

The First Cultural Literary Magazines before the War of Independence in 1878

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Abstract: The cultural development of Lower Danube area was felt after 1840, when in Romania the first societies intended to promote the culture among the masses, to transform it into an affordable commodity. The first attempt to popularize the literature occurred in Galati, in 1851, when it was published a little magazine, *Muzeu literaru*. The political and linguistic problems of the time made it difficult the mission of popularizing the culture, so one may speak of cultural, literary journals after the merging of two Principalities in 1859. The first publication was a political literary importance, entitled *Moş Ion*, which was miraculously discovered, much later in a private collection in Braila. This was achieved by the well-known journalist George Baronzi. We should mention that in that period the journal *Omul şi natura/The man and nature* has seen the light of printing in 1874 in Cahul. The few publications have emerged as an important contribution to the cultural development of the area and of the Romanian language, having published well known national poets.

Keywords: cultural development; Lower Danube; mass-media

The economic development of cities in the Romanian Lower Danube Area led to the release of the first economic, political newspapers, which had a significant cultural component, but on the actual development from the cultural point of view and therefore there is no literature involved within those years. During the Organic Regulation there were just the basis of the first libraries in Bucharest, Iasi and Craiova. Only after 1840 there were first established county libraries and it began organizing the scientific and cultural societies. In Braila, the first library and museum was founded by royal decree in 1881. There were concerns on the development of the Romanian language, the aim was to write the Romanian grammar. By the Russo-Turkish War, we may not speak of cultural development of the area, but thereafter a national cultural effervescence has left traces in Braila and Galati. In 1833, in Bucharest, the Philharmonic Society was created based on previous literary society and in Moldova, in Iasi, it was created a society of physicians and naturalists; in 1841 it came the proposal to establish an Academy

that would have members in Moldova and Romania Country that would work on editing a grammar and a dictionary, an idea that had been submitted in 1832 by Dinicu Golescu as well. In January 1844 another literary Society was formed in the following year called of the Literary Association of Romania. All these national cultural movement echoed in Braila and Galati, where there were their branches. Never-failing any event was the Carpathians Society, founded after 1880 and it is now considered one of the Great Romania's Secret Services for it has fought by all means to enforce in the public consciousness the idea of uniting the three principalities.

There were involved in particularly professors, who held conferences regularly, among them being Șt. C. Hepites or I. C. Lerescu. In 1888 it was founded the Athenaeum in Braila, where they worked and lectured at conferences to politicians, professors, creating a true cultural life. In April 1891 it was founded at Braila the Cultural League, its first president being the politician Cociăș C.G., then the function was taken over by Professor Atanase Popescu. And this society has fought for national unity. The cultural agitation dedicated to the evolution and development company has lead in 1896 to the setting-up of The Plunge Society, where there were involved especially high school students, among which P. Armencea at first and then even Nae Ionescu.

This society had a significant role in uniting the forces of the high school pupils and of the Braila's students in Bucharest, who managed to build their very own first hostel. In May 1899 it was established the Lecture Society of the pupils from Nicolae Bălcescu High School, and in 1904 the teacher staff of this high school built the basis of a Cultural Circle. One of the active members of these societies was Petre Armencea who founded in 1899 the library that was named after him for a long time and he offered the Plunge Society Patrimony. S. Semilian stated that this library began with two or three boxes full of books that were carried from house to house. (Semilian, 1927, p. 161)

Among the founding members it was included the poet Panait Cerna. After 1908 it becomes public library, and during the First World War is hidden in the attic of a house not to be plundered by the army of occupation. After the war it reached at the present location of the theater, a building donated to the community building by the former Mayor, Dumitru Ionescu.

It was remarkable at Braila the theatrical movement. The economic development has brought also the increase of financial strength of the inhabitants, so that all the

major theaters in the capital and even from abroad had written in their tournament list Braila City. It is famous the story that evokes the demanding taste for drama of Braila's people. The theater managers, when they wanted to know whether a public performance will be successful or not, played firstly in Braila. If it was successful there, then it would have been appreciated everywhere. The theatre in Braila was there since 1840, but it is only the building, for a permanent band, which will be created much later. In 1877 it is established in Braila and a philharmonic society as well, Lyra, who manages to stand up since then.

In this context, although seemingly favorable for cultural printing press literary, there were not released many magazines in Braila. Some of them were printed more in Galati and in Tulcea there were fewer than in Braila, due to the late release from the Turkish domination. The reason for this situation is revealed in by Solomon Semilian (1927). "*Our city has given to the country writers, artists and scholars who count more in the arena of the Romanian culture, and yet Braila has only benefited from this fact only morally. The fault does not belong to Braila, or to literary, cultural and scientific personalities that come from Braila, but to the social and political circumstances that developed in Romania. The centralized administrative political system has made from the capital of the country a political, cultural and literary center.*" (Semilian, 1927, p. 34)

Despite these unfavorable conditions of existence of local cultural literary life in the Lower Danube area, there have emerged publications belonging to the domain that had its importance domain and that needs to be taken into account in the history of national cultural movement. In the specialized literature of these magazines only two are taken into consideration *Muzeu literar/Literary Museum* and *Dacia literară/Literary Dacia Museum*, others are overlooked, although the collections were at the Romanian Academy Library, as the publication from Cahul, *Omul și natura/The Man and Nature*, or the logs that did not exist in the known collections at Bucharest and those in the province that were not taken into consideration, such as the paper *Moș Ion/Old John*.

