associated to the authorship of some of the materials; the random organization of the articles; the biased selection of the journalistic material aimed at emphasizing the journalist's nationalism, and the like.

These efforts of editing the poet's journalistic works culminate with the complete edition of Eminescu's *Works*, initiated by Perpessicius in 1939. Volumes IX-XIII of this edition include, in a chronological order, the whole journalistic activity undertaken by Eminescu, resolving thus the gaps and shortcomings of the previous editions. Perpessicius' editorial endeavours are continued by Petru Creția, Alexandru Oprea, and D. Vatamaniuc, seconded by the researchers of the Romanian Literature Museum under the guidance of the Romanian Academy. During the communist period, a great part of Eminescu's journalistic works were forbidden by censorship, so that the volume *Opere X* (*Works X*), covering the period November 1877 – February 1880 which was meant to be the last of the five volumes compiling Eminescu's journalistic works was only approved for publication in December 1989.

⁵ Alexandru Andriescu, "Publicistica eminesciană – operă de asanare morală" [Eminescu's Journalistic Works – a Moral Reconstruction Endeavour], in *Cronica* 13 (1990): 1-8.

Without being completely flawless,⁶ the Perpessicius edition still remains a landmark among the collections comprising Eminescu's work, succeeding in eliminating the flaws of the previous editions (Păuceanu 1891, Scurtu 1905, Vălenii de Munte 1909, Cuza 1914, Murărașu 1931). Most of the subsequent attempts to edit Eminescu's works fail to overcome the rigour and magnitude of the Perpessicius edition, resulting in merely non-systematic and inaccurate attempts.

As far as the organization of the material is concerned, two main tendencies are noted among editors: on the one hand, the tendency to adopt the chronological criterion, on which the Perpessicius edition is also based and, on the other hand, the efforts to adopt the thematic criterion, namely to organize the articles according to their topic. The first direction is illustrated by the two-volume edition coordinated by Bucur Popescu and D. Demetrescu Popescu, issued in Bucharest in 1999, under the title *Opera politică (The Political Works)*. Aiming at depicting Eminescu's political journalistic activity conducted in the periods 1870-1883 and 1888-1889, the volumes include articles published in "Federațiunea" (The Federation), "Convorbiri literare" (Literary Talks), "Curierul de Iași" (The Jassy Courier), "Timpul" (The Time), "România liberă" (Free Romania) and "Fântâna Blanduziei" (Blanduzia's Fountain). Another edition, this time centred on a thematic organization, was issued in the year 2000 at the Timpul Publishing House in Iași, under the coordination of Cassian Maria Spiridon. Entitled *Opere politice (Political Works)*, this edition includes 3 volumes: the first volume compiles texts regarding the territorial distribution of the Romanians (Bukovina, Bessarabia, Transylvania, Banat, Dobrudja), the second volume includes volumes regarding economic, historical, cultural and monarchy-related issues, whereas the third volume includes texts on topics such as religion, the parliament, the government and education. The thematic organization criterion gives the reader the opportunity to follow the journalist's political views from a diachronic perspective and thus detect the specificity of his writings from one stage of his career as a journalist to the other; however, the edition excludes those texts that do not correspond to the topics established by the editor and occasionally forces the entry of certain texts into pre-established thematic categories.

Organized according to the same thematic principles, the journalistic anthologies compiled by Irimia in 1970 and 2016 and Cioabă&Milică in 2018 bring forward the vast culture-related issues approached by Eminescu in the 19th century press. Thus, the anthology *Eminescu despre cultură și artă (Eminescu about the Culture and the Arts)* was issued by the Junimea Publishing House in Iași, an edition coordinated by Dumitru Irimia. This volume, which includes a series of unique texts

⁶ See, in this respect, Nicolae Manolescu's statements included in the article "Întreaga istorie a umanității este istoria culturii ei" (The Entire History of Humanity is the History of Its Culture), in *Familia* (The Family) 1(2000): 83: "some articles that Eminescu did not write were attributed to him, while others, that he definitely wrote, were refused."

