

The Problematization of the Identification of the Ego During the Confession

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Abstract The article is intended as a psychodynamic interpretation of the fundamental concepts with which the academician Eugen Simion contemplates, describes and interprets the Parisian reality of the 70s. We operate with identification, the symbolic construction of individual and collective identity, defence mechanisms from the positive and/or negative areas, authentic reality and/or fantasy. The references are to famous psychoanalysts (Lacan, Freud, Winnicott), to the weapon and the art of war, as this article wants to be a psychoanalytic interpretation of what Eugen Simion called "lived time", time of confessions, because Auerbach's continuous present represents exactly those seconds in which the passing reality goes to posterity by fixing it in the memory. The journal includes anodyne events raised to the level of conceptualization and value, the interpretations of this article highlighting: projection, projective identification, ideal Ego, hyper-analyzability, secrecy and the issue of filiation, sublimation, Dadaism, confession, ivory balance and thoughtfulness. The phenomenon of manipulation, the historical and political vein, the hidden melancholy, the problematic of value judgments is taken into account.

Keywords Parisian diary, Auerbach continuous present, Mechanisms of sublimation, The art of war, The issue of secrecy

1. Introduction

Eugen Simion was one of the most appreciated Romanian literary critics and historians, essayists and theorists in the field of literature. He is considered the (theoretical) founder of biographical genres (journals, correspondence, memoirs). His activity as editor and foreword of editions, author of monographs and promoter of projects of national scope, resulted, among others: General Dictionary of Romanian Literature (DGLR, two editions), Chronology of Romanian Literary Life 1944 - 2012, (CVLR (60 volumes), facsimile of Eminescu manuscripts (notebooks) (38 volumes). University professor and academician, president of the high forum between 1997 – 2006, Eugen Simion became a member of seven other academies, from: Great Britain, Denmark, France, Greece, Moldova, Spain, Serbia, and some of his books and studies were translated in Belgium, Switzerland, France, Germany, USA, Serbia, Hungary. The unexpected disappearance of Professor Eugen Simion left in the work phase a vast site of literary projects, now devoid of the infectious energy and enthusiasm of their originator. These are currently being continued and completed by the researchers of the Institute of Literary History and Theory

"G. Călinescu" of the Romanian Academy, whose director was acad. Eugen Simion. The critical reception of Eugen Simion's work also contains a lot of references from which an expressive "self-portrait of words" emerges, derived from the touches of the 3000 articles, chronicles and reviews, which bear his signature. Inside them, as in the edited work, the unmistakable portrait of this personality can be seen. In addition to the "mirror" images of the **Parisian**, Berlin and Danish **Journals**, several tens of thousands more pages of Journal entries - only very little and fragmentarily known (therefore, not included in the metabolism of our literary life!), are expected among the literati who show signs of not being able to control their curiosity.

2. Parisian Journal

Eugen Simion describes identification in his **Parisian Journal** [1] as an operation of construction of the human subject, which means that it involves a process of transformation that takes place in the individual who assumes an image. In the case of Eugen Simion's personality, this image is constituted, first of all, of the strongly stimulating projections of others, in all the creative periods of his existence. In every age and every time, a personality of such a magnitude can only assume an image of identification (and / or including) through the others. The concept of identification raises important theoretical issues.

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Using Lacanian concepts [2], we speak in the case of Eugen Simion's personality about an imaginary identification and a symbolic identification.

Imaginary identification is strongly associated with the mirror stage, a moment of the initiation of this process of knowing the identity. It is here that the ideal Ego is born, which originates in a reflected image, an image that gives unity and synthesises the Ego to be constructed. Subsequently, several unknown variables will govern around this Ego.

Perhaps, the moment when we make first contact with our identity (the first instance of our own image reflected in the mirror) is the only image unguarded by others, charged with the uniqueness of the Ego, a singularity of identity that we recurrently seek later in our lives and during the development as entities of the mind.

In the works of Sigmund Freud [3], we encounter the concept of the ideal Ego, what most individuals today consider to be their (authentic and real) Ego, but it is important to note that it represents a part of the Ego, which functions as an ideal or an image of what the individual aspires to be. The ideal Ego is an internalized instance (a secondary, not a primary, instance) that contains the standards, values, and ideals that the individual considers important and seeks to achieve. This is why the Ideal Ego is often mistaken for the Ego (which is nothing more than a narcissistic illusion of control of the individual - the perception that they hold the power of their identity).