The main problem in evaluating these publications was the lack of signatures. Practically the published articles have unknown authors, but we believe that it is not a sufficient reason to ignore their contribution to the development of culture and literature, at least at regional level it is real. It is therefore necessary and appropriate to disclose this periodical, important for the cultural, literary evolution of the Romanian society.

The first publication was released in the Lower Danube in 1839, but the first literary publication was printed 12 years later. *Muzeu literaru/ Literary Museum* is the first literary magazine from Galati, that appeared as a supplement to *Patria/Homeland* Newspaper from Galati. It was small, with eight pages only, with Cyrillic mixed with Latin letters. The first two numbers were not kept.

The Academy Collection begins with the issue 3 of April 15, 1851. It is published a story entitled *Providența/Providence*, poems F.M. Galati and Ioan Ketrariu writes about the history of Moldova-Wallachian principalities, a translation without the signature. The editor is Vrabie V., and F. Momferato publisher and owner, the owner of the printer with the same name where it was probably printed the supplement as well. The next issue, 4 of April 30, 1851 published a play, *Avgara în deșert/Avgara in the desert*, lyrical scenes, a dialogue between Avgara and Ismail. The story *Țiitorii de cărți/The book keepers* has as subject the money issue, morals and officers. It was kept the same format and number of pages as the previous issue.

The next publication came after the Union of 1859, after the vocabulary and language problems were more ordered. Thus, in 1866 *Moș Ion/Old John* Newspaper is released, fully with Latin letters, in Braila. It was the first publication was achieved by George Baronzi with the engineer S. Belloescu, although Baronzi had a publishing activity since 1845 at the *Curierul românesc/The Romanian Courier*. It was printed weekly, on Saturdays, the guarantor being G. N. Tetorian. For the first time it appears on the front page of the newspaper a summary of the articles for the reader to see before you reading it. Of this publication is in the Braila County Library just one issue, 8 February 1866, missing from the collections of the Academy. In Bianu's catalog of 1913 it is written the summary data collected from other newspapers.

The first time this copy is described by Semilian in the *Analele Brăilei/Annals of Braila*, no. 3-4 of 1931, then resumed and developed in issue 2 of 1935, where it tells how he discovered the newspaper. "A fortunate incident made me discover a copy of the newspaper *Moș Ion/Old John*, from a friend, Mr. B. Schwartz of Braila, an avid collector of rare books and publications. My friend discovered this precious copy, among other newspapers and old books, in a forgotten corner of the bridge. How many old, precious documents wouldn't be found, if he wouldn't rummage through the bridge! But few bother to look over for prints on which time has covered them with the forgetting dust! The copy of *Moș Ion/Old John* owned by Mr. B. Schwartz, is doubly valuable, because: 1. It cannot be found in the

collections of the Romanian Academy and 2. It is dedicated entirely to the events occurring after the overthrow of Prince Alexandru Ion Cuza and the proclamation, as Lord, the Count Filip de Flandra”. (Semilian, 1935, p. 33) The Journal was subtitled “A newspaper for political news, literature, sciences and artists, commerce, industry and agriculture” and it was considered by Semilian the first newspaper with political news, but could equally be considered the first literary journal in Braila. The Newspaper greeted the event in February 11, 1866, when Prince Alexandru Ioan Cuza abdicated. The feature article, *Dumnezeu e cu noi!/God is with us!* Speaks of seven years of suffering endured by the people, of the abdication of Cuza and the coming to the throne of Prince Filip I and his new government.

Semilian appreciates as being important also because it describes how it was celebrated the election of the new Lord in Braila. It is published the full document of Cuza's abdication act and the speech of N. Murgășanu held army in Braila on the abdication day. The newspaper is typed in three columns, and in the bottom of the page is located the section “Foița lui Moș Ion/The foil of *Old John*”, which is published in a literary text “Susenii and Joseni”, which continues on pages two and three. In these pages, the top positions are filled with proclamations by the Romanian people of the ministers of the royal lieutenants.

