

"LUCIAN BLAGA" UNIVERSITY OF SIBIU  
FACULTY OF LETTERS AND ARTS

**ABSTRACT OF THE DOCTORAL THESIS WITH THE TITLE:**

***RADU GYR-MONOGRAPHIC STUDY***

PHD SCIENTIFIC COORDINATOR:  
PROF. UNIV. DR. ANA SELEJAN

STUDENT:  
MARIA ANTAL

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The doctoral thesis entitled "Radu Gyr - monographic study" is the result of a systematic study of three years on all aspects of Gyr's work.

The reasons for choosing this theme are subjective and objective. The first reason is subjective; I discovered the existence of a writer retrieved after the 1990, whose work is unjustly forgotten. Secondly, I considered imperatively necessary to restore a creation of national importance, entirely unexplored until now. People speak about the poet Radu Gyr, but almost no one knows that there is the journalist Radu Gyr. A single monographic study has been dedicated to him so far, notably, but without including his publishing activity or memoirs that were published after his death.

I tried to highlight those aspects of his work that were less known or not at all: journalism in the interwar and postwar press, poetics of text and his legionary poetry. This is the novelty that brings this work.

The theme of the work was approached first of all from the theoretical and critical point of view and then analyzed. My subsequent approach was built on applied research methods which were very different: investigation, analysis, case study and comparison.

The work was divided into two parts, with related subchapters, bio-bibliographic profile at the beginning, end considerations, bibliography and appendices. As regards this structure divided into two parts, it was designed this way because the work of Radu Gyr met these two stages: interwar and postwar.

Gyr's poetry was brought to light especially after 1992, after the posthumous publication of the first volume of poetry, which represents a lyric of prisons. That's the moment when the door of Gyr's poetry reopened to his readers and consequently to literary criticism, after years of oblivion and silence deliberated or imposed by the communist regime.

The first part, entitled *Interwar creation of Radu Gyr* has an independent chapter entitled *Interwar literary context. Poetic directions*. I have tried in this chapter to place Radu Gyr in the literary environment of the interwar period and to place his poetry within the poetic trends of that time.

In the chapter entitled *Poetry* I analyzed the physiognomy and dialectic of each volume separately, and then I identified lyrical formulas, which I analyzed in terms of themes, motifs, episodic or fundamental symbols. Content paradigms were identified and detailed: intimate-symbolist poetry, traditionalist poetry, traditionalist-regional poetry, floral poetry,

erotic poetry, the poetry of existential reflection, war poetry, legionary poetry and detention poetry.

I showed the evolution of Gyr's poetry from the symbolist stage of the early years, starting from the influence of the symbolist circle led by Elena Farago, to the traditionalist lyrics which also consecrated him. From the traditionalist formula of the second volume (*Plange Stramba Lemne*, 1928) he goes towards the regional regionalism of Oltenia in the next volume, *Cerbul de lumină (Light Deer)* (1928). He creates here a space specific to Oltenia region with all parts of the topos. Traditionalist line is abandoned in the poetry volume *Stele pentru leagăn (Stars for the cradle)* (1936) where he inaugurates two new lyrical formulas: a paternal poem dedicated to his daughter, but also a reflective-existentialist lyric. With the volume *Cununi uscate (Dried crown)* (1938), the traditional formula is not abandoned, but he innovates. This is the most complex volume in terms of diversity of lyrical formulas of vision, including the traditionalist poetry, floral lyrics, erotic poetry and existential reflection lyrics. Frontline experience will make him come under another lyric formula: war poetry present in the volume *Poeme de războiu War poems* (1942). His last volume published after his death, *Balade (Ballads)* (1943) brings a dimension of modern ballad reinterpreting ancient Romanian myths (Corbea, Miorița, Meșterul Manole, and Toma Alimoș).