Throughout the Journal we find the conviction that it would be a misconception to consider that identity belongs to us completely, as a deeper understanding of this "assumed" representation, which appears as a simulated, fictitious identity built on others, is necessary.

Eugen Simion states, in non-psychoanalytic terminology, that we can never return to the first instance mentioned above (the encounter with our Ego) without it already being transformed/disrupted by a secondary instance (which includes aspirations related to behaviour, morality, success and others imposed, or transmitted by central reference systems).

Finally, the author wonders: How original and assumed is this identity, however, over which we have the perception of a power of decision and consent? How much have we given our "consent" on what we represent? And what do we really need to examine about ourselves?

We cannot discuss Eugen Simion's analysis of the ideal Ego without symbolic identification, which is so called because it represents the completion of the subject's passage into the symbolic order, which implies the "internalization of one's own image".

In other words, in Eugen Simion's view, self-development (because one perceives oneself as the object and subject of one's own moral and value self-development), represents the taking up of this image and its conscious or unconscious assimilation or incorporation in the form of traits, values and models/schemes of behaviour, which happens in one's own personality at any age and whenever there is a value leap

based on an initiatory one.

If we allow ourselves to judge the personality of the great academic as a living organism in its own right, we will notice several instances in which he restructured his cognitive system, going through several stages that shaped or reshaped his existence, without uprooting his central beliefs. And then, the return to the first real instance of the image reflected in the mirror is only an illusion of an unsuccessful attempt of each of us (the perpetual attempt to get in touch with our real and impenetrable ego), a loss of the Ego, which I can metaphorically associate with the image of flocks of birds that have early put the seal of their nest in the structure of our identity, being hermetically sealed in what we call today the Ego.

Therefore, to the question present in all of us, namely "Who am I?", Eugen Simion believes that we cannot omit the interferences, imprints, contours, rigours that others have (also) left. In psychological and - why not? - linguistic terms, symbiosis can be defined as a close and interdependent relationship between several individuals, living together in the same context of life and often mutually benefiting each other or at least one of the partners benefiting from this relationship. Sometimes it culminates in mutualism or commensalism.

Victor Hugo [4] described Paris through an anguished vision of a vertigo in which all things great and small merge, but without losing their individuality or individuation, which frightens the eye due to its variety. It is as if this leads to mutualism as a form of romantic symbiosis, which in turn can be likened to harmoniously joined puzzle pieces. Each entity discovered in the Paris dominated by the bliss of pleasant bewilderment contributes, along with each individual, through its own qualities and specificities, to the creation of a whole picture. Without combinatorics, it is impossible to understand the overall picture of Paris, for its pieces of resistance are small, but they constitute the very scaffolding of the dynamics that influence the relationship between several entities. Nevertheless, Eugen Simion is always aware of the panoramic reality of Paris, which he can represent, and has the ability to convey it to us as a faithful copy, to bring it before our eyes, perhaps with the enormity of a hypermnesic mentalism, looking at any distinct reality of a relationship.

Perhaps here we could find the origin of commensalism. This metaphor can be applied to Eugen Simion's Journal "Time of living, time of confessing", in terms of its ability to illustrate social dynamics, as well as the resources of each individual, capable of contributing in an equal way to a fair relationship, for the well-being of all. Beyond the fact that the academic Eugen Simon inaugurates his fundamental research on the species of the intimate journal, he demonstrates how relationships transform from mutualism to commensalism. Even if we speak of symbiosis, merging with a fantastical and/or idealised image of the other, the fiction of the intimate journal never inappropriately "devastates" reality, but reflects it by apotheosising its particularities. We are not talking about a perception of a fusional nature or a loss of

identity and lack of autonomy, but from time to time we find the painful process of separation in which Eugen Simion delimits himself in the poetics of the Parisian diary.

Some character introductions are novel: "I must make room in this journal for a full-bodied and generous lady ... Donna Angela, with the body of an elephant pouffe (an Arghezi phrase), the head of a Tuscan painting and the grace of a ballerina". Making room has a double meaning, whereby Acad. Eugen Simion carries out subtle, yet thorough analyses in the frontier areas of literature (the cleaning woman thus becomes "a figure"/ effigy). The description is acute, the emphasis being that fidelity *per se* can horrify. Thus, any anodyne character is given artistic value and colour. For Eugen Simion, seeing what few sees is his own universe, which has as its psychodynamic counterpart the function of hyper-analysis, making him traverse vast territories, with open eyes and free intimate judgement.

