

Romulus Scriban, Portrait of a Poet, “*Entirely and Unfairly Forgotten*”¹

Adrian Duțuc²

Abstract: Our approach aims to bring into the light of historical research the personality and work of Romulus Scriban, one of the notable members of a Romanian family that has given an impressive number of cultural personalities that distinguished themselves in pedagogical, political, literary, and theological areas of activity. In this article of historical research, in order to bring in a clearer light Romulus Scriban’s life and work, we make use of various didactic materials. First, we analyze archive material that consists mainly in correspondence with family members. Then we summarize the information received from the writings of historians who have treated historical episodes that include Romulus Scriban such as George Călinescu, Nicolae Iorga, George Potra, etc. In addition, we extract from the writings of Romulus Scriban, active in both the contemporary press and literature, details meant to complete his portrait and to formulate some conclusions on its work, echoes of it, and his legacy.

Keywords: Romanian poetry; Italy; culture

1. Introduction

Our endeavor aims at bringing into the light of historical research the personality and activity of Romulus Scriban, one of the important members of a family who gave Romania an impressive number of cultural, pedagogical, political, literary, and theological personalities.

In this historical research article, in order to clarify the life and activity of Romulus Scriban as much as we can, we will make use of various bibliographical materials. Thus, first we will be analyzing archive documents that consist mainly of his post box correspondence with the members of his family. Then we will synthesize the information that comes in from the writings of the historians who treated historical

¹ (Iorga, 1928, p. 320).

² Stefan cel Mare University, Suceava, Romania. Address: 13 Universității Street, Suceava, 20229, Romania, Tel.: +40230 216 147, Corresponding author: pr.dutuc@gmail.com.

episodes, which included Romulus Scriban such as George Călinescu, Nicolae Iorga, George Potra, etc. Also, from Romulus Scriban's work, active both in the contemporary press and the literature of the time, we will extract details meant to complete his portrait and be able to draw a series of conclusions regarding his activity, its echoes, as well as the legacy left to the posterity.

2. Education Received. Involvement in Contemporary Political Events

Romulus was born on August 24th 1838, in Burdujeni, Suceava (Călinescu, 1985, 339), as a nephew from one of Neofit and Filaret Scriban's brothers, of Gavriil Scriban's lineage. The latter had 9 children, five boys and four girls. These were August Scriban (teacher), Traian Scriban (doctor in Law), Ștefan (publicist under the pen name "*Digama*"), Iuliu (archimandrite, director of the Bucharest Seminary, professor of the Theology Faculty of Kishinev) Florica (poetess and teacher who studied in Paris) and Laura (poetess).

The beginning of his schooling was made in Iași. He graduated the courses of the Socola Seminary, then the higher cycle of the Iași Academy (the former Mihaileana Academy). Among all his siblings, he was the closest to his uncles, Neofit and Filaret. He was there for them, especially in their pro-unionist efforts. To that effect, we have a very precious reference made by Constantin Erbiceanu, who gives very suggestive details about Neofit's trip to Bucharest in 1857: "*He (that is, Neofit Scriban, n.n.) was entrusted in the summer of 1857 with the documents and protests of the Unionist Committee in Moldavia, and was supposed to secretly go to Bucharest, since they were closely followed by the anti-unionist government police; reaching Focșani he crosses Milcov by foot, together with his nephew, Romulus Scriban, who carried the documents next to his chest...*" (Erbiceanu, 1884, p. 403). These papers carried next to his chest were the documents and protests of the Unionist Committee from Moldavia (*History of Romanian literature*, Vol. II., 1968, p. 760).

Evidence of this very tight connection with his uncles is the letter written by Filaret Scriban to his nephew Romulus in which he shows that he considers him one of the most intelligent members of the family that he is a part of. Furthermore, as a proof of the closeness between the two, Filaret confesses to his nephew with regard to his childhood marked by shortcomings and hardships, as well as his difficult educational and professional journey. The letter also contains references to the tremendous importance of the Romanian Principalities Unification Act, about the fact that he had

focused on the younger generation members of the Scriban family, whom he helped to attend the courses and occupy important positions in their activity areas. (Erbiceanu, 1982, pp. 84-86) Moreover, supporting the cause of his bishop uncles in the dispute related to the canonicity of appointing bishops in the Romanian Principalities, Romulus prints "*Political reflections upon the Romanian uncanonical bishops in 1865*". This political reflection bears the number IV, which shows that he most probably had previously printed another three. (Iorga, 1920, p. 163)

In the same manner of fighting against the unwelcomed changes which had been made within the Romanian Orthodox Church, changes which the archimandrite Neofit Scriban fell victim of, Romulus Scriban protects the position of his bishop uncles in the press of that time. In this register, Romulus writes a series of articles in which he approaches this matter from various points of view: theological, canonical, legal, political, etc. Among his article on this subject, we must mention:

