

Virgil Gheorghiu's Literary Activity Reflected in Securitate Archives

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Abstract. *Using information provided by former Securitate Archives, the author tries in this research to investigate the way how the literary activity of Virgil Gheorghiu, one of the most important writers of Romanian exile from France were presented in the informative notes written by the agents of that institution. Their way of understanding his work and ideas, the errors of their perception but also other aspects are therefore emphasized there. Also, their attitude towards his anti-communist perceptions and the value of his novels is presented there together with their attempts to get closer to him using the Romanian Orthodox Patriarch Justinian Marina, his parents who were living in Neamţ county, other relatives and some of the Securitate agents, in order to convince him to visit Romania. The way how his bad relationships with the other members of the exile have influenced his image is also a topic developed in this research.*

Keywords: legiary movement, 25th Hour, Romanian exile from France, anti-communism, novels.

Introduction

Important personality of Romanian exile from France, Virgil Gheorghiu (1916-1992) was, for sure, one of the most important writers from the 20th century. His book entitled *25th Hour*,¹ forwarded by Gabriel Marcel² and translated in 33 languages, as he was saying in one letter to his parents,³ and later screened, made him a well-known author. In the same time, it helped to the denounce of communist sins and in presentation of some aspects of Romanian contemporary history. In the same time, this book constituted an element that brought him, as he mentioned, a lot of troubles.⁴

Arrived in Paris somewhere in the beginning of 1948, after a few years of exile in Heidelberg where he worked at the manuscript of the famous book, but also studied theology⁵ and wrote poems and stories inspired by the folk history of Romania⁶, he will come to Monica Lovinescu and ask her to translate the roman that he considered the masterpiece of his work. As he had no money, she asked him to be paid after the release of the book. The manuscript has been translated

¹ Virgil Gheorghiu, *La vingt-cinquieme heure*, translated into France language by Monique Saint-Come, Paris, Librairie Plon, Paris, 1949.

² Gabriel Marcel, "Preface", in Virgil Gheorghiu, *La vingt-cinquieme heure*, translated into France language by Monique Saint-Come, Paris, Librairie Plon, 1949, p. I-IX.

³ Archives of National Council for the Study of Securitate Archives (ACNSAS), *Fond Service of External Information (S. I. E)*, dossier no. 4408, f. 183-184. Cf. Maxim Morariu, "Corespondența lui Constantin Virgil Gheorghiu cu părinții săi, reflectată în documentele Securității", in *Tabor*, XI (2018), no. 3, p. 72-76.

⁴ Constantin Virgil Gheorghiu, *Omul care călătorea singur*, translated into Romanian by Gheorghiuța Ciocoi, Bucharest, Ed. Sophia, 2010, p. 77.

⁵ That will help him later to become the parish priest of the Romanian Orthodox community from Jean de Beauvais street in Paris.

⁶ For more information about this period of his life, see: Virgil Gheorghiu, *Memorii – martorul orei 25 (Memories – the witness of 25th hour)*, translated into Romanian by Sanda Mihăiescu-Cârsteanu, ucarest, Ed. 100+1 Gramar, 1999.

and recommended by Mircea Eliade to Gabriel Marcel,⁷ who facilitated its publication. Soon after this moment, because of its well-receiving, it has been translated in several languages and the author has been called to provide lectures and to speak about the history of his country all around the world. From the first imprint, he won about 1 million francs. As the translator has asked for 15th per cents of the money received, he offered her 310000 francs.⁸ Unfortunately, she wanted more, and later, she will deny in her diaries the fact that she received money from him.⁹ Moreover, she will use the antipathy between her husband, Virgil Ierunca¹⁰ to cut some passages from his youth memorials from the second world war,¹¹ translated into English, and send it to Gabriel Marcel, that will consider him after this moment, because of the content presented to him, legionary and Nazis.

In this situation, there were a few years when the writer has not been published anymore¹² and almost all the Romanians from the French exile refused to talk with him. Later, influenced by family Lovinescu-Ierunca, writers like Sanda Stolojan,¹³ Neagu Djuvara,¹⁴ Eliade¹⁵ and others, will write bad words about him in their memories or letters. The only exception was Emil Cioran, who refused to reject him in the moment of the conflict.

Despite of the attitude of Romanian writers to him, Gheorghiu was still considered an important personality of the Exile and of Romanian culture and literature. This is the reason why, Romanian Securitate have followed him between 1950-1989 and even tried to bring him closer to Romania and the regime from there in the 7th decade of the last century.