extracted from the poet's manuscripts and the press of the time, proposes a new reading of Eminescu's writings, from a perspective that had never been exploited before, namely that of the comments and meditation upon cultural and artistic topics. Thirty years later, the author of the volume first published in 1970 returns to his youth project, aiming at providing a relevant corpus for Eminescu's perspective upon culture and the arts. The new edition, issued by the Publishing House of "Alexandru Ioan Cuza" University of Iași in 2016, is elaborated based on much more generous sources, being structured according to three thematic sections: I. On language, II. On culture and III. On the theatre. Each text is followed by indications regarding the source after which it was reproduced as well as the manuscript it belongs to, while the critical apparatus includes data regarding the first time the text was published in a volume, in relation to the reference editions that were used. The titles given by the editor generally represent words or phrases included in the body of the article, which are relevant for the approached topic and for the appurtenance to the respective field, namely language, culture and theatre. In turn, the source of reference of the Cioabă&Milică 2018 anthology, entitled *Eminescu. Publicistică literară. Convorbiri literare, Curierul de Iași, Timpul, Fântâna Blanduziei (Eminescu. Literary Journalism. Literary Debates, The Jassy Courier, The Time, Blanduzia's Fountain)* is represented by the *Opere (Works)*, vol. IX-XIII edition. The authors of this anthology reproduce, in chronological order, the articles on literary topics published by Eminescu, signalling, at the end of each text, the issue date and the position in the *Opere (Works)* edition.

Although Eminescu's journalistic works have triggered multiple attempts from editors, the issue regarding the authorship of several articles still remains debatable, since most of the articles published in "Timpul" (The Time) do not bear any signature whereas the few texts that were signed appear under the pseudonyms *Fantasio* or *Varro*. Eminescu's name appeared for the first time in "Timpul" (The Time) in September 1877, when Slavici reproduced the article *Observații critice (Critical Observations)*, that had been published in "Curierul de Iași" (The Jassy Courier) the same year, in August. The poet signed just one article with his name, namely *Materialuri etnologice (Ethnologic Materials)* in April 1882.⁷ Was this a common practice at the time, since all published materials were generally assumed by the whole group of editors? Another such issue refers to the fact that not all the articles published by Eminescu were included in the editions published so far. In this respect D. Vatamaniuc restates the necessity of "a new reading of «The Jassy Courier» and of «The Time», where Eminescu worked, so that some texts that he may have published do not remain undetected, risking thus to disappear altogether,

⁷ D. Vatamaniuc, *Publicistica lui Eminescu, 1877-1883, 1888-1889...*, 16.

as these publications might deteriorate.”⁸ In these conditions, Eminescu’s journalistic works continue to remain an open field for anthologists and critical editors, while revisiting the pages of those journals with which the poet collaborated becomes urgent in order to achieve an exhaustive edition of his journalistic works.

Reception patterns

Along the years, Eminescu’s creations have raised the interest of a significant number of Romanian and foreign interpreters, being approached from various perspectives, with various tools. In the context of so rich an exegesis it is difficult to imagine novel ways of interrogating the object or field of his work that have escaped previous investigations. However, Eminescu’s journalistic work still remains an insufficiently exploited field. Despite the fact that the complete editing of his journalistic works was completed in December 1989, when the last of the five volumes (IX-XIII) of the Perpessicius edition, *Opere X (Works X)* was issued, and all the subsequent editions brought Eminescu’s vast journalistic production to the attention of the readers, it has not yet made the object of a systematic monographic study. His journalistic work was, as a rule, approached tangentially, in articles and studies regarding his poetical creation, or it was subject to biased interpretations aimed at demonstrating, by means of tendentious excerpts extracted from the journalistic corpus that the author adhered to certain political ideologies. In these circumstances, his journalistic production was more than often perceived as a field that brought prejudice to the poet’s image⁹, being disregarded by many experts who dealt with his work. In this respect, Al. Oprea remarked in his “Introductory Study” to *Opere IX (Works IX)*: “We believe that no other field of the activity of M. Eminescu had more to suffer from various speculations than his journalistic activity” (*Opere IX*, p. 2).