1. The article from the "*Românulu*" newspaper dated March 3rd 1866, the article "*Political reflections upon the Romănescu General Pseudo-Synod*". (Scriban, 1866, p. 59) In this article, he first shows that he had been an eye witness of the meeting from December 7 1865 within which Neofit addressed against the law, which gave the right to the Country Prince to appoint the Church bishops. Then Neofit forwarded a protest document on the Synod's desk and left the meeting hall. Consequently, in Romulus' own words, "*Pseudo-Synod threw its venom*" on both Neofit and Filaret Scriban, both being excluded from the Synod. The article reviews a series of reasons why the decisions taken by the Synod during that December 7 meeting, as well as the subsequent ones, were uncanonical. Romulus emphasizes the fact that the Romanian Orthodox Church Synod had been instructed by the country's government to silence Neofit to "*morally kill a dreaded individual*". Although the Church Synod compiled the document for the exclusion of Neofit from the Synod, after not having been allowed to express his position but a few minutes, that is, he had been forbidden to talk, in fact this Synod "*killed itself before the posterity and public opinion by the disapproval of the entire Romanian Orthodoxy*". (Scriban, 1866, p. 59)

Furthermore, Romulus shows in this article, signed "*Romulus Scriban, Dr. In Law and Chambers*", the "*Machiavelian*" cunning with which the Synod had used the falsification of certain statements and information in order to hide as much as possible the protest compiled by Neofit Scriban, most probably the purpose being that of making this protest illegal. The members of the Synod had used the fact that Neofit's protest document hadn't been dated and thus, they prepared Neofit's exclusion document with the date December 7th, mentioning that his exclusion was

being made “*taking the previous meeting into account*”. Yet, shows Romulus, Neofit had participated only in the December 7th meeting, so that exclusion document could not have been made but in the meeting of December 9th, after three days of pressure from the government and those who supported the new law regarding the appointing of bishops. “*I now unmasked this fraud, so that all Romanians know... so that the flashes of the protest be diminished [n.n. of Neofit Scriban’s]*”. (Scriban, 1866, p. 59)

Also, attacked in this article is the document by which Neofit had been excluded. Romulus shows that these charges which were brought to Neofit, those of being “*astray*”, since “*he has undertaken the right to speak on behalf of all Romanians*”, an accusation which had been based on some words that had been taken out of context and even changed, accusation which couldn’t have been based on any dogma, much less custom of the Orthodox Church.

The article entitled “*A new baptism, strange and unheard of in the history of the Church*”, in the “*Românulu*” (the Romanian) newspaper of March 20th 1866 (Scriban, 1866, p. 115), falls under the same theme of attacking the actions which supported and participated in the applying of uncanonical laws given by Alexandru Ioan Cuza. The article attacks a supplication which had been printed during that time and which aimed at being signed by the people with the purpose of fixing the abuse of the previous government. In the supplication there were two Holy Sacraments which were described – the Matrimony and the Baptism – yet “*beneath these beautiful icons, one can sense the hidden poison and venom of this deceitful snake...the fruit of an uncanonical hierarchy*” in Romulus’ polemic expression. That supplication was stating that the clerics who had received the positions in which they were appointed “*from Prince Cuza’s own hands*” in order to “*wash away the filthiness of breaking the Holy Canons and their consciousness*” through the “*civil election baptism*”.

Surely, this way of treating the situation was easy to attack, having nothing in common with the canons of the Church. Romulus develops both canonic and political considerations, regarding this problem of uncanonical hierarchs being appointed by Cuza.

Economically speaking, as one could expect, Romulus refers to the Church canon that points strictly to the situation in question: The apostolic Canon 30 (“*Should any bishop, using worldly rulers (beneficiaries), become master of any church, may they be defrocked and anathematized, along with any of his acolytes (his accomplices)*”).

Moreover, he reminds that, politically speaking, this is a very incautious act, that of going ahead with the uncanonical appointing of bishops, when *“Romania hasn't yet completely healed the Romanian Monasteries' wound, and it wouldn't be useful, nor cautious, to open yet another one”*.

In the subchapter entitled *“Political considerations”*, Romulus explains similar principles, one – common among the rulers of countries and the other one – among the Orthodox Church bishops. He explains the fact that, just as when a prince or a king is invested as ruler of a country he needs to be acknowledged by the other princes or kings, so that his subjects be able to have legal relations with other states, so happens in a church, when a person is chosen in the churchly superior authority, whether as metropolitan or bishop, he needs to be acknowledged by *“his equal fellows”*.