Using the information provided by this institution, who was very influential and spent a lot of money and human resources to find as much as possible about

⁷ Mircea Eliade, *Europa, Asia, America... Corespondență A-H*, 1st volume, edited by Mircea Handoca, Bucharest, Ed. Humanitas, p. 385, p. 441, p. 459, p. 468, p. 385.

⁸ The fact is proved by a letter of thanksgiving sent by Monica Lovinescu to Gheorghiu in the beginning of 1949. See: Personal Archive of Thierry Gillyboeuf, *Correspondence Constantin Virgil Gheorghiu - Monica Lovinescu*, without page, but also: Iuliu-Marius Morariu, "Omul din spatele Orei 25. Constantin Virgil Gheorghiu în dosarele Securității," in *Sargetia – Acta Musei Devensis*, New Series nr. VIII (XLIV) (2017), 2017, p. 373-381.

⁹ Monica Lovinescu, *La apa Vavilonului (At Babylon river)*, Bucharest, Ed. Humanitas, 1999, p. 65.

¹⁰ Cf. Virgil Ierunca, *Trecut-au anii... Fragmente de jurnal. Întâmplări și accidente. Scrisori nepierdute*, Bucharest, Ed. Humanitas, 2000, p. 338-339.

¹¹ Because, during the conflagration he activated also as a war reporter, writing a few books about his experience there: Constantin Virgil Gheorghiu, *Ard malurile Nistrului*, Bucharest, Ed. Gea, 1993; Idem, *Reportaje de război*, Făgăraș, Ed. Agaton, 2008.

¹² For more information about this topic, see: Constantin Cubleșan, *Escale în croazieră (Crnise stops)*, Cluj-Napoca, Ed. Grinta, 2011; Idem, *Constantin Virgil Gheorghiu – aventura unei vieți literare*, Bucharest, Ed. Sophia, 2016.

¹³ Sanda Stolojan, *Nori peste balcoane. Jurnal din exilul parizian*, , translated into Romanian by Micaela Slăvescu, Bucharest, Ed. Humanitas, 1996, p. 22-23, p. 104-105;

¹⁴ Neagu Djuvara, *Amintiri din pribegie (1948-1990)*, , 10th edition, Bucharest, Ed. Humanitas, 2012, p. 164-167.

¹⁵ See, for example: Mircea Eliade *Europa, Asia, America... Corespondență*, , 3rd volume, edited by Mircea Handoca, Bucharest, Ed. Humanitas, 1999, p. 255-257.

him, his literary work, his information sources,¹⁶ we will try to see in this research how was his literary work reflected in the Securitate Archives. In the three dossiers that exist on his name, but also in the ones of Monica Lovinescu, with whom he had, as we have already mentioned, a conflict, we have found interesting information that are valuable not only to see how the supervising structure was working, but also to understand the writer, his life and way of acting.

Virgil Gheorghiu's literary activity reflected in Securitate archives

As soon as, in the 60s, they were 16th people sent by Securitate to spy the Romanian writer, it is not at all surprising the fact that today there are four dossiers in the aforementioned archive which are dedicated to him¹⁷ and, in the ones of writers¹⁸ like Monica Lovinescu¹⁹ there can be also founded information about him. The Romanian information service knew therefore that he lives in Cannes, when he became priest, what he has published, but also information about his wife and his parents and brothers who left home. His literary activity was also between the main concerns of the officers that were "taking care" of him.

Therefore, the sources who were giving information about his life activity have almost always starting by presenting his biography and speaking about his youth books where he describes war experiences, using this as a pretext to accuse him as being legionary.²⁰ This accuse is, as some of his biographers emphasize, encouraged by Lovinescu-Ierunca family, who always speaks about his political orientation.²¹ An evidence in this sense can be considered the fact that most of the sources link this passage with his denunciation or the conflict with Monica Lovinescu. Therefore, for example, in a note from 1964, the agent says that:

"For his novels he was denounced and deeply criticised by the progresist newspapers from abroad, but also by a reactionary newspaper like "Figaro." The journal "L.Humanite" from 2.I. 1963 wrote: "GHEORGHIU VIRGIL is not more than a hitlerist who, in 1941 have killed Soviet civilians."²²

¹⁶ Because, in books like: *The Spy* or *Condotiera*, he was speaking about some bad habits of the Romanian communist regime that were taking place in the country in the time of writing, like the techniques of spying or the sale of political from detention in different capitalist countries. See: Idem, *L'Espionne –roman*, Paris, Librairie Plon, 1971; Idem, *Condotiera*, translated into Romanian by Georgiana Matei, Cluj-Napoca, Ed. Renașterea, 2011.