A survey of the main ways in which Eminescu’s journalistic works were reflected by the critical spirit of the subsequent generations is aimed at identifying the constant elements related to the reception of these works, as well as the recurring formulas specific to Eminescu’s exegesis in its diachronic perspective. The identification of certain constant elements at the reception level is rendered possible by the articulation of opinions in the integrative framework of the reading process, the approach of the journalistic work through the epistemological filter of each generation leading to either confirmations or re-evaluations of the previous judgements. The analytical process cannot disregard the interpretative tradition in the field, the openings and limitations of the previous analyses, so that any new

⁸ D. Vatamaniuc, *Caietele Eminescu. Mitologie și document* [The Eminescu Notebooks. Mythology and Document] (Bucharest: The Publishing House of “România de Măine” Foundation, 1998), 83.

⁹ See the opinions expressed in *Adevărul* (The Truth) on 15-16 June 1909.

approach of the journalist's writings should start from a good knowledge of the main reading patterns revealed by the exegesis in the field.

The critical literature reveals the oscillation of the interpreters between two extreme attitudes: on the one hand we note the *tendency to overrate* everything that was written by the poet, while on the other hand there is a *detracting position*, a tendency to contest any value whatsoever associated with the poet's journalistic writings. Speaking about these two contrasting attitudes, Al. Paleologu states that the dangers of this "simplistic eulogistic attitude" are far greater than those brought by the contesting attitudes, emphasizing on the interpreters' inability to keep their intellectual and affective calm when it comes to Eminescu.¹⁰

"We have got used to saying that Eminescu is a genius, stated Noica. Yet when saying this, we do not actually say anything that is reasonable, instead we keep stating a double nonsense: that Eminescu is beyond any explanation and that we, the common people are actually exempted from any kind of responsibility."¹¹

This mythization phenomenon specific to the generations following the poet still continues to prevent the accurate reception of his work, the devotion for Eminescu eventually ending in obnubilation. "Every once in a while, we have to speak of an Eminescu who stands among us. We must take him from that icon, make him descend from Olympus and more than anything take him out from the madhouse the 19th century was so keen to place him in."¹² Noica's advice remains up-to-date to the present day, when we can still note the tendency to borrow and promote interpretation clichés. Both attitudes, the eulogistic and the detracting one, are reprehensible because of their excessiveness, radicalism and narrowing effect upon any interpretation: neither overrating, nor *ab initio* rejection offer the solution of an adequate approach towards the poet's creation.

The exaltation for the journalistic work and the overrating of its political character are counterbalanced by the scepticism of certain interpreters who, starting from the preconception that a writer cannot completely manifest his vocation in several fields consider that Eminescu remains a poet, whereas his other activities are inferior. In this respect, G. Panu, a member of Junimea states that "Eminescu was, before anything else, a man of letters and his short-lived political articles did not and will not bring him any glory, and this is why the posterity will not even be interested in knowing about them."¹³ By establishing hierarchies between the literary and the

¹⁰ Al. Paleologu, "Cum stăm cu Eminescu" [What About Eminescu], in *Viața Românească* (The Romanian Life) 1(1990): 27-28.

¹¹ Constantin Noica, *Eminescu sau gânduri despre omul deplin al culturii românești* [Eminescu or Thoughts about the Utmost Personality of the Romanian Culture] (Bucharest: Eminescu Publishing House, 1975), 60.

¹² *Ibid.*, 115.