His reactionary attitude towards the shortcomings brought to the Church following Alexandru Ioan Cuza's election as Prince, bursts several times. Romulus was hurt not only by what he and the majority of the Church's rulers were considering a historical harm, but also by the fact that these changes had brought many inconveniences to his uncles Neofit and Filaret Scriban. For instance, in an article from the *“Românulu”* newspaper, entitled *“Two decrees given without notification”* (Scrian, 1867, p. 776) in which he shows his indignation related to the punishment of two clerics in their absence (D. Ioanichie of Evantia, Bishop of Câmpulung, and Priest Ion Păunescu of Pitești) who had protested against the uncanonical synod appointed by Cuza. The terms used by Romulus are very suggestive: *“Behold, Romanians! The bitter effects of Cuza's despotic laws! ... Look, as t after two years since the falling of the same scullion Prince, his laws still wound the freedom of the Romanian people...”*. What we get from these words is not the assertion against Cuza's reforms, which, with a few exceptions, have helped a lot the Romanian States' emancipation process, but the ardour with which Romulus was involved in defending Neofit and Filaret Scriban, both supporters of the unification and election of Cuza, but who subsequently became passionate opponents of the reforms which were aiming at the Romanian Orthodox Church.

Romulus sees in the good resolving and settlement of the Church reform a pillar that would later underpin the new Romania. Aside from the subjectivism due to the fact that his bishop uncles had been against Cuza's applied reforms and had thus suffered many shortcomings, Romulus sees his country's destiny as being a luminous one, just as long as its religious side would not be endangered. In order to argue these beliefs, he refers to history, showing that *“many men, patriots of our country, have*

often repeated that ancestral truth, that is, that religion has kept our Nationality intact". He calls religion "*the soul of a nation*", considering that "*in the middle of the anarchy lies religion as a principle conserving national life*". "*The state person cannot refuse to soothe a country whose soul is tormented and alarmed by the laws which gave it a lethal blow*". (Scriban, 1868, p. 237)

3. Studies in Italy

Appreciating Romulus' advocate and passionate attitude, Mihail Kogălniceanu valued him and supported him for studying in Italy. (Cunescu, 1982, p. 63) This appreciation and friendship between the two would last along their entire life. As an expression of this friendship, on October 24th 1893, Romulus Scriban is the one who gets to read, at Galați, the documents by which the city hall of the respective city was receiving the bronze bust sculpture of Mihail Kogălniceanu, offered by Mr. V. Urechia, a sculpture which was settled in the central park of this Danubian city.

At that time, superior education had become a branch that the new political regime wanted to take pride in, therefore it was encouraging the granting of scholarships to Law students, especially for studies abroad. At the same time, the Italian Government was receiving these scholars very positively (Iorga, 1928, p. 319), following a diplomatic agreement between Vasile Alecsandri and King Victor Emanuel (For this arrangement, see V. Alecsandri's confessions in *Excerpt from the history of my political missions*, in V. Alecsandri, *Trips and diplomatic missions* (edition commented by Al. Marcu), in col. *Clasici rom. Coment.*, p. 246). These first scholars sent to study abroad - Petru Borșiu, George Alexandrescu-Urechia, Romulus Scriban (Law), Ion Morțun (Letters) and George Roșu (Architecture) – had been recommended to the Cavour Committee through the intervention of Italy's first consul, D. Strambio, and sent into the care of Vegezzi Ruscala, former deputy in the Italian parliament (Potra, 1939, p. 45), appointed by the Country's Prince as "*caretaker of the young Romanians who are studying in the schools of Turin and correspondent of our Government as far as the country's education relations with Italy's education is concerned*" (Vegezzi Ruscala is the subject of an article written by Alexandru Marcu, which honors his memory, entitled "*The mentor of Torin's Moldavian students (1860-1861)*").

In the address no 10.290, the Minister of Cults and Public Instruction, M. Kogălniceanu, shows his Italian correspondent the need to bring Romania as closer to Italy as possible "*the stem where it blossomed from*", as well as "*hurrying the*

passing of Italian ideas to us". (Urechia, 1894, p. 231) The arrival of the young Moldavian students to Turin is referred to in the local press with enthusiasm, but that current didn't last long (*Gazetta di Torino*, No 266 writes that "*the intellectual alliance between Italy and Romania starts now, the latter country having opposed at its frontiers millions of corpses to the Ottoman invaders...*", while the Turinese journal *Opinione* noted: "*the moments are approaching, when the Latin race shall be set free from the foreign yoke*"). (Urechia, 1984, pp. 231-232)

In Turin, Romulus publishes in "*La monarchia italiana*" ("*The Italian Monarchy*") in 1863 an article about "*L'emigrazione italiana in Romania*" ("*The Italian emigration to Romania*"). In this article, the young Romanian student emphasized the fact that "*Italians are loved by our country*". Moreover, he shows that both countries have won out of this immigration, since the Italians which were established in Romania would "*introduce the commercial and industrial custom*" while the Romanians would offer them the necessary means. "*Out of this, Italia shall win wealth, while Romania –commercial and industrial force*". (The Romanian Historical Magazine, 1940, p. 147)