¹⁷ ACNSAS, M. F. I./Neamț, rola 356; Idem, *Fond Service of External Information (S. I. E)*, dossier 4408/2; Idem, *Fond Informativ*, cote I -234624, DossierGheorghiu Virgil; Idem, *Fond Service of External Information (S. I. E)*, dossier 4408; Idem, *Fond Informativ*, cote I -185086, Dossier Gheorghiu Virgil (for Virgil Gheorghiu, who, in one of this dossier is called Vasile Gavrilescu); Idem, M. F. I./Neamț, rola 356.

¹⁸ Cf. Dumitru Dobre, Iulia Huiu, Mihaela Toader (eds.), *Sursele Securității informează*, Bucharest, Ed. Humanitas, 2008, p. 84.

¹⁹ ACNSAS, *Fond Service of External Information (S. I. E)*, dossier 349.

²⁰ ACNSAS, M. F. I./Neamț, rola 356, f. 7.

²¹ Amaury d'Esneval, *Gheorghiu*, P Pardes, Puiseaux, 2003, p. 10.

²² ACNSAS, M. F. I./Neamț, rola 356, f. 19. Cf. Idem, *Fond Service of External Information (S. I. E)*, dossier 4408, f. 343.

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The same agent, who's conspirative name is C. Olariu, speaks in a note dated from 1st of December 1951 about the success of his book,²³ and about his troubles with the translator,²⁴ presenting her Lovinescu's version of the story. The style of the note shows that the author was most probably an intellectual or, perhaps and a writer who was visiting the aforementioned family when he was passing through Paris. Still, he is voluntarily presenting fake or incomplete information, trying most probably to impress his superiors and to show how the communism has been defended even by capitalists. But at least he knows exactly the title of his works and some aspects about his biography and the main events from his life.

Both because of the glory known after the publication of *25th Hour* and of the conflict with the translator of it, Gheorghiu has been carefully supervised in the beginning of 6th decade of the latest century and the end of 5th one. Therefore, the authorities from Bucharest were informed in 30th of January 1951 about his publications, conferences and his most important actions:

"On 25th of November 1949, C. V. Gheorghiu has offered to the journal "Temoignage Chretien", belgian edition, an interview about his latest book "The 25th hour, published in Paris. There, he attacked USSR and USA, underlining the fact that only the Christianity and especially the Roman-Catholic Church is the only force coherent, capable to resist in nowadays fight.

The work (25th hour, our note), has been published in 100000 copies and brought to the author an important amount of money.

In 31th of November 1949, Const. V. Gheorghiu have given a lecture in Sorbonne, where they have participated: Andre Malraus, important in De Gaulle team, Gabriel Marcel, Catholic priests and an important number of Romanian revolutionary

It seems that that the reaction wanted to find in C. V. GHEORGHIU a new KRAVCENKO case."²⁵

The same author the note will write to Bucharest a few days later, informing the authorities from there that the writer was expected in 19th of January and 5th of February 1951 in Brussels to provide a lecture at the Catholic conferences, asking information for the denounce of the writer as a legionary.²⁶ Fortunately, the Securitate will not find the compromising information before that moment and therefore, this fact will start a little bit later with the work of Virgil Ierunca. The fact that, almost a decade later, the story of the Vintilă Horea and his

²³ *"25th Hour* has been translated in Anglia, Argentina, U. S. A., West Germany, Holland, Italy and Denmark. As a consequence of the success that he had and of great fortune won, lost his mind." *Ibidem*, f. 43.

²⁴ "Because of the fact of being unfair since he has been born, he didn't payed anything to Monica Lovinescu for her translation. He had a verz known process with her in Paris. He was forced to paz, he sold the copyrights to more editors in same country, and from there he had trials in Argentina, USA and Denmark. He has also a trial for unrespecting his agreement with his editor Flammarion from Paris." *Idem, M. F. I./Neamț*, rola 356, f. 44.

²⁵ *Idem, Fond Service of External Information (S. I. E)*, dossier 4408/2, f. 185.

²⁶ *Ibidem*, f. 183.

book: *God have been born in exile*²⁷ will look so similar with Gheorghiu's one it may be a clue of the fact that Securitate have improved its methods.