¹³ G. Panu, *Amintiri de la Junimea* [Memories from Junimea], vol. II (Bucharest: Minerva Publishing House, 1971), 135.

journalistic creation, other interpreters finally overrate Eminescu's journalistic creation, using various formulae:

"no matter how much we admired Eminescu as a poet, he deserves even more admiration as a political thinker¹⁴"; "Eminescu, undeniably the greatest poet of the Romanian people is also our most important journalist¹⁵"; "Eminescu's political prose reveals him as one of the most outstanding representatives of the Romanian journalism, I daresay one of the greatest journalists in Europe...¹⁶"; "Eminescu undoubtedly represents a great model for the Romanian journalism, due to his unprecedented professionalism, his vast culture, his ardent patriotism, his impeccable ethics, to which his literary talent and, last but not least, his unusually sharp political instinct are added.¹⁷"

Such remarks correspond to the general tendency to overrate Eminescu's creation. To establish a hierarchy between his literary and his journalistic work is not at all reasonable, as long as both fields equally define Eminescu's genius and creative personality.

Another tendency, noted at the exegesis level, resides in the tendentious selection of certain fragments from the body of the articles based on which interpreters form *mystifying value judgements* regarding the journalist's political thinking. Thus, his being regarded as a reactionary by prestigious critics, from Dobrogeanu Ghenea to Eugen Lovinescu, functions as an inhibiting element at the level of interpretation. The disregard for the historical context that generated those articles and the fact that the articles were submitted to a series of ideologized reading patterns led to erroneous judgement with regard to Eminescu's work. Thus, in 1900, Eugen Lovinescu stated that there is no doctrine that could not be associated with Eminescu when one extrapolated fragment from the poet's journalistic works. Since "certain ideological disputes – which we should mention that not only Eminescu, but other thinkers of this time tangled into – have become outdated and lost their substance due to the structural transformations that have marked the evolution of the Romanian society in the past five decades,¹⁸" an effort

¹⁴ Al. Oprea, *În căutarea lui Eminescu gazetarul* [In Search of Eminescu the Journalist] (Bucharest: Minerva Publishing House, 1983), 13.

¹⁵ Alexandru Andriescu, "Publicistica eminesciană – operă de asanare morală" [Eminescu's Journalistic Works – a moral reconstruction endeavour], in *Cronica*, 13(1990): 3.

¹⁶ Doru Scărlătescu, "Poezie și politică" [Poetry and Politics], in *Cronica*, 13(1990): 8.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 8.

¹⁸ Petru Creția, *Publicistica lui M. Eminescu* [M. Eminescu's Journalistic Writings], preface to *Opere IX* [Works IX], ed. Perpessicius (Bucharest: The Publishing House of the Romanian Academy, 1980), 6.

to re-contextualize journalistic texts is absolutely necessary in order to prevent any unfounded judgement with regard to the journalist's political views.¹⁹

As far as the journalist's political views are concerned, two main attitudes of the interpreters can be detected: on the one hand, one can note the *supporters of conservatism* who, starting from the very nature of the publication with which the poet collaborates, namely "Timpul" (The Time), attempt to demonstrate the poet's adhesion to the conservative ideology; on the other hand, one can distinguish those interpreters who aim at imposing the *idea of Eminescu's liberal attitude*. Beyond the political options of its author, Eminescu's journalistic works plead for the Romanians' rights, for the preservation of our national identity, for the conservation of our natural values, revealing the journalist's constant concern for the destiny of the Romanian people. All those accusations formulated by the critics, such as his bias for either nationalism, passéisme, rightism and the like are nothing but attitudes that basically reflect the journalist's love and respect for the specificity and values of the Romanian nation.