In all his descriptions, there are not only a number of clauses and conventions that make the text possible, but all his portraits have secrets behind them, this being the subtle mechanism of operation and possibility by which the academic establishes a poetic relationship with the world. Although it seems that everything is in plain sight, through the unvarnished presentation of every detail, the true realities are hidden: a rhetoric of negation, a poetics of refusals, a convention that denounces all the conventions of literature.

We are presented with a confession by Natalie Sarraute [5], in which she refers to the epic technique by which the substance of her novels are the sensations so fine, so moving and so fast that the reader can barely touch them with thought or feeling, for they are imprecisely defined, the rhythm of the sentences seems to take the lead of the one who seeks them, the images becoming confabulatory and incorporating in them the primordial sensations. For Eugen Simion, the notation of these sensations becomes the very purpose of narrative. For us, it represents the opening to a psychoanalytic world, through the preciousness that the academic gives to the world of sensations as a fundamental reservoir for the cultural baggage of humanity. The return to sensations, imposed by Winnicott [6], is imperative and demands a profound self-analysis.

The parallel with psychoanalysis gives us art through sublimation, as a mechanism by which man directs his unacceptable impulses and dark conflicts into action for cultural purposes, which gives artistic expression. The Parisian journal is rich in literary chroniclers, poets, painters, musicians and common people who have revolutionized fields of historical and cultural importance, using and transforming through sublimation the anguishes of mundane existence and the tensions of earthly life. In one of his most faithful descriptions, Eugen Simion introduces Cioran as a visitor with a frazzled physiognomy and imprecise age, a gentleman who stands out from a noisy crowd and masters the image of the Latin Quarter.

Emil Cioran's representation [7] is that of melancholy lost in the crowd. From behind, however, we feel how through Eugen Simion's lens the devastating force of the hidden

melancholy of the entire Latin Quarter strikes us. Thoughts flow centripetally from Cioran to a suffering capable of dynamiting through the vigour of pessimism and the extraordinary force of despair. The psychoanalytic counterpart of despair, with its extreme hypostasis of painful melancholy, has a deep and vast psychopathological scope and intensity, far beyond the realm of ecstasy or classic mania: "The fate of the one who is too revolted is to have no energy left except for deception (*Le mauvais demiurge*)".

Eugen Simion thus speaks of the energy of disappointment, which, in extreme circumstances of existence, fosters an environment of war. Paradoxically, however, such times are charged with affect and artistic creation. The question remains, however, whether sublimation is really the most accessible defence mechanism in the fury of disappointment, and whether all artistic creations of this nature are forms of truth found in the core of the individual psyche or in the reservoir of collective consciousness, through obvious universal representation? And what then would this collective consciousness be in the context of a tension between individuals, groups or nations?

Although a man of ivory balance, Eugen Simion is fascinated by the power of dynamism, by the confrontations of two or more forces, by strong competitions and the desire to win, by the consciousnesses located beyond, always necessary in order to declare an open adversity. It is aware of the unity that must exist in the elaboration of a goal, of the common sense of cause that justifies or motivates the unleashing of writing as a weapon aimed at convictions, from the will to change collective perceptions.

Behind the curtain, there is the fear of manipulation as an imminent threat to the literary world. Here we allow ourselves a parallel with Freud, with regard to the art of war, which can mean art as a product obtained in wartime, art made through the act of sublimation, the basis of the polarisation of an ideological conflict, corresponding to a collective consciousness. Eugen Simion thinks, like Freud, that sublimation is a socially accepted escape valve that gives rise to a form of art, the more tragic being when it gives birth to a form of war.

Returning to more anodyne descriptions in the Parisian Journal, we sense an aprioric time predestined to random events, in which the continuous present, loved and invested, is temporized in Auerbach's sense, while the everyday and drunkenness are present with their Parisian force: 'Au Lapin Agile has become a place accessible to the rich, which I entered out of pure literary curiosity, for the financial aspect makes you want to kill yourself: music, expensive tastes, wildly priced drinks, poetry. Like any Montmartre cabaret, the place has its poet, an vieux monsieur who recites elegiac verses, discreetly licentious sentimental ballads."

Beyond the words, we perceive a Montmartre locked in padlocks (perhaps this is not only a metaphor, but a reality of Parisian places), in which these vieux monsieurs crawl slackly towards the sordid boats cursing, themselves people marching in their sleep ("*Dulce et docurum est*", Wilfred Owen [8]). Beyond World War I Dadaism, as an artistic

movement whose works rejected the conventional norms of art, beyond Otto Dix's World War I Dance of Death [9] and propaganda art, which exposed violence under the banner of solidarity, came the scream of World War II (Wilfred Owen), as a reaction to the anxiety and suffering caused by war.