Romulus' affinity towards Italy has remained one of his defining features. Following his return to the country, he continues to state the fact that Romania's path must become similar to that of Italy's, considering that their patriotism, politics and diplomacy (*author's note*: of Italians, that is) are worth keeping in mind. (Scriban, 1868, p. 14) In the "*La Romani*" article, written in the winter of 1867 in the "*Românulu*" newspaper (Scriban, 1867, p. 1064), Romulus brings a series of evidence for the defense of Romania's Constitution, more precisely, he stands for the an unchanged Constitution. The article, signed "*Romulus Scriban, Voter in the Bucharest capital*", is openly pro-liberal and wrote in order to convince the readers to vote as deputy members of this party. Romulus shows that Romania meets the same difficulties as recently-constituted Italy, which is confronted with all the difficulties of a new state. In defending his theory, he reminds that Piedmont had adopted in 1848 its own Constitution and by maintaining it, made it so that the entire Italy joined it in unification. The urge at the end of the article is as illustrative as it can get, as far as Romulus' love for Italy was concerned: "*Not being able to be as the Orient or France, which has been continuously consolidating itself for ten centuries, let's be as Italy, that is: through hardships and losses suffered from our strong neighbors, let's rule our nationality's ship with political artistry!*".

Once the Italy study cycle is finalized, Romulus obtains the title of Doctor in Legal Sciences on December 23rd 1864, with a thesis in Civil Law. It was there that he

occupies the position of Secretary of the Neo-Latin International Society in Turin. From this period of studies in the Piemont City, we're left with the poem "*A night on the Danube's shores*", a "*poetical conception*" which A.D. Xenopol, compares in his work "*The history of Romanians in Traian's Dacia*", in chapter "*The intellectual culture*", as "*outburst of thinking*" to "*A night on Suceava's ruins*". (Xenopol, 1925, p. 106)

3. Return to the Country, in Iași and Galați

His return to the country, in Iași, is not a successful one, because he doesn't manage to pass the civil and penal procedure test for the lecturing desk of the Iași University, which was held on December 25th 1865. On these tests, Romulus receives two white balls and seven black balls.

About 4 years later, in September 1870, Romulus Scriban "*requests the political economy lecturing desk of the Galați Commercial School, where we'll find him even in 1893.*" (Xenopol, 1925, p. 340) Following the interim period, he is named permanent professor at the Political Economy Lecturing Desk through Royal Decree no 980 of March 28th 1891. (Romania's Official Gazette, 2 (14) April 1891, p. 2) In June 1886 the professors of this education institution choose Romulus Scriban, along with G. Mihăilescu and C. Bărbescu, as possible member of the Instruction's General Council. Yet, contrary to the Public Instruction Law, Dimitrie Sturza chooses Alecsandru Radu, who was Teacher of German at the same commercial school, for this position. (The Epoch, August 27th 1886, p. 2)

On May 10th 1897, as eminent professor he holds a speech at the House of the Galați Commercial School, in which he reveals the importance of Monarchy for Romanians ever since ancient times and talks about its continuity through the Ad-hoc Divan reform, which had fixed the ancient principle during King Carol the 1st's dynasty. Two days later, on May 12th 1897, the same professor held a conference about the city of Galați. The conference pointed out aspects such as the importance of political economy, merchants customs, the age of Galați, Stephen the Great's army called the Galați Cavaliers, the economical Galați under the Romanian rulers in 1828 and 1834, the porto-franc, the principle of customs exemption from Emperors Comod in 180 and Sever in 201, the city of Galati's right and its future. (The Epoch, May 16th 1897, p.4)

His loyalty and attachment towards the Royal House of Romania emerges not only from the above mentioned speech, but also from the fact that Romulus Scriban signs – along with Galati's many other prominent names, on hearing the joyful news related to the health status of His Royal Highness The Crown Prince – a dispatch addressed to him on May 23rd 1897, in which he signs as: "*Romulus Scriban, professor and attorney*". (The Epoch, May 25th 1897, p. 3)

It was also here in Galati that he practices Law and flirts with the local politics, pertaining to the Conservatory Party (We render the dispatch text: "*Enjoying - together with the entire country- the happy improvement of H.R.H. The Crown Prince's health status, we lay at the Throne's feet our feelings of respect, obedience and profound love and we ask God to send as soon as possible complete recovery to His Royal Highness for the tranquility and satisfaction of Your Majesty and for the great good of The Country and of Your Majesty's obedient People. May God Your Majesty and the entire Royal Family many happy years.*") (The Epoch, December 17th (29th) 1888, p. 2), appearing on the temporary list of the people who were eligible for the Senate, in 1890 being vice-president of the County Council (Romania's Official Gazette, December 16th (28th) 1890, p. 4907). Being interested in economic sciences, he publishes two works in this field: *The history of Romania's political economy, commerce and navigation*, published in 1885, and *The history of commerce*, published in 1893 – a work centred round the idea of Romania's economy increase.

He retires in 1899, and towards the end of his life he leaves Galați, "*a merchants' city*" which he had never liked (Iorga, 1920, p. 163), and settles down in Iași.