If some of the authors really know important things about Gheorghiu, his literary activity and his biography, most of the ones asked to supervise him have no ideas about his work. And if, to find how it is seen the Romanian writer by the Romanian exile from this space and to present the opinion of some important intellectuals like Cioran or Eliade about him,²⁸ is easy as soon as you speak Romanian and know whom to ask, to present his publications and their message is really difficult for some of those mandated to do this. Most probably, some of them have a very poor cultural background and are not very capable to decide which information is fake and which real. Therefore, some of them will speak about the way how his books are received in Belgium, showing in the same time that he is the bishop of the Church from Paris and will mention just briefly his literary activity,²⁹ while others will consider the *24th Hour* as his masterpiece.³⁰ Others will do errors when they will speak about the collection or the press where *25th Hour* has been published, but they will know for sure that he criticised the Romanian communism there. There is such an example from the end of the 6th decade of the 20th century.

"In the autumn of 1949, he published in the edition of "Elarion" library, the novel 25th Hour. The novel, between others, brings serious offences both to USSR and democratic popular regime from our country.

At the end of 1955, Gheorghiu Virgil have published a second novel: "The second chance", which has been published in the press of "Plan publishing house. In both of the novels,

²⁷ For more information about his life, activity and story of his book, see also: Vintilă Horea, *Memoriile unui fost Săgetător*, edited by Cristian Bădiliță and Silvia Colfescu, Bucharest, Ed. Vremea, 2015; Idem, *Scrisori din exil*, vol. 1-2, edited by Maria-Pia Castaing, Bucharest, Ed. „Memoria”, 2011; Pompiliu Crăciunescu, *Vintilă Horia – transliteratură și realitate*, Bucharest, Ed. Curtea Veche, 2011; Cristian Bădiliță, Basarab Nicolescu (eds.) *În căutarea „Omului total”. Moștenirea literară și spirituală a lui Vintilă Horea*, Bucharest, Ed. Vremea, 2016; Cecilia Latiș, *Arhitecturi paralele: Marguerite Yourcenar – Vintilă Horia*, Suceava, Press of Suceava University, 2003; Gheorghina Adina Lemian, *Vintilă Horia – nefericitul fericit*, Oradea, Ed. Didactica Militans, 2009; Georgeta Orian, *Vintilă Horia – un scriitor contra timpului său*, Cluj-Napoca, Ed. Limes, 2008; Idem, *Vintilă Horia – privire monografică*, Alba-Iulia, Ed. Bălgrad, 2000; Daniel Florin Predoiu, *S'initier à l'errance en la racontant: l'exil, l'identité et la mémoire dans les journaux intimes de trois intellectuels roumains*, Saarbrücken, Éditions Universitaires Européennes, 2011.

²⁸ ACNSAS, *Fond Service of External Information (S. I. E)*, dossier 4408/2, f. 209-210.

²⁹ Like in this note from 1960: "There are in Belgium and in many countries of Europe books of a Romanian citizen called VIRGIL GHEORGHIU. He has a lot of talent. He is bishop in the Church from Paris. Is far-right orientation from all his ideas. Is press attached to Yugoslavia embassy during the last war. Is taking care of Romanian citizens who are political refugees.

He wrote several books where he criticises the Romanian regime. He have received many literary prizes. It is known by many Romanian political refugees and provides them substantial help." Idem, *M. F. I./Neamț*, rola 356, f. 125.

³⁰ Idem *Fond Informativ*, cote I -185086, Dossier Gheorghiu Virgil, f. 6.

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*Gheorghiu Virgil uses as characters types of people who run away from the countries of the socialist lager, enemy elements and betrayers that seek for their "chance" in Occident.*³¹

In fact, both of his books have been published at "Plon" and not "Plan" or "Elarion" (wrong tipping of Flammarion press name) and the first one have been released in the collection "Crossed Fires."

The Securitate will be also informed about the fact that, after his ordination as a priest and receiving under the authority of Romanian Patriarchate, Justinian Marina has received his books, that he considered important and interesting.³² They will also know that Romanian Patriarch wanted to publish some extracts of his books, with religious message in the journals of his institution, and they have asked him and other bishops to get closer to him in order to convince the writer to come and visit Romania, in the 7th decade of the 20th century.

Also, they will be informed in 1968, when the Americans were preparing the screening of his book with Antony Quinn as main character and they will try to get in contact with the team to determinate them to come in Bucovina for the movie. In this context, Gheorghiu will write to his parents in Neamț county, telling them about this possibility and the fact that they may see each other soon.³³ Unfortunately, the negotiations will not be favourable and the Romanian writer will not come in Romania anymore until his death, feeling afraid of a trap. Also, despite of all the attempts of Romanian authorities to get in contact with him and determinate him to write in a positive way about the Communist regime, he will never cease to denounce the abuses of the regime and present case studies of it in his novels.

