

**„LUCIAN BLAGA” UNIVERSITY FROM SIBIU  
FACULTY OF LETTERS AND ARTS**

**DOCTORAL THESIS**

**EUGEN BARBU - MONOGRAPHIC STUDY**

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## ABSTRACT

After a long documentation I have found that there is no study dedicated to Eugen Barbu, presenting and to analyzing his work as a whole. About Eugen Barbu and his creation many things were written but not enough. Two decades after the writer's death, the work is presented to the reader in part. Many critical studies or articles take into consideration only part of his creation. The confessions about his work and the relationship he had with the society he lived in, the fact that I came to know his publishing work and the stories of those who knew him were useful to me in understanding the creative process and the artist's attitude towards the world of the work. Because I want to make a literary monography, I will not take into consideration in my review the scandals he was involved in. The only mentions about policy will be found on the last part of the work where I brought to attention the publishing activity of Eugen Barbu. Here I will analyze some political articles but only to demonstrate his collaboration with the Ceausescu regime. The doctoral thesis, divided into five parts, each part with many chapters and subchapters, was intended as a more comprehensive research of Barbu's creation. The writer went through various existential experiences (law and literature studies, peace officer, football player and coach, printer, corrector) was also fascinated by the world of stadium, work environments, theater, poetry, journalism, reportage, travel. My research is based on his creations, journals, translations, reports, film scenarios that complete the image of a writer constantly present on the stage of public life. Throughout his life he was a burst of energy, he created a diverse and unequal work in terms of value. The writer melts his personality in the work that we, as readers, have the obligation to revive it with our own personality. I invite to a new reading, having this way the privilege of discovery and restoration of a work destiny. It is an important fact and a cultural act.

The research methods applied in this work are: inquiry, analysis, comparison, case study. The main strategy of work is systematization of information structuring it on a logical plan.

Eugen Barbu remains one of the outstanding personalities of the literary environment of the twentieth century.

This study aims to fling down a challenge to the contemporary reader, who for various reasons did not read Eugen Barbu, to study his work and why not, to complete this work with other interpretations.

My doctoral thesis is the result of numerous readings. The activity of research and rigorous documentation on the theme imposed the use and fructification of numerous volumes of criticism and history, dictionaries of writers, theoretical articles published in periodicals and anthologies. The theme of the work was approached first from the theoretical and critical point of view, then it was analyzed.

My subsequent step was based on the applied research methods which were very different: investigation, analysis, case study and comparison.

Eugen Barbu was a controversial writer of the postwar period, admired and judged equally loved and denigrated. Throughout the work I didn't try to judge him, nor to excuse or blame him, though I admit, - it is in human nature to be malicious and I was often tempted to do it and maybe sometimes I did made an ironic statement. I tried to be objective, to analyze his creation, despite the fact that it was hard. But I found a simple solution by which I managed to finish the study: I had to separate the book from the image of the person who wrote it.

The analysis of Barbu's creation included the works published during his life and after his death, mentioning here the novel, *Ianus*, the only novel published shortly after the writer's death.

This study begins with an introductory part in which I outlined based on the interviews and confessions from the journals a comprehensive bio-bibliographical profile. In the first part I presented chronologically the life and literary work of Eugen Barbu. From the memories of adolescence, the experience of war and the years of the Gendarmes School there are evoked episodes and events meant to draw the spiritual profile of the future writer. Then follows a theoretical chapter which aims to determine the postwar epic directions and contextualize the writings of Eugen Barbu; I actually presented the socio-political, cultural and literary framework in which he completed and finalized his work.

In order to establish better the image of the work, other chapters from this introductory part consider the critical reception of the work and the writer's literary creed. The research is divided into five parts, each with a varying number of chapters and subchapters.

The first part which is the most comprehensive is dedicated to the universe of Barbu's prose. Here I tried to identify the epic formula that Eugen Barbu comes under, to capture the physiognomy of the short stories volumes of novels typology. I analyzed several short stories and tales. His literature depends on the political life and responds to the initiatives of the regime that prohibited any form of association or elaboration of other aesthetics than the official one.

I noticed that the writer approaches with spontaneity various topics. Ample space is allocated to beginning novels which have the same theme: the discovery of class-consciousness, process driven by a dramatic circumstance that took place in the family or at work, which turns the undecided person into a fierce supporter of communist doctrine. This scheme typical for most debut novels is completed with the commission of a heroic act by which the activist expresses his creed regarding the benefits of the new direction and total adherence to the party. Even in the most successful novels reprinted in numerous volumes, echoes the socialist realist cliché. Achilles' hill regarding short prose derives precisely from these features.

As we could observe the debut novels are marked by of realist-socialist cliché, dealing with issues of consciousness of the new man, builder of the new society, the latter leaving the ideological territory to experience the fantastic, sensational territory. Fall into this category the novels that revolve around the novel *Principele* (Prince).

The perspective of approaching the novels is analytical, the study focusing on the specificity of narration, types of characters and common epic spaces and situations. *Groapa* (The Pit) is a one of the novels of the decade with the fewest socialist realist elements. The mistake committed by Eugen Barbu was publishing two socialist realist novels: in 1959 *Soseaua Nordului* (North Road) and in 1963, *Facerea Lumii* (Creation of the world). The thematic mobility is observed by switching from peripheral environment populated by workers and lacking the socialist realist ideology to the description of Grivița in the next two novels, *Soseaua Nordului* (North Road) and *Facerea lumii* (Creation of the world). It is quite curious from my point of view this delayed issuance of the two novels when almost no one demanded it, let's not forget that after 1960 follows a more relaxed period of ideological calm. In his work, Eugen

Barbu captures moments from the society he lived in, surprising the interdependence between the evoked social environment and outlined characters.