Eugen Simion repeatedly discusses the new criticism, in which the question of value judgement becomes essential. Can modern criticism dispense with judging the value of the work it analyses? An essential moral skill would be the absence of critical judgement by means of mindfulness developed by Job Kabat-Zinn [10], who posits that this is the first of the seven attitudes considered to be the attribute of conscious practice? The others would be: patience, beginner's mind, trust, absence of persistence at all costs, acceptance and detachment. It is not always easy to be uncritical, for the inclination to judge is deeply ingrained, just as mindfulness, understanding and compassion form the basic skeleton of all meditation systems.

In the dispute between E.S. and J.-P.R., reference is made to the essay on the Goncourt brothers, an essay that is very difficult to judge. Sartre [11] and the fact that all criticism involves judgement is brought up. The Goncourt brothers are accused of not staying true to their deepest fantasies, of deviating from their original orientation. In other words, if we continue this view, writing becomes permissible only if one remains faithful to one's deepest fantasies, for anything else is worthless. It becomes hilarious how a man can be summed up in a few seconds at a glance that reveals his intentions. One is left to wonder why a quick flash hides one's full creative potential, when we know that time can heal the pain, for small is the pause and great is the curtain of the stage. Why do some people think you have to do things alone to find yourself when we cling to any change because it's all we can try?

Even a sensitive melody changes us, when everything transforms while "hanging on". Referring to George Poulet [12] and his philosophical approach, Eugen Simion sees criticism as a meditation on an object, which is represented by the work, and which by the very act of meditation becomes the subject. Thus, Poulet thinks contrary to all that Kant [13] thought about the general in man, about categorical activities, about time, space, cause, number, entities with which our mind operates and which are only considered initial conditions of thought, the first topics of life. "Let us not be alone..." - is all we need to understand from here...

Eugen Simion's opinions become contemplations on the passage of time, which also dictates the title of the journal, which refers to the place of worship necessary for confession, when one must agree and be in agreement with each individuality, in order to support the process of individuation. Thus, we gradually move along the literature-criticism axis, trying to talk more about the author, his being, personality and Ego, than about the value of his work: "This is the reason why the critic, traversing these mental universes (the works), must not ignore the moments when the being he studies becomes self-conscious. Discovering the starting point underlying any imaginary universe becomes the critic's

essential concern. For Poulet, this starting point is tantamount to a choice, an option, which links the spirit to a system of determined representations. Reflecting the opposite path, the critic uses the steps of figuration to reach the vital centre of the work, its thinking cell."

In Poulet's view, literature is a collection of coins, which are constituted by thought and are incited by another thought, which is criticism. In this equation, although unexpressed, remain the anxiety and the level of self-esteem, the strip drawn with stories, which gives each one the freedom of his own literary arbitrage, made up of an amalgam of text and represented images. Through combinations, we achieve creative imagination, relying involuntarily on reproducibility. We choose to continue personal stories or the story of literature itself, depending on our ability to express our emotions.

The Parisian Journal was created as a qualitative assessment tool that can contribute to a better conceptualisation of France as a society that feeds on itself, on its own values, as resources of a sanogenic narcissism. An entire civilisation watches over the culture of France, not from the perspective of a hierarchy, but from a profound process of integration that transforms culture into value. We are talking about cognitive experience, existential skills, realistic justifications and control over situations.

Paris gives birth to an art of salon, a civilisation du loisir, an art of living, a home of the Frenchman that has a distinctive and old style and a particular radicalism, in which we find a pain that few recognise and many deny, the common individual deepening into a Parisian incapable of resolving his spleen and existential injustice.

Where is the support and care? Where is the validation of feelings and integration of loss? Eugen Simion brings up George Călinescu's idea [14], an idea that is basically Valéry's and other thinkers' idea of the classicism of styles: We accept rebellious values that easily enter the great and balanced flow of culture, innovations that quickly turn into tradition, modernisms that hastily discover their sources and hide under the protection of models. Surrealists have unearthed Lautreamont [15] and found in it the justification of automatic dictation.