3. Publicist and Literary Activity

Romulus Scriban debuts as a poet in the encyclopedic review called "*Ateneul român*" ("*The Romanian Athenaeum*") in 1860. Although being a senior year student at the Iași Academy, Romulus was one of the collaborators of this publication, along with Vasile Alecsandri, Mihail Kogălniceanu, Bogdan Petriceicu Hașdeu and Gheorghe Tăutu. (The history of Romanian literature, 1968, p. 638) However, even though this review had such prestigious collaborators, despite being distributed freely in every school in the Romanian Principalities, the magazine appeared far too little time to gain the desired notoriety. His name is also connected to the literary magazines *Românul* ("*The Romanian*") and *Stea Dunării* ("*Danube's star*") from Iași. (Călinescu, 1985, p. 321) The latter magazine appears

from Mihail Kogălniceanu's initiative on October 1st 1855 until November 5th 1860, a period of time in which the publication has many synopes, appearing at a given moment in Belgium, Bruxelles under the name *l'Etoile du Danube*. Romulus Scriban's name is remembered among other collaborators of this magazine such as Gr. Alexandrescu, A. Russo, C. Negruzzi, C.A. Rosseti, and others. In the articles published in these magazines, Romulus approaches a series of political, legal, economical, cultural, as well as religious subjects.

Together with Demetriu N. Preda, Romulus establishes the political, literary, and religious semiweekly "*Romanian Daci*" which functions for only a couple of months, from October 1866 to February 1867. (Iorga, 1922, p. 151) The publication is received and announced with confidence, yet with various reservations related to the fact that it was maybe too critical. An article from the "*Românul*" newspaper dated October 9th 1866 entitled "*Romanian (!!!) Dacia*" describes this publication as being overly critical towards the government regimes and asks N. Preda and Romulus Scriban to "*also show the good people who would deserve to be chosen according to their proven abilities, and who haven't been in the Chamber or the Government before*". (*Românul*, October 9th 1866, pp. 722-723) The all too critical side of this semiweekly was what the two founders aimed at, as D.N. Preda himself recounts: "*the purpose of energetically combating the bad systems which have compromised this country for so long before the entire Europe*". (Preda, 1867, p. 168)

Among the notable articles that have been published in this bimensal, we recall the dialogue, which had taken place between the Romanian revolutionary Tudor Vladimirescu and Eterist Alexandru Ipsilanti. The details of this dialogue – as published in number 8 from 1870 of the literary sheet – had been discovered by August Scriban, who was chancellor of the Sankt Petersburg University at that time. (Aricescu, 1874, p. 137)

The publication's short life was due to the misunderstandings, which appeared between the two founder members. In his article published in the *Românul* newspaper on February 25th 1867, D.N. Preda presents an abstract of the facts which have led the "*Dacia*" newspaper to failure. He shows that, despite having consented to the respecting of the newspaper's program, Romulus Scriban didn't comply with the "*obligation to support the fight on the completely national realm and persist with all his force in the inauguration of a new and national politics*". (Aricescu, 1874, p. 168)

N. D. Preda appears to be very disappointed by the fact that Romulus Scriban published “*under the mask of defending Orthodoxy in our State*” and without his consent, a series of articles which had brought confusion within the Church and the State, emphasizing that Romulus writes “*from a personal and God-knows-what other point of view...*”. (Aricescu, 1874, p. 168)

Despite all this, Romulus published a new number of the *Dacia* newspaper on February 23rd without D.N. Preda’s consent, a number “*filled with personal churchy material*”. Preda finished his article: “*So I declare before the entire nation, that the February 23rd’s number of Dacia has gone out STEALTHILY, against Mr. Scriban’s WORD OF HONOR? against the program subscribed by him, against the committee’s members*”.

In 1866, he publishes “*Poems*”, a volume of poems with a significant stamp on the Italian influence and historical content. (Iorga, 1934, p. 56) In Nicolae Iorga’s own words, Romulus reunites in his poems “*Roman memories with the devout cult of Moldavia’s national past, with very large horizon aspirations, which he supports in a manner which in itself rises to what shall be achieved in general, without him, only a little time following this lonely dawn*”. (Iorga, 1934, p. 56)

George Călinescu, while remembering Romulus Scriban, aims at emphasizing aspects related to this character. First he says that Romulus’ small collection of poetical attempts which sees the light in 1860, is the initiation of the participation, ever since college time, of high school student to the their city’s literary life. Secondly, G. Călinescu mentions that still it is an “*adventure*” calling Romulus Scriban a poet. (Călinescu, 1985, p. 339) It is also from Călinescu that we find out the fact that Romulus Scriban leaves “*out of love for the new Italy*”, in 1860 in Italy, to Turin, in order to study. He remembers a dispute that Romulus Scriban becomes a part of a money debt of 67 pounds to Mrs. Matilda Siccardi from via S. Pelagia nr. 4, possibly even his landlady. (Călinescu, 1985, p. 339) Although he didn’t admit he owed anything to anyone, Romulus pays the debt, so that “*the name of Romanian doesn’t get in the mud*”. Another at least interesting detail that we find out from the same source is the fact that Romulus Scriban reads a salute before Garibaldi on behalf of his study colleagues.