I demonstrated that since the debut volume, *Liniști de schituri (Silence of hermitages)*, till the last posthumous volume, the lyric of Radu Gyr is constantly evolving. His debut is under symbolism sign with decadent impressions and Bacovian atmosphere, and then he crosses traditionalism, sometimes with a too strong regionalist shade, eventually reaching a tempered modernism as substance and structure, clad in clear forms of classicism. Radu Gyr will inclemently refuse on behalf of the Romanian tradition the avant-garde literature putting under accusation the Hermeticism of Ion Barbu, pornography of Camil Baltazar, Geo Bogza, I. Vinea, Felix Aderca. In all his press articles, starting with the beginning of his collaboration at *Flamura* then at *Porunca vremii* he expresses his conception about poetic art, pleading for the traditionalist poetry, sound poetry, abolishing by any mean the new poetry by saying that a disjointed syntax and syntactic eliptism would create *poetic anarchism*, affecting grammar and poetic vocabulary. Eugene Lovinescu is also pointed for promoting synchronism and modernism, which in Gyr's opinion would not represent the Romanian soul in its aesthetic expression. Avant-garde writers are often judged according to ethical criteria and not according to the aesthetic criteria. For example, Tristan Tzara is accused for staying in Switzerland and writing *crazy* poetry, while in Europe the war devastated everything. In articles and his lyrical practice Gyr believes that lyrics revolve around ethnos.

In a literature with several values, like the Romanian one, the way of a poet would naturally pass through the confrontation with his predecessors and contemporaries. A sharp

eye can identify in Gyr's poetry the coexistence of several components, elements from the poetry of Bacovia and Arghezi or from the symbolism of Francis Jammes.

On the other hand, Radu Gyr will join the legionary movement and promote art either by articles or poetry. He calls writers to get out of the ivory tower and become representatives of the national spirituality. He strongly declares in one of his articles that poetry can serve the legion, which he considers art creator.

In the chapter entitled *Poetica (Poetics)* I tried to identify all sources that outline his conception about the creation laboratory and the mission of the poet, in order to show that Gyr's concerns to define poetry were systematic and clear, even if they did not favor the development of modern poetry. Radu Gyr pleads in his articles, interviews, poetic arts for traditional elements and for those with regional specificity (Oltenia), for national values, for perpetuating the forms already known, for a development of poetic forms in stages and not through insurrections. From here, all his rejections begin: avant-garde, extreme modernism, poetic Hermeticism, synchronism with European literature. All this is denied by cultivating tradition primacy. Temptation to define the concept of poetry has nothing to do in Gyr's point of view with a poetic fashion, but is an organic necessity of awareness or adherence to a particular direction and a specific program. In his case the direction that he will follow will be the traditionalist one, supporting a renewing traditionalism, by a non poetized content and form, cultivating bold and unusual images, reviving themes and refreshing expression.

For the symbols and myths found in the poetry of Radu Gyr I dedicated a chapter entitled *Mituri și simboluri fundamentale (Fundamental myths and symbols)*. They are numerous, some of them fundamental and present in all volumes of the poet, such as, for example, the dream symbol. This symbol crosses his poetic work from one end to other. I showed that Radu Gyr uses some of the myths in order to express himself in relation to his poetic ideal. So it is the myth of Prometheus, Ulysses and the Romanian ancestral myth of Mesterul Manole.

The novelty that brings this doctoral thesis is the publishing activity of Radu Gyr. It's a unique field, unexplored and hardly known by readers. People speak about the poet Radu Gyr, but few people know that Radu Gyr the publicist really existed. The publishing activity of Radu Gyr was ordered by the same criteria as the poetry: interwar and postwar publishing activity.

I ordered the interwar publishing activities according to chronology and articles content. A key subchapter is the *Publishing activity in right-wing newspapers*. Articles in this sector of press represent a novelty. These articles were not presented before, thus, they were not subject to any critical comment.

Publishing activity in the interwar period can be divided into two phases: the first period is placed between January 1<sup>st</sup>, 1925, when his first collaborations in the press appear (*Flamura, Pastel epileptic*, in the section "Rhymed Chronicle", "Romanian Magazine" *Lumea de la Eși or Vacs X00*, under the section "Notes and annotations") and July 1929 (*Ritmul*

*vremii (Rhythm of time), Română (Romance)*, No.6-7, 1929). There are two arguments supporting this division: the first has to do with the presence of Gyr's pen in press, during 1925-1929, paused then for quite long period of time, his name reappearing again only in 1936, the second argument has to do with the content of the articles and poems he published.