Behind it, there remains a common set of reactions, protest, denial, shock, apathy, despair, but also anxiety, sadness, guilt and shame. All these remain constant over time, if continuity has not been properly integrated into the culture and remains opposed to the concept of sovereignty. This is the personal space in which Paris and the Parisian express, live and discharge their tension, openly and in an assumed manner. Eugen Simion speaks of religious, moral and political divisions, of Catholic France and Protestant France, of conservative and pious right-wing France and oppositional and renewing left-wing France. Behind them we find: denial, dissociation, regression, distraction, deviation, sometimes hyperactivity, which must be interpreted as signs of pain. After all, it is an inner conflict of France itself, which incorporates feelings of ambivalence and loss in the complicated process of internalised pain. It prolongs the time

of recovery, reintegrates the past and what happened, the fact going as far as abandonment, present and future flashbacks, lush grottos, souls or corners where no one penetrates.

On another level, Paris has its own personality - a curious impatience, an excitement hyperbolised into imagination coupled with a majestic and impersonal international style. Paris is personalised, students get the Latin Quarter and we feel the narcissism nourished by its own grandeur, overflowing into the phantasmagorical dimension of Paris's grandeur, as the vein of Eugen Simion's journal: Paris steeped in the historical and political. The Paris that preserves mysteries and plans, tears and smiles, memories and dreams of perspective, kisses and stardust. Despite the cleavages that sometimes-become central operating mechanisms, love dominates hate. The new generation indulges in a psychedelic or punk style, it is revolutionary, but it embraces the Botticellic, while everything is victory and first revolutionary communion. Various styles mingle in the name of victory, while Eugen Simion's aim remains unwavering: to incorporate Paris into his own ego, to miss nothing in the process. At the heart of the incorporation remains the theological man, as an exercise in meditation, emphasising that the new image of the Middle Ages is a false one.

Eugen Simion incorporates man with his theological narcissism, with the irrational, the emotional, the grotesque, the bizarre, the carnivalesque, the divine. He does not forget the melancholy of the medieval spirit, its cruelty and madness, which he expresses by putting a filter on them, but recognising them as belonging to reality. Any movement of this kind, in the sense of integrating contradictory things, creates an intolerable anxiety, born of the fear that cruelty will destroy the beloved Parisian.

The inner, normal world of Paris is turned into an experience of life, in which it is hard to differentiate who is trustworthy or untrustworthy, who is capable of the unpredictable [16]. Who hides malicious thoughts and intentions, who is apt for assimilation and who remains sadistic [17]. Projection substitutes an internal threat for an external one, and projective identification shows us the need to control others and low self-esteem. Paris remains grandiose, even if only as a compensatory defence to one's own power status. We speak of a Paris in its all-powerful, triumphant representation, invading the internal world of whoever inhabits it, alleviating conflict and suffering. Much of Eugen Simion's energy is spent on vigilance and surveillance of the potential dangers lurking in Paris's hidden corners.

3. Conclusions

Seeing and experiencing life, sometimes even the most insignificant events lead to psychological interpretations full of meanings, as demonstrated by the Parisian Journal. Although Paris is described, sung and praised by many authors, we notice the unique and harmonious imprint defined by Eugen Simion, the brand of universal literature that will also persist over the years.

4. Discussions

4.1. Study Limitations

The limitations of this study derive from the fact that we focused on a youth diary of the author, written 50 years ago and which is representative of that period of time in his life, thinking, work and the emergence in his personality, of the conceptions of those times and of the way in which time itself has been internalized. Eugen Simion was a personality of the Romanian culture open to the new, in step with the times and critical thinking, he defiantly accepted the divergent opinions of the younger generations and, consequently, his work deserves to be visualized and analyzed in a perspective of the flow of time and crossing different stages of maturation under time. The second limitation comes from the fact that, to begin with, we wanted to structure the present article through a comparison between Eugen Simion and the French psychoanalyst Lacan, with an emphasis on what they both pursued: reporting on time and the essentialization of the critical act (either that it was essay writing, literature, criticism in dramaturgy or psychoanalysis: *panta rhei*!

4.2. Further Research

As future directions, a careful collaboration with the Institute of Theory and Literary Criticism "G. Calinescu", institution of the Romanian Academy, which has in its research plan the editing of the entire work of the academician Eugen Simion, a complete edition, in which both the real and the internal image of his personality will be reported at each stage of creation to the socio- cultural of the countries where he completed his academic training. At the same time, we will keep the psychoanalytic vein of the approach, taking one by one princeps concepts, which will be presented in parallel in literary criticism versus psychodynamics and implicitly artistic creation from this point of view.

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