Although G. Călinescu hadn’t seen him or presented him in a very positive light as far as his literary path is concerned, Romulus Scriban has enjoyed the appreciation of his closed ones. To that purpose, we mention a holograph document- Letter sent from Turin. (The “*Sf. Treime*” (“*Holy Trinity*”) Parish, Documentary Fund, vol. II,

file 75) This letter signed by G. Nastasano, who congratulates “*the honorable Father Neofit*” Scriban for his nephew Romulus, the author being informed about his young student Romulus Scriban by D. Negiți, a charge d’affaires of the Romanian Government. The author writes that he is a student who does the country proud. The letter is drafted in Romanian, sent by courier and has the following content:

“*My Honourable Father Neofit. While adversities are still keeping me in Turin where one can find D. Negiți, the charge d’affaires of our Government, who, as soon as I saw, he asked me if I’d met this Romanian student named Scriban, such were the accolades that the named D. Neggiți made on Your nephew. That my heart listened with National pride. So, driven by my pen’s ego to write what young Romania once said: Be happy, Neofit, for your work. Please receive a hand kiss. Turin, Ag. 21 G. Nastasano*”.

An important merit of Romulus Scriban is, as far as historical research is concerned, the fact that he had collected a part of the poems, lectures, and articles of his uncle Neofit. This collection first saw the light of the print with the title *Poetical attempts, Political speeches, Memoirs and political letters...* published in Iași, in 1870, the volume consisting of 252 pages.

In the same activity register, we must mention the fact that Romulus Scriban, at the advice of the Bucharest typographer Toma Teodorescu, reviews the old Romanian translations of Saint Ioan Gură de Aur’s *Margaritarele* (“*Pearls*”), comparing them to the Greek edition published in Venice in 1793. (Călinescu, 1985, p. 100) This works goes out under the title *Mărgăritare sau colecțiune de cuvinte alese ale celui întru Sfinți Părintelui nostru Ioan Hrisostomul Arhiepiscopul Constantinopolului și ale altor Sfinți Părinți* (“*Pearls or a collection of chosen words of The One Among the Saints, Our Father Ioan Chrysostom Archbishop of Constantinople and of other Holy Fathers*”) for the third time printed in Romanian, in Bucharest, by the Toma Teodorescu Printing House, in 1872, the volume having 384 pages, drafted in Romanian using the Cyrillic alphabet. 34 sermons of Saint Ioan Gură de Aur, 10 sermons and a few other teachings from other writers. (Călinescu, 1985, p. 101)

Romulus Scriban took part in a poetry contest called “*Floral games*”, which was held in Paris. The poem which won the First Prize at this contest - “*The Latin Race*” written by Vasile Alecsandri” – was recited on the occasion of certain manifestations for the celebration of Latinity, which took place in the city of Montpellier between May 22nd and 30th in 1878. Unfortunately, due to the fact that the Romanian Principalities had been at war since the beginning of 1877, both Vasile Alecsandri,

as well as other Romanians couldn't participate in these manifestations held in France. Frédéric Mistral was the one who read the winner poem, and four verses out of this poem are encrusted in the marble plaque next to L'arque de Triomphe.

The poem with which Romulus entered the contest obtained the 3rd Prize, and in the evening of the very day in which the contest was held, a reception was organized, within which a telegram signed by 21 Romanian deputies, addressed to their "Latin brethren", by which they were inviting them to Bucharest in September 1879, was read.

This success of the Romanian poetry hasn't stayed echoless. The famous "Convorbiri literare" ("Literary conversations") magazine writes in its June 1st 1878 number: "Today, Grivița and Montpellier are two inseparable names and equally dear to Romanians, since they represent two brilliant victories by which Romanians have stated their right and will to exist¹".

In his speech held within a meeting in July 1920 at the Romanian Academy, "A romantic poet of the national union: Romulus Scriban", Nicoale Iorga shows himself pleasantly surprised by the fact that he had found in a Bucharest antique shop, a few numbers of the "Literary Dacia" magazine, a literary publication which appears in Galați under the management of Romulus Scriban. (Iorga, 1920, p. 125) The great historian shows that both Romulus' statements, ("Romanian irredentist poet", as he called him) and "the remarkable verses...attract the memory". (Iorga, 1920, p. 125)

Yet, Iorga hasn't been the first personality of his time to observe Romulus Scriban. His poetry had long been observed by Al. D. Xenopol, who reminds in his "Istoria lui Cuza-Vodă" ("Cuza Vodă's History") in the chapter which treats the literature of that historical time, Romulus Scriban's poetry: "A night on Suceava's ruins". (Iorga, 1922, p. 56)

Romulus Scriban left a series of manuscripts, which attest his literary activity. Among these, worth mentioning is a beautiful poem called "Ștefanida", an ode brought to the fourth centenary from the death of the illustrious Moldavian King Stephen the Great (1904) (Iorga, 1920, p. 58) which he evokes repeatedly in his articles, urging his readers not to forget the legacy left to posterity by the great Moldavian ruler.