I tried to order the articles according to the issues they approach; I presented them in chronological order of their issuance. I showed that his writing moulds on the patterns of current colloquialism, the journalist is not afraid to explore any secular language resources. Many of his articles bear lexical boldness, virulent polemic, unbridled volubility, provocative imagery, all displayed emphatically in his work.

The second stage of the interwar publishing activity begins in 1936 with a first article printed in the magazine *Vestitorii (Heralds) (Misiunea scriitorului de azi, The current writer's mission)*, No. 4, 1936) until January 13<sup>th</sup>, 1941, when the last article is printed in the legionary publication *Falanga (Ion Barbu – Tinda Bisericeii din Jupânești/The porch of the Church from Jupânești)*.

As I did in the subchapter entitled *Pseudonyms*, showing the with which Radu Gyr signed (this name also a pseudonym, his real name is Radu Demetrescu) his articles, the publications and reasons that led him to takeover a pseudonym or another.

In the second part of the work, entitled **Aspects of Radu Gyr's postwar creation** I presented the poetry included in the posthumous volumes, the publishing activity comprised in the newspapers  *Glasul patriei (Voice of the country)* and *Tribuna României (Romania Tribune)*, his correspondence and memoirs.

Postwar creation of Radu Gyr represents a drawer poetry written without hoping to be published in his lifetime, what happened indeed, but is also a detention lyric, the result of many years of prison, which was transmitted orally, memorized by prisoners, being as a doina that eased the suffering. Consequently, I demonstrated there were two voices of the poet in the posthumous lyric: an unheard voice in writing, meaning the poetry created in prison, with an interesting characteristic of the twentieth century literature, namely, the transmission of the poetry orally, the poem being memorized and transmitted to others, sometimes gaining collective character by the contribution of those who transmitted it. A prison poetry written on an imaginary sheet of paper, which most of times, was the ceiling, as the poet himself confesses or written on the sole of the boot with soap or simply told in the prison yard to another prisoner in order to be memorized and told to another prisoner to be sure that it won't be lost. Here is how the prison lyric was transmitted. These poems appeared first collected in *Poezii (Poetry)*, Vol I-III (*Sangele temnitei (Prison Blood), Balade (Ballads), Stigmată (Stigma), Lirica orală (Oral poetry)*), Timisoara, Marineasa Publishing house, [1992](#) - [1994](#) .

Prison lyric is a combination of lyrical poetry and prayer. Approaching the religious field in poetic creation involves, on the one hand, the manner the poet relates to the Divine and on the other hand, the assimilation of an imaginary dialogue with the lyrical ego. After 1989, many readers found in Radu Gyr a lyric representative of the prisons and his poetry

resurrection. His poems written in prison and published posthumously made possible the rediscovery of a poet, ensuring Radu Gyr's posterity.

In the chapter titled *Memorialistica (Memoirs)* I treated the biographical-confessional book of Radu Gyr, called *Calendarul meu. Prieteni, momente și atitudini literare. (My Calendar. Friends, moments and literary attitudes)*. Many of the information found here are very important for posterity especially for coming from a personality of the interwar literary and political life. In fact, he actually talks more about others forgetting about himself, if we take into account the dilated part of childhood and adolescence memories up to the early years of college. Then he focuses on friendships, people who crossed his life.

The interesting part of the memories derives from the fact that they are doubled by the critical voice. Radu Gyr doesn't limit to evoking the figure of great personalities and outlining their portraits, even if this increases the historical and literary interest of the memoirs.

The memoirs of contemporaries about Radu Gyr represent a novelty; they have been gathered from various books in order to shed light on lesser-known aspects of the life and work of Radu Gyr. Some of them, such as the memoirs of Peter Pandrea were published recently in 2011. Editorial post-revolutionary explosion proved the existence of a valuable forbidden literature, a drawer literature, which gradually took its rightful place in the pantheon of contemporary Romanian literature. It is also the case of Radu Gyr, who enriched the Romanian literature with his drawer poetry, on the one hand, and with detention literature, on the other hand.