The first exegete of Eminescu's creation is undoubtedly Titu Maiorescu who, in his article entitled *Direcția nouă în poezia și proza română* (*The New Direction in the Romanian Poetry and Prose*) (1872), describes Eminescu as a modern spirit, "a poet in his own right." The text, published in "Convorbiri literare" (Literary Talks), comprises one of the first value judgements related to Eminescu's work. From that point onwards, Eminescu's name was connected to the personality of the Junimea's mentor, the poet being perceived by the critics of his time as an annex to the Maiorescu issue.²⁰ The critic actually opens the long series of interpreters of Eminescu's works and his initial remarks are also the triggers of the first attacks against the poet in the pages of publications such as "Columna lui Traian" (Trajan's Column), "Românul" (The Romanian), "Revista contemporană" (The Contemporary Journal), and others. One of the most vehement representatives of the detractors' generation, also known as the "Grama generation", was monk Alex. Grama²¹ who, being solely interested in the ethical value of a literary work, sees Eminescu as an example of the attempt of a literary association (Junimea) to impose its options to the whole world.

¹⁹ Such an approach to the re-contextualization of Eminescu's journalistic works by using semiotic methodology is presented in Mihaela Mocanu, "Publicistica eminesciană. Un model de analiză situațională" [Eminescu's Journalistic Writings. A Model of Situational Analysis], in *Philologica Jassyensia*, 1/17(2013): 79-88.

²⁰ Detailed comments on the critical reception of Eminescu's works are provided in D. Popovici, *Studii literare* [Literary Studies], vol. VI (Cluj-Napoca: Dacia Publishing House, 1989).

²¹ When analyzing the ideas circulated in Eminescu's creation, Alex. Grama states that its pessimism, non-religious and immoral nature represent a real danger for the young generation. The theologian's views are fuelled by the mentality regarding the moralizing role of literature.

Whereas Eminescu the poet was well-appreciated from the very beginning by the Junimea mentor, who anticipated his influence upon a whole culture, Eminescu the journalist is characterized according to Nicolae Iorga's ideological perspective. Opening a long series of interpreters of Eminescu's journalistic work with an article entitled *Un nou Eminescu apărut...* (A New Eminescu was Born...), Iorga actually shifts the focus towards ideological debates. Pleading for the return to Eminescu's journalism within the "sower movement", the historian notes in 1905:

"It is amazing to see how much richness, logical thinking, care, warmth, moral wisdom of a superior, genius personality can be found in those political bulletins, theatrical reviews, and book reviews that used to be merely aimed at filling the empty columns of that poor publication from Iasi. In each instance, his great intuition provides understanding or reveals completely new perspectives. In his past he learned everything about the present of the Romanians and these few years have provided him with a clear, complete perspective upon their past history; he approached any topic, even the ones he barely mentioned, with unprecedented mastery.²²"

Resuscitated by the "sower movement", Eminescu's journalistic writings will provide justifications for xenophobe or fascist movements which claimed to be based on "Eminescu's statements":

"Silenced for a short while, Eminescu's influence quickly recovered this wasted time: brought to the public attention by the sower movement, and then perpetuated by various people and actions, it survives to the present day in some xenophobe or fascist manifestations that still claim to be based on «Eminescu's statements».²³"

Stating since 1930 that Eminescu felt and thought as a reactionary, that he was "the most reactionary Romanian" supporting "the absolute power, the re-establishment of old professions, the boyars, etc."²⁴ Garabet Ibrăileanu labels his journalistic work as reactionary. The same label will be subsequently adopted by

²² See Eugen Lovinescu, *Istoria literaturii române contemporane* [The History of Contemporary Romanian Literature], vol. 1 (Bucharest: Minerva Publishing House, 1981), 13-14.

²³ *Ibid.*, 14.

²⁴ G. Ibrăileanu, *Scriitori și curente* [Letters and Currents], 2nd edition (Iași: Viața Românească Publishing House, 1930), 20.

notorious critics such as Dobrogeanu Gherea or Eugen Lovinescu, remaining active to the present day.