In an attempt to please the party and the public and to attract readers he uses in the novel *Soseaua Nordului (North Road)*, two construction tricks. First of all it imprints an exciting note through a series of actions: escapes, sabotages, romances. Second of all, by keeping upright the image of the politician, of the communist, he will insert throughout the novel the biography of communist characters, which is full of sensationalism. Total dedication to serve the party will lead him to failure.

*Soseaua (The Road)* presents dramatic events occurring during the last world war. In the novel *Soseaua Nordului (North Road)* the socialist realism is reflected both by the topic and the idealized ethics of the character to whom Barbu refuses the psychological analysis, the characters being surprised acting and very little talking.

The volume that gathered the most attributes of socialist realist literature speaks about the daily and contemporary life. *Facerea lumii (Creation of the world)* continues the communist vision of the early years, successfully illustrating the subservient literature type. The establishment of socialist economy. In *Facerea lumii (Creation of the world)* of the world the vision changes a little bit, the report action-psychology inverts, action passing on a secondary place, being preferred the cases of consciousness of the new man. Eugen Barbu managed to express through the characters his own thoughts and feelings about an issue.

Barbu's characters are inflamed with the communist spirit for which they always ready to kill. Creations capture life at all levels: social, ethnic, ethic and economic and less psychological.

Changing the theme registry brings changes to the writing. Novels of the second period require a serious research; the author no longer expresses freely, refrains from getting inspired by the immediate reality, which he described in previous narrations.

Starting with the novel *Principele (Prince)* Eugen Barbu opens another paradigm: the primitive world, undergoing development is replaced by another world, sophisticated and in a decomposition process. If he was familiar with the first with the second one he gets familiar by consulting numerous sources, using passages from different books from the most extensive fields.

In this work I tried to outline a controversial writer of the postwar period, and I say controversial because many times there were different views in the reception of the work, in two



cases he was accused of plagiarism. Two novels were put under the microscope *Principele* (Prince) and *Incognito*. The latter will bring after 1990 and novelist's exclusion from the Writers' Union.

The chapter concludes with the finding that in the development of the novel, Barbu's prose constitutes a decisive step forward.

Research undertaken continues with the second part of the work covering two other sides of the writer: the historian and literary essayist. For the first side I analyzed the volume *A polemical and anthological history from origins until nowadays* where Eugen Barbu tried to present a picture of contemporary poetry, and for the second side the volume *Goethe's masks*. Subjective prose and creative and travel journal, are the subject of the third part of the work, the fourth one focusing on other aspects of creation: poetry, translations, and screenplays

The last part of this work, *Publishing of Eugen Barbu*, focuses on the period when he was chief editor at: *Luceafarul* and *Saptamana Culturala a Capitalei*, without forgetting the publishing activity at the magazine *Romania Mare* whose founding director was with his good comrade Corneliu Vadim Tudor. From the 69 years that he lived more than 45 were devoted to publishing. At "Saptamana" magazine which was pleasing the party activists he led campaigning against the Writers' Union, supported by RCP, against all his rivals and opponents and those in exile. Publishing activity is ordered depending on the issues he approaches.

What is new in this part which deals with the publishing activity is the preparation of the chronology of Eugen Barbu's articles. Annexes placed at the end of the work facilitate and pave the way for other work dealing in detail with the publishing activity of Barbu.

The thesis concludes with a chapter of conclusions and a comprehensive bibliography. In this work I used the volumes of prose, poetry and drama as well as articles and several books of criticism and literary history, dictionaries. The critical support this thesis is based on is composed of numerous studies.

For the preparation of the work I used a variety of bibliographic sources from which the reader after reading can draw a conclusive opinion on the process of reception concerning the work of Eugen Barbu, both during the years 1960-1970 and currently.

Many scholars developed analytical studies of Barbu's creation. Significant additional information of real help was provided by Cristian Sandache, Henri Zalis and Emil Manu. I had difficulties in finding some books of criticism published in a single edition or limited editions.

I paid a special attention to the selection of critical texts. In organizing the material, I used a systematic process. This way, I started from interpretation suggestions offered by literary criticism, trying to find new values of the writings and also to see what writings were reviewed and which were left in a shading cone. The conclusions that I reached were that, in general, creations prepared with literary meanings captured scholars' interest. Each chapter is followed by bibliographical notes, which provide additional information to complete the work.

I also made a chronology of Eugen Barbu's articles published in the most important magazines of that time. Of appreciable value, Annexes complete the chapter dedicated to publishing activity.

After reading the novels I can say that Eugen Barbu is unjustly marginalized and that he deserves to be rehabilitated. Also, I would propose the reintroduction in the scholar curriculum of the novel *Groapa (The Pit)*.

Within the literary environment of the twentieth century Eugen Barbu, remains one of personalities of that time. Lecturers are provided with an impressive creation.

I have never judged him nor have I tried to justify him. My undertaking wanted to retrieve this writer based on the books that definitively imposed him as writer: *Groapa (The Pit)*, *Principele (Prince)*, *Saptamana Nebunilor (Fools's Week)*, works that summarizes the major themes of Barbu's creation.

Denied, disputed or praised, with an unequal work, Eugen Barbu, supporter of nationalist communist ideology expressed commitment to the national version of communist ideology as it was proclaimed by Nicolae Ceausescu at the Ninth Congress of the RCP. The writer complied with the socialist realist requirements and allied with the regime giving up honor in its favor and becoming a loudspeaker of it. His literature enters in the zone of influence of the communist regime and faces the need to avoid prohibitions that characterized the politically controlled literature.