¹ (http://necenzurat.ro/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=6825%3Aod-gintei-latine&Itemid=13 Taken up from <http://ro.altermedia.info>.

Analyzing the poetical style of Romulus Scriban, historian Nicolae Iorga makes a general profile. First, he shows that Romulus was “*deeply pinched*” by the ideas which once pertained to Asachi, ideas which hadn’t been represented by anyone in our literature for almost two decades. Iorga finds the state of mind found in Romulus Scriban’s poetry to be interesting, since it was surely a defining one for other study colleagues in Italy, too. “*In Italy (writes Iorga) he found the entire dowry of a classicism which he borrows in all his Virgilian charm, with its allegories of eternal abstractions and the refreshing of comparisons which elements he searches for in the lively life around him.*” (Iorga, 1934, p. 57)

Furthermore, Romulus always wrote under the shadow of an idea of a national epos similar to the one that the Italian literature could be described. According to those written by Romulus in prose, among others, it appears that he was profoundly convinced of the fact that “*a nation cannot be smashed into pieces by the violence of time, when <<his body and clothes are divided among strangers>>, while his soul is staying alive, with the “literature of his ancestors, his language, his morals and religion, then his soul is embodied, is born again, and grows new again, to the glory and surprise of the centuries”*. (Iorga, 1934, p. 57) Romulus’s concern for the future of the Romanian nation wasn’t stopping at the inhabitants of the two Romanian Principalities, but was crossing beyond the borders, anywhere there were Romanian ethnics. This aspect is shown not only by his poems and articles written in the press of that time, but also the fact that in 1879 we find him on the I Macedo-Romanian Culture Society members list (Stoicescu, Naum, & Petrescu-Birina, 1900, p. 108) a society which purpose was, among others, the spreading of teachings between the Romanian inhabitants across the Danube and across the Balkans in the Romanian schools.

“*The Italian ode attracts this old student in Law, with studies more or less complete*”. (Iorga, 1920, p. 165) But the Italian influence can be sensed not only in the poetical area, what Romulus brought from Italy was also a strong sense of pertaining to the Latinity, a sense which had made him give significant importance to Dacia of all times¹, an importance even led to, says Iorga, “*bigotry and anger*”. (Iorga, 1920, p.

¹ For more relevance, we render the poem “*Winter in Dacia*”:

*The old Pawn washed his grey-haired forehead
Blizzards and snowstorms throwing from his mountain.
Wind the horn, oh, Roman corners, the country's resurrection
And from the morning's all too delicate silence,
Approach the moment, desired with passion
When the country will take back its ancient frontiers!
From Nistru' til Tisa Moldavia shall stretch,*

165) This conception of his, with a Dacian-Roman emphasized stamp brings with itself something that Iorga calls “*a great Romanian patriotism*” which finds as poetical sources of inspiration - various symbols of Romanianism from the Calusari traditional folk Romanian dance “*proud glory souvenir of Rome’s origins*” until Stephen the Great’s victories, the Craiova and Târgoviște Fortress as well as Hotin’s old citadel (Iorga, 1920, pp. 168-169). When remembering Romulus in, *The history of the Romanian Church and religious life of Romanians*”, Iorga writes that his name is *a manifesto of nationalism with Roman foundation*”. (Iorga, 1909, p. 263)

4. Conclusions

The research of Romulus Scriban’s life and activity brings to light an interesting personality, who had a recognized role within his activity areas. His participation in the battle led for the Unification of the Romanian Principalities, although discreet, was a precise one and worth being in the history’s memory.

The fact that he was the member of the famous Scriban family, as well as having helped his uncles Neofit and Filaret in the tumultuous process of unifying the Principalities, and in the hardships that followed, made Romulus enjoy the trust and protection of some prominent personalities of the time. With their help, Romulus found an opening to the studies he followed in Italy, as well as support in his activity within the country.

As a publicist, he was without a doubt an inconvenient one for his very polemic spirit in which he approached certain contemporary subjects, yet the arguments he brought were as pertinent as they could be. This polemic spirit is a family legacy, also inherited by his son Iuliu Scriban, which will surpass his father.

As a poet, he made himself known to his contemporary epoch. Although we can’t say that he had the same genius as other contemporary poets, Romulus was a talented poet, who remained in the Romanian culture history more for the liveliness that he created in Iași, where he was one of the main factors of maintaining the proper atmosphere of literary interest among students. (History of Romanian Literature, 1968, p. 761)

As an abstract of what history mentions about Romulus Scriban’s literary activity, Iorga was ending his above mentioned speech held at the Romanian Academy in a

And the entire Dacia finally shall embound it”.