The vast legitimizing monograph compiled by G. Călinescu reveals his effort to re-evaluate the creations of his predecessors through the perspective of Eminescu's work, regarded as a landmark and reference point for the entire Romanian culture. By reversing the cannons of literary history, the critic alters the whole interpretation apparatus by re-reading the literature of his precursors and justifying his reinterpretation according to Eminescu's creation. Applying these reading patterns to journalistic materials facilitates the identification of certain convergence points and affiliation areas, "since Iorga, Pârvan or Arghezi are *typologically influenced by Eminescu as much as the latter is influenced by his predecessors from 1848*."²⁵ By following the forty-eighters' generation, Eminescu actually follows a tradition, while establishing at the same time new coordinates for the development of the Romanian journalistic writing, by renewing its topics and means of expression in his articles. In the few pages dedicated to Eminescu's journalistic writings, Călinescu emphasizes the ideal, perfect dimension of the articles, along with the journalist's tendency to caricaturize in an abstract manner while speculating in a concrete manner:

"The literary value of these articles – according to the critic – consists first and foremost in his almost didactic ability to translate, without making use of many neologisms, into a language that is available to everyone, the great abstractions. This was Maiorescu's gift. Yet, from a formal viewpoint, Eminescu surpasses him by far. (...) Never have we seen such general ideas expressed for the newspaper reader in such a manner in which everybody has the feeling that they understand."²⁶

The authority of the literary historian and critic was the reason for which many of his appreciations were accepted and adopted outside the censorship of a reflexive filter, an aspect which Noica actually points out:

"We have rested in Călinescu, this is the truth. And we are still resting. (...) These days, countless literary historians and critics seem willing to start from one of Călinescu's characterizations, to get confirmation from it [...] to get comfort and rest with it. The great

²⁵ Monica Spiridon, *Eminescu sau despre convergență* [Eminescu or On Convergence] (Craiova: Scrisul Românesc, 2009), 18.

²⁶ G. Călinescu, *Opera lui Mihai Eminescu* [Mihai Eminescu's Works], vol. 2 (Bucharest: Minerva Publishing House, 1976), 169.

creators have this function of speaking on behalf of many people, saving them the effort of searching any further.²⁷

Leaving aside the verbal expression register in favour of other issues related to Eminescu's journalistic writings, Lovinescu insists on the journalist's nationalism – a mix of criticism specific to the Junimea movement and national mysticism", from a perspective that contradicts the views of the Junimea school:

"The issue of our nation, which found in the members of Junimea a rather rational interest, was approached much more deeply by Eminescu; by breaking the frameworks of the organic growth theory, the sensitivity of the poet had given life to those past times: in his consciousness, the present was related to a past felt as a reality; Junimea's evolutionism had thus turned into reactionarism and the simple considerations on the social value of the peasantry had turned into peasant mysticism which was totally opposed to the Junimea perspective.²⁸

Regarding the idea of national solidarity through tradition, the exaltation of the rural category as the sole reality of our nation, the lyrical expression, pamphlet-like and sentiment-based ideology as defining elements for Eminescu's journalistic writers, Lovinescu accredits the idea of an extremist nationalism, detectable in the poet's articles, thus inviting to subsequent interpretations pertaining on the journalist's radical nationalism and xenophobia.

The critical literature also emphasizes the articles' ability to depict an extremely agitated era as far as national and international politics was concerned. In this respect, Perpessicius, the main editor of Eminescu's creation, stated:

"the most authentic and varied image of Eminescu's contemporaneity is mirrored by his journalistic writings, especially during his collaboration with *Timpul* (*The Time*). The history of Romania, with all its political, social, economic and cultural aspects, with all its great and smaller actors, is depicted in those old pages by one of the most conscientious and keen eye-witnesses.²⁹

²⁷ Constantin Noica, *Eminescu sau gânduri despre omul deplin al culturii românești românești* [Eminescu or Thoughts on the Utmost Personality of the Romanian Culture] (Bucharest: Eminescu Publishing House, 1975), 152-153.

²⁸ Eugen Lovinescu, *Istoria literaturii române contemporane* [The History of Contemporary Romanian Literature], vol. 1 (Bucharest: Minerva Publishing House, 1981), 13.

