

Introduction

The volume 39/2020 of the journal *Caietele Echinoc* is the result of a splendid collaboration between the Chair of Romanian Language and Literature of the University of Pisa and the director and editorial board of this publication, edited at “Babeş-Bolyai” University in Cluj-Napoca, which boasts a rich history and enjoys high prestige among the scientific journals published in Romania. *Caietele Echinoc* is widely acknowledged also by foreign academic bodies and communities, including the Italian Agency for the Evaluation of the University System and Research (ANVUR), which has included it in the list of class A publications, recognized as the highest level of quality for Area 10 – Ancient Studies, Philology, Literary Studies and Art History.

This special-themed issue, entitled *Subversions and Censorship. The Relationship between the Writer and Power during the Century of Dictatorships*, brings together the contributions presented at the international conference I organized from 14 to 16 November 2018, with the twofold contribution and support of the Department of Philology, Literature and Linguistics of the University of Pisa, a conference whose title was partly identical to the one mentioned above, to which we added the final note “A Gaze from Romania”, since the initiative arose, in the first instance, from the opportunity to enrich the cultural offer in the field of Romanian Language and Literature studies, with a long tradition at this Italian university.

The aim of the conference was to develop, in a transversal and multidisciplinary perspective, some themes already presented on the occasion of two consecutive editions of an interdisciplinary seminar that took place within the same Department during the academic years 2015-16 and 2016-17, and several others, expanding both the cultural and geographic area of study (initially that of dictatorial regimes, especially those in Central and Eastern Europe), and the time period of the survey, which focused mainly on the twentieth century. This interdisciplinary approach compared similar and at the same time different aspects (e.g. wars, the Shoah, the effects of mass society, as well as other social and political phenomena), which have also characterized Western culture in a broad sense.

The multiplicity of approaches and the wealth of thematic ideas that the reader will discover by browsing the contents and then by reading each essay included in this volume, are some of the premises of the project underlying the conference. As a result of our subsequent collaboration with the journal *Caietele Echinoc*, these premises are now strengthened, thanks in particular to the new studies added to the corpus already produced in the Pisan and Italian context, studies written by fellow scholars from “Babeş-Bolyai” University and other Romanian and foreign universities, who responded to the call launched by the Cluj editorial board.

The days of study spent in Pisa brought together scholars from the fields of literature, philology, history and the arts, who engaged in a fertile dialogue on literature, especially on Romanian literature, in order to examine cultural phenomena, languages and expressive techniques that derive from the relationship between writers and political power in the twentieth century. They have also proposed expanding their critical and theoretical examination to the themes of censorship, resistance or, conversely, to the analysis of the consequences that the compromise with cultural politics produced in the referenced period, but also at other points in history. Documented here are the different forms and phases of censorship, but also the strategies implemented to combat and/or merely to elude censorship, such as dissidence and exile, or the attitudes assumed by writers and artists during dictatorships. The results of this critical reflection are brought together in the first three thematic sections of the volume.

In keeping with the theme announced in the title, the guest of honor at the conference was Matei Vişniec, a bilingual Romanian-French writer, one of the most interesting contemporary European playwrights, who decided to leave Romania in 1987 to apply for political asylum in France. A playwright, but also a poet and a novelist, Vişniec was born in Romania in 1956 and has lived in Paris for more than thirty years, where he works as a journalist for Radio France Internationale. He is widely recognized in the culture of the host country above all for his dramaturgy, published almost entirely and performed on numerous stages, in Paris and in various other cities across the globe. His plays have also been regularly mounted at the Avignon Off Festival since 1993.

In November 2018, the author arrived in Pisa to oversee the staging of his important theatrical text *Occident Express*, a lucid and multifaceted representation of the theme of recent migration from Eastern European countries to the West as a consequence of a historical past marked by traumas and wounds that are still open in the eastern part of the Old Continent. The show was produced by the Nosodi Company of Pisa, directed by Franco Farina. The contributions published in the fourth thematic section illustrate aspects relating to Vişniec's work as a whole.

The last essay included in this volume starts from the collection of studies entitled *Romanian Literature as World Literature*, which, at the time, had just been released by Bloomsbury (New York), 2018. Edited by Mircea Martin, Christian Moraru and Andrei Terian, the book was launched at the end of the symposium, with the participation of the first two curators.

I welcome the opportunity to warmly thank the journal *Caietele Echinox* and *Phantasma. Centrul de Cercetare a Imaginarului* [The Center for Imagination Studies] at the Faculty of Letters of the "Babeş-Bolyai" University in Cluj-Napoca. I wish to thank in particular Professor Corin Braga, the Director of the publication, for his generous and impeccable collaboration in shaping this special-themed issue, as well as for having encouraged the scientific exchange with our Chair, which led to the organic integration and expansion of the initial corpus of studies that emerged from the conference.

It is perhaps almost superfluous to say that the selection and assessment of the studies was carried out through the peer review system and those precise methods and criteria of scientific evaluation have been applied to this collection as a whole.

I would also like to thank the National Museum of Romanian Literature, the Association of General and Comparative Literature of Romania (ALGCR) and the other Romanian universities that, together with “Babeş-Bolyai” University, have been scientific partners of the initiative: the University of Bucharest, through the Faculty of Letters, and “Ştefan cel Mare” University in Suceava (Romania) through the Faculty of Letters and Communication Sciences. On the Italian side, I am pleased to mention the collaboration and sponsorship of the Italian Association of Romanian Language and Literature Studies (AIR).

Furthermore, we extend our warmest appreciation for the double contribution to the organization of the conference and the publication of its scientific outcome, both to the Department of Philology, Literature and Linguistics of the University of Pisa, chaired by Professor Rolando Ferri, and to the Research Services Unit - National Research Section of the same university. Finally, my warmest gratitude goes to each of the colleagues in this Department who have contributed to the volume and have cooperated with me over the past few years.

Emilia David