On page three there are published details about the development of the events in the night of the abdication of Cuza obtained from its private correspondence. Also on page three it is given information about food preservation by drying, salt or sugar. It then follows an article entitled *Istoria lui Mahomet și a Califilor/History of Mahomet and the Caliphs* of E. Butoianu. There are several fables published signed by Baronzi, *După chip și asemănare: Lupoanca și meii/According to image and likeness: The wolf/female and the lambs, Pisica și șoricii/ The Cat and the mice, Gaia și puii/Gaia and the chickens, Tiranul și poporul/The tyrant and the people* - a parody form of popular ballads, of which Semilian said to be “graceful and flowing versification, inspired by popular literature, that George Baronzi knew to use with very much talent in his poetic work.” (Semilian S. S., 1927, p. 39)

Finally, engineer S. Belloescu addressed an invitation to its conference on political economy, which says that the ladies will have reserved seats. Semilian states that *Moș Ion/Old John* has ceased to appear in February 1868 when it merged with *L’Echo Danubien/The Danubian Echo* Galati, edited by S. Carmelin, changing its name then press the Romanian newspaper that he himself is not in the collections of the Romanian Academy. It appeared weekly in Romanian and French. From this

we can deduce that *Pressa română/The Romanian Press* was a cultural newspaper, so as *Moş Ion/Old John*. Then, just three years apart from the *Literary Dacia/Dacia literară* magazine at Galati, between October 1st, 1868 - March 1, 1869, with monthly frequency under the leadership of Romulus Scriban who also signed the magazine's texts.

Researchers have found that between this magazine and its homonym from 1840 there was a vague contiguity, especially the ideas developed in Article program. "The New D.I. intended to make from literature an instrument of political and national action, building on the historical traditions of the Romanian people". (The dictionary of Romanian Literature since its beginning until 1900, 1979, p. 258) It is revealed the occurrence of this magazine because it aimed at promoting the literature inspired by the Romanian spirit. From the objective to its achievement is a long way since the publication was mediocre with a few exceptions belonging Romulus Scriban, whose creations were influenced by Gr. Alexandrescu.

An interesting publication, in Romanian, also appeared in 1874 in Cahul. That was *Omul și natura/The man and nature*, scientific and practical paper, for the conversing and improving the human race, issued twice a month, the 1st and 15th of each month. The specimen, a number of test print to see people's interest in the magazine, appeared on December 15, 1874 in Cahul, being edited by I. Munteanu. It had 16 pages and it began with an article about the human race. The article was not signed nor had any title.

The first issue, year I, was released on January 1, 1875 in Cahul and it discusses problems of childhood and marriage. On January 15 is the next to information about diet and how blood is formed. In issue 4 of February 15 it appears an article signed by Dr. J Felix, on graham bread, and in issue 6 of 15 March is published the Law on the organization of medical service. On June 15, issue 12 it is published the Regulation on the establishment of rural pharmacies. Last issue on August 1, 1875, is was on the Rule of unhealthy industries. It is an important publication because it promoted the correct Romanian language, in an area where it was very difficult to do so.

Only after four years in 1878 appears at Galati *Calendarul coscarilor/The calendar of kiosk's people* which includes, in addition to text utility with holidays and celebrations, mobile holidays, national, moon phases, and a literary text, *Minunile coscarilor/ The wonders of kiosk's people*, unsigned, anecdotes and poems of Vasile Cârlova taken from *Steaua României / Romania's Star*. In 1874 can be

mentioned an attempt for entertainment press, *Filosovski Kamak*, of which only two issues were released, the editor being Kostaky. It was printed at the printing house of the Bulgarian D. Panicikov. It is known that it was released because of an essay done by Alexandru Iordan, *Contribuții la istoricul tipografiilor muntene. Activitatea tipografiilor bulgărești/Contributions to the mountains history printers. The activity of Bulgarian printers* published in *Timocul Magazine*, in 1942, book III, page 25.

It can be seen therefore that, until the War of Independence in the Lower Danube the publishing activity was not very intense, and the concerns in the field, regarded particularly the political or social domain. Although they could not ignore the literary concerns in these journals, as they have contributed to the development of local cultural life and it gave to future writers the opportunity to develop their horizon of expectations, contributing to the separation of literature from the old regime and it enabled the possibility of developing the national literature. In addition, we can say that these magazines are part of the literary tendencies of the time, being based on national history, the folklore, but also on the desire to separate the Greek language, switching to Latin alphabet.

In *Romanian history* published by the Romanian Academy it states that the period was characterized in terms of the reception of Romantic literature, especially the French one, also by maintaining the pre-Romantic presence, here we may give as example Vasile Cârlova's poetry. The same volume states that an important role in the development and stimulation of literary periodicals had the periodicals, so few magazines have valued these when discussing the evolution of literature in the Lower Danube.

For any student the success is an evident link between the national movement and development of literature, literature supporting the idea of union. It is true that the last time before the War of Independence, it was hard to say provincial writers while in literature appeared Eminescu, Creanga Caragiale, but they even published translations that should be highlighted because they contributed to the development of Romanian Literature and when discussing cultural and literary periodicals, be valued and the Lower Danube for their contribution, even as minor. I remember the minor poets and CD Aricescu, Romulus Scriban among many others, so that these periodicals cannot be ignored.

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