²⁹ Perpessicius, *Eminesciana*, vol. 1 (Bucharest: Minerva Publishing House, 1989), 132.

Moreover, the fresco-like quality that journalism acquires during the second half of the 19th century is also exploited by historians who often use quotations from Eminescu's articles to describe political, social or economic events from that period.³⁰

Yet another issue raised by Eminescu's exegesis is related to the continuity of the journalist's attitudes, outlooks and implicitly the linguistic choices he made throughout his seven years of activity as a journalist. A thorough reading of the articles reveals transformations, changes of direction and nuances of both his journalistic expression and the topics he approached, as well as certain indications of inherent continuity, detected mainly with regard to the topics. Taking into account various criteria used for establishing stages of Eminescu's journalistic work, his critics divide his activity in two, three, four and even more stages.³¹

Among the experts in Eminescu's journalistic writings, Dumitru Vatamaniuc can be remarked due to the scientific rigour and extent of his research. After publishing in 1985 a volume that presents Eminescu's journalistic writings in the first period of his activity, Vatamaniuc edits a second volume in 1996, dedicated to Eminescu's journalistic activity in the periods 1877-1883 and 1888-1889. According to the changes in the journalist's status, Vatamaniuc divides his journalistic activity into three stages and provides a systematic presentation of its main thematic dimension. The author's efforts to reveal the specificity and originality of Eminescu's journalistic approach are supported by the constant references to examples extracted from the corpus of articles. The critic focuses on the press campaigns conducted by the journalist, emphasizing Eminescu's political views, the sharp wit of a journalist who was not willing to compromise by defending the interests of whatever political group or party of the time. Vatamaniuc concludes his analytical itinerary with a chapter entitled *Poetica publicisticii eminesciene* (*The Poetics of Eminescu's Journalistic Writings*) in which he reveals the filiations between the poetical and the journalistic writings, the constant elements and the originality of the journalist's expression.

An interpreter's interest for Eminescu's journalistic writings is generally motivated by reasons that do not necessarily pertain to literature, as indicated by

³⁰ See, in this respect, the following works: Ioan Scurtu, Ioan Bulei, *Democrația la români* [Democracy with the Romanian People] (Bucharest: Humanitas, 1990); Ioan Scurtu, *Monarhia în România 1866-1947* [The Monarchy in Romania 1866-1947] (Bucharest: Danubius Publishing House, 1991); Dan Berindei, *Societatea românească în vremea lui Carol I* [The Romanian Society during the Reign of Carol I] (Bucharest: The Military Publishing House, 1992).

³¹ For a detailed presentation of the stages identified by the exegesis see Mihaela Mocanu, *Limbajul politic eminescian. Perspective semiotice* [Eminescu's Political Language. Semiotic Perspectives] (Iași: Institutul European, 2013).

Monica Spiridon³², and this aspect has often encouraged the proliferation of reductionist and ideological comments that distort the meaning of Eminescu's political thinking. Providing a parallel reading of Eminescu's creative and journalistic writings, Monica Spiridon identifies an area of convergence and interferences that invites readers to a complementary understanding of the two dimensions of Eminescu's writing. Beyond the differences generated by the appurtenance to distinct fields of knowledge, the poet's literary and journalistic creation is marked by doubtless elements of continuity, especially at the level of expression, so that "we discover in the poet's journalistic writings a series of means that contribute to the «closure of the discourse», by twisting it towards the self and placing its centre of gravity within its own limits."³³ Reading his poetry through the lens of his journalistic writings and his articles from the perspective of his artistic creation sheds light on the entire writing apparatus and the structural relations that define Eminescu's writing.