very positive note, saying: *“Beautiful words, in the best sense of the healthiest direction! They excuse so many shortcomings and an often desperate inequality. But especially these ideas, as is the sonority and brilliance of certain verses as well as the shiver of the past, the love for all the popular words and turns, the laborious honesty of the rich rime, show that before Eminescu’s light, there were flickers which foretold it. Just as in the universal literature, in the German Switzerland, a certain Leuthold often has some of Eminescu’s notes, the same happens in the Romanian one, which we forget from one moment to another, and mostly, from one generation to another, one such as Vasile Bumbac, one such a Romulus Scriban come to show that brilliant individuality comes off of a joint fund of feelings and ideas. Our cultural value cannot but develop through this”*. (Iorga, 1920, p. 169) Furthermore, on another publicist occasion, Iorga describes Romulus Scriban as *“talented poet, who always kept the Italian classicism norms in writing, and who’s unfairly forgotten”*. (Iorga, 1928, p. 320)

5. Acknowledgment

This paper has been prepared with the financial support of the project “Quality European Doctorate - EURODOC”, Contract no. POSDRU/187/1.5/S/155450, project co-financed by the European Social Fund through the Sectoral Operational Programme “Human Resources Development” 2007-2013.

6. References

- Aricescu C.P. (1874). *Justifying documents regarding the 1821 Romanian revolution*. Craiova.
- Călinescu, G. (1985). *The history of Romanian literature from its origins until present*. Bucharest: Minerva.
- Cunescu, G. (1982). Archimandrite Iuliu Scriban, defender of Romanian orthodoxy – Testimony of gratitude. *Mitropolia Olteniei*.
- From the country. *Rural journal*, year X, 5 November, No. 19 (211).
- The Epoch, year I, no. 228, 27 August, 1886. Bucharest: “Le Peuple Romain”.
- The Epoch. (1897). II series. year III. no. 453. 16 May, Bucharest: Epoca.
- The Epoch. (1897). II series, year III, no. 461, 25 May, Bucharest: Epoca.
- The Epoch. (1888). IV year. no. 921. 17 (29) December, Bucharest: Epoca.
- Erbiceanu, C. (1884). Contemporary history – Material for national and religious history of Romanians, life and activity of the late professor and bishop Neofit Scriban, Bishop of Edesa, *Biserica Ortodoxă Română*, 7/ *The Romanian Orthodox Church*, 7.
- Erbiceanu, C. (1982). *The life, activity and writings of Filaret Scriban treated from a religious, moral and literary point of view*. Bucharest.
- Iorga, N. (1930). *The history of the Romanian Church and of the religious life of Romanians*. Vol. II. Bucharest: Neamului Românesc.
- Iorga, N. (1928). *The history of the Romanian educational system*. Bucharest: Casei Școalelor.
- Iorga, N. (1922). *History of the Romanian press from its beginnings until 1916*. Bucharest: Atelierele Societății Anonime “Adevărul”.
- Iorga, N. (1920), A romantic poet of national unity, Romulus Scriban, communication at the Romanian Academy. *Historical Journal*, year VI, 7-9.
- Iorga, N. (1934). The history of the contemporary Romanian literature, I vol., *The creation of the form* (1867-1890). Bucharest: Adevărul.
- ****History of Romanian literature*, Vol. II. *From the Ardeleană School until Junimea*. (1968). Bucharest: Academy of RSR.
- ****History of Romanian literature*. Vol. III, (1973). Bucharest: RSR Academy.
- ****In memoriam Vasile Pârvan*. (1934). Volume published by the Academic Association “*Vasile Pârvan*”, Bucharest.
- Potra, G. (1939). *Romanian travelers in foreign countries*. Bucharest: Oltenia.
- Romanian Historical Journal*. (1940). Vol. IX. Bucharest: National Typography.
- Românul/The Romanian*. (1866). October 9th.
- Preda, D. (1867). *Românul*, year XI, 25 February.

- Scriban, R. (1866). Political reflections on the False General Romanian Synod. *Românulu*, March 3.
- Scriban, R. (1866). A new, bizarre, and unheard-of baptism in Church history. *Românulu*, March 20.
- Scriban, R. (1867). Two sentences issued without notice. *Românulu*, year XI, September 13.
- Scriban, R. (1868). Legislative meditations for the solving of the church problem in Romania. *Românul*, year XII, march 15.
- Scriban, R. (1868). Correspondence regarding Italy. *The Romanian*, year XII.
- Scriban, R. (1867). At the Romans. *The Romanian*, year XI.
- “Saint Trinity” Parish, *Documentary Database*, II vol. Suceava.
- Stoicescu, V., & Naum, C., & Petrescu-Birina C. (1900). *Romanians in Macedonia (270-1901)*. Bucharest: Viitorul.
- Romania’s Official Gazette. (1891). 1, 2 (14) April.
- Romania’s Official Gazette. (1890). 208, 16 (28) December.
- Urechia, V.A. (1894). *History of schools between 1800 and 1864*. Bucharest: State Typography.
- Xenopol, A.D. (1925). *The history of Romanians in Traianic Dacia*. vol. XIV, *The reign of Cuza*, Bucharest: “Romanian Book”.

Online Sources

http://ne-cenzurat.ro/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=6825%3Aod-gintei-latine&Itemid=13 apud <http://ro.altermedia.info>.