I brought as novelty several episodes existing in Gyr's personal file, that were at the documentary fund of the National Council for the Study of Secret Police Archives, which I present in annexes. I also attach a few notes signed by Gyr and handed to the secret police which elucidate his collaboration with the newspaper *Glasul patriei (Voice of the country)*, and also some letters to friends.

I had difficulties in finding some books published in one edition and limited editions. Also, hundreds of articles of Gyr were identified with supported effort. A first cause is the vague information that the dictionary provides on his collaborations with the press. Then, other collaborations are not mentioned, they were discovered with a lot of work and investigation or there are cases when even they mentioned they do not exist. Treating the articles of legionary doctrine is still taboo. There is no such market study, which made it difficult approaching the theme of this kind of articles.

In the analysis, I used a number of seventeen primary sources, volumes of poetry and memoirs and more articles, approximately three hundred. They were included in the annexes grouped in chronological order. From the many articles I selected only those that I considered probative in highlighting issues that I was concerned about. Memoirs books in which Gyr's face appear are numerous, I identified over thirty volumes, published after 1990, but I chose those that comply with an accurate, literary expression, with a logical chaining in the narrative

flow. Another selection criterion was that of the different opinions, contradictory even when they treat the same issue.

In my research activity I exploited the literary specificity and fructified criticism books, literary histories, press dictionaries, theoretical works, a lot of articles published in newspapers. There were brought up critical works of Romanian authors in order to observe the analysis grids, similarities and differences. In this regard, I started from the interpretation suggestions offered by the literary criticism. I tried to find out what works were commented in particular, which were left less observed and find the reasons that led to a fact or another.

I was helped my approach by the critique of Ana Selejan, in her studies I discovered a guideline leading easily to identify the reasons of the abundance of critical studies or their precariousness. The conclusions that I reached were that, in general, interwar writings attracted the attention of critics. Then Gyr's work was in the drawer or in the memoirs of the prisoners, this explains the lack of critical studies of the postwar period.

The current critique tried placing in the foreground Gyr's work, especially after the publication of the complete work. It was especially concerned to comment his detention poems without taking into account the poetry unpublished in books, a poetry that remained in newspapers. In particular the legionary poetry, of course, with no aesthetic value, but it exists. Also, from the poetry published in the communist newspaper  *Glasul patriei (Voice of the country)* up to the literary critic Ana Selejan, an expert researcher of the communist phenomenon, nobody considered the poetry published in the mentioned gazette although it reflects another side of Gyr's poetic.

All together, the work published during his life and after his death, legionary press, legionary songs, his memoirs, memoirs of others about him, represent the image of Radu Gyr. An accurate picture can not be achieved without this essential part of his life.

The general conclusions of the work point out the fact that no part of the work of Radu Gyr was ignored, in order to bring to light some issues unknown or lesser known by readers. I did not ignore militant articles, legionary doctrines; I placed them in the spotlight, as they give a moment of tension to the work through their novelty and Gyr's legionary vision.

The life of the poet Radu Gyr was an alternation of prison and freedom, as well as his writings. He wrote his work in freedom, and the posthumous work circulated in jail through the voice of prisoners, which was like food and spiritual support for them, or waited in the drawer for many years until it was printed. Gyr did not lose hope that his lyrical work would last, he never gave up to his creed, and communist regime was wrong believing that it could beat this man's feeling and Romanian emotion. A martyr poet crucified on the cross of his destiny, Radu Gyr remains a model of the interwar generation that believed in spirituality and orthodoxy keeping his faith even during the storms he endured, as he says in a posthumous poem, entitled  *Inteleptul (Wise man)*:

*Nu scuip pe-nfrângerile mele.*

*Ce-am adorat nu știu să ard*

*Și nu ridic în vânt obiele,*

*În locul ruptului stindard*

*I do not spit on my defeat.*

*I don't know how to burn what I adored*

*And I do not wind up the wraps,*

*Instead of the broken flag.*