The tendency to disregard the social, historical and political context of Eminescu's journalistic writings and to turn his journalistic works into an absolute matrix of his creation are just two of the aspects that tainted the exegesis in the field. Separated from the contextual environment that generated it, Eminescu's journalistic writing still influences various cultural, ideological and political options, according to the interpreter's interests. Labelled throughout the years as a Marxist, communist, legionary, conservative, and liberal, with each of these labels being based on incompatible synonymies between ideology and symbol, Eminescu the journalist is still awaiting to be released from all these interpretative preconceptions.³⁴ Besides the aforementioned interpretative excesses, the critical literature also contains important titles of works distinguished by their in-depth analysis and scientific rigour. We must mention here, besides the volumes compiled by G. Călinescu, Perpessicius and Dumitru Vatamaniuc, the works signed by Monica Spiridon (*Eminescu. Proza jurnalistică [Eminescu. Journalistic Prose]*, 2003; *Eminescu sau despre convergență [Eminescu or On Convergence]*, 2009), in which the author reveals the convergence between Eminescu's poetical creation and journalistic writing, making thus proof of a detailed and subtle knowledge of the poet's journalistic phenomenon.

Conclusions

Often perceived as a field that has a negative impact upon the poet's image, his journalistic activity remains, besides his poetical creation, an area where Eminescu's

³² Monica Spiridon, *Eminescu sau despre convergență [Eminescu or On Convergence]* (Craiova: Scrisul Românesc, 2009), 5.

³³ *Ibid.*, 8.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

creativity manifested itself. Insufficiently known to the audience at large and only partially researched by the exegesis, his journalistic writings complete Eminescu's universe of creation and confers it unity. His poetry, his prose, his drama and his journalism reveal, each in its own way, images of Eminescu, yet his genius can only be conceived by his creation as a whole. From this perspective, ignoring one of the dimensions can only prevent the reception of an entire world of meanings that the poet's writing proposes. Speaking about Eminescu's two "parallel vocations", literary creation and journalism, Șerban Cioculescu emphasizes that: "To disregard, out of principle-related contempt, this major production of the Romanian spirit, namely his journalistic activity is to overlook one of the ways in which Eminescu's genius reaches us."³⁵

Although much more reduced in volume when compared to the poetical exegesis, the exegesis of Eminescu's journalistic work has often been subject to excessive interpretations. Its being either overrated or *ab initio* rejected seem to be the extremes of the reading patterns applicable to his journalistic writings. Among these aspects, the isolation from the context that generated his texts, the tendentious selection of certain article fragments based on which interpreters form *mystifying value judgements* regarding the journalist's political thinking or his ideological affiliation to certain political groups, the tendency to ignore the essence of his journalistic language, tributary to the event-related referential and interpreting his statements from an ideological perspectives are just some of the elements that have prevented the proper reception of Eminescu's journalistic writings. Separated from the historical context that generated it, Eminescu's journalistic writing still influences various cultural, ideological and political options, according to the interpreter's interests and his/her interpretative skills. Some aspects remain open for further research: the authorship of some of the articles and the identification of the texts that were left unpublished by the anthologies compiled so far; the analysis of the contents and issues related to the poet journalistic writings; the description of the thematic and expression relationships between literary and journalistic creation; the analysis of the literary value of Eminescu's journalistic writings, and last but not least, establishing the journalist's contribution to the development of the Romanian journalistic language.

The return to Eminescu's articles, not in order to receive a confirmation of pre-established labels, but in order to perform an analysis within the boundaries of the texts, free from the abuse of superlatives that only mystify and prevent the access to the solid core of the creation, allows us to discover a new Eminescu, extremely actual and fascinating for the contemporary interpreters. In a period in

³⁵ Șerban Cioculescu, "Ziaristul" (The Journalist), in *Revista Fundațiilor Regale* [The Royal Foundations Journal], 1, VII (1939): 132.

which national values and the national being are shadowed by the ever-increasing tendency towards globalization, both at an economic and cultural level, a new reading of Eminescu's articles reveals current issues, depicting thus the image of a journalist whose thinking successfully stands the test of time. The return to the content of the articles ensures the necessary conditions for the objective interpretation of journalistic writings, eliminating the risk of *ad libitum* value judgements that go beyond the boundaries of the text.