Conclusion

Although it was rather concerned with his activity and life than with his literary activity, Romanian Securitate has not neglected, as we could see, the activity of Virgil Gheorghiu as a writer and its outcomes. The people sent to supervise him and analyse the content of his writings were, in most of the situations, incapable to do it. But they have understood the fact that he was always criticising communism in his novels and denouncing its crimes. Therefore, using the accusations of Virgil Ierunca and other Romanian intellectuals from Romanian exile from French that he was legionary, they will classify him as part of this category in all the notes.³⁴

³¹ Idem, *Fond Service of External Information (S. I. E)*, dossier 4408, f. 6; *Ibidem*, f. 10. Cf. Idem, *Fond Informativ*, cote I -234624, Dossier Gheorghiu Virgil, f. 7.

³² "The Patriarch has told to GAGIU that VIRGIL GHEORGHIU is the biggest writer at this moment in France, that he wrote a book in Spanish about Saint John Chrysostom (5th century), that has been very well received in West. The Patriarch had the book with dedication from GHEORGHIU himself and she offered to a lady who speaks Spanish for writing a review, adjust it and then, publish it in Patriarchate journals." *Ibidem*, f. 111.

³³ Idem, *Fond Service of External Information (S. I. E)*, dossier 4408, f. 183-184.

³⁴ Although the fake content of this aspect is easy to argue also because of the fact that he has some troubles with legionary because of the fact that he got married with Ecaterina Burbea from Galați who was Jew, during the legionary government. For more information about this topic, see: Virgil Gheorghiu, *Memorii – martorul orei* 25. The fact is known even by the ones who were writing notes

His refuse to cooperate with Romanian regime will make him to be presented only as a minor legionary poet in the histories of literature published in this space between 1949-1989.³⁵ All the references will be at this topic and his poetical contributions from interwar period, when he was rewarded for the poetries from *Calligraphy on snow*,³⁶ by Charles the second Royal Foundation will be neglected. His bad relationships with Ierunca-Lovinescu family who was a very influential one in Paris and French exile made him also to be not enough valorised there. This is the reason why, after 1989, his literary work started to be rediscovered and investigated³⁷ and translated in Romanian language.

Despite of all these problems, it must be mentioned that, for communists like for his enemies too, his talent was clear and the value of his writings was a matter of fact. This determinates in some moments of the 7th and 8th decades of the 20th centuries their attempts to get in contact with him and invite him in Romania, which were not some fruitful ones.

about him, and mentioned by them. See: ACNSAS, *Fond Informativ*, cote I -185086, Dossier Gheorghiu Virgil, f. 13.

³⁵ Like: Ovid. S. Crohmălniceanu, *Literatura română între cele două războaie mondiale*, second volume, Bucharest, Ed. Minerva, București, 1974, p. 562-570.

³⁶ Constantin Virgil Gheorghiu, *Caligrafie pe zăpadă*, Bucharest, Foundation for Literature and Art King Charles the Second, 1940.

³⁷ Through works like: Thierry Gillyboeuf, *Virgil Gheorghiu l'écrivain calomnie. Essai*, Paris, Editions de la Différence, 2017; Constantin Cubleşan, *Escale în croazieră*; Idem, *Constantin Virgil Gheorghiu – aventura unei vieți literare*; Iuliu-Marius Morariu, „Elemente ale spiritualității ortodoxe în opera literară a lui Virgil Gheorghiu,” in *Symposium – "Cultural Transparency and the Loss of Privacy in the Era of Digital Technology: How Is This Shaping Our Becoming and the Ethical Dilemmas Related to It"*, Edited by The Romanian Institute of Orthodox Theology and Spirituality from New York, XXIII (2016), p. 63-73; Iuliu-Marius Morariu, „Conflictul dintre Virgil Gheorghiu și Monica Lovinescu, reflectat în scrierile lui Mircea Eliade și Neagu Djuvara,” " in Doru Sinaci, Emil Arbonie (eds.), *Administrație românească arădeană – studii și comunicări din Banat – Crișana*, Arad. "Vasile Goldiș" University Press, 2017, p. 575-585; Alexandra Laignel-Lavastine, *Cioran, Eliade, Ionesco: L'Oubli du fascisme*, Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, 2002; Florin Țurcanu, "Un moment roumain a Paris," in Mihai Neamțu, Bogdan Tătaru-Cazaban (eds.), *Memory, Humanity and Meaning. selected essays in Honor of Andrei Pleșu's Sixtieth Anniversary offered by New Europe College Alumni&friends*, Bucharest, Zeta Books, 2009, p. 515-530.

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