



## THE LATE RECOGNITION OF TUDOR ARGHEZI BY THE COMMUNIST REGIME

Mirel ANGHEL<sup>1</sup>, Diana-Ligia TUDOR<sup>2</sup>

The Department of Foreign Languages, Faculty of Medicine, “Carol Davila” University of Medicine and Pharmacy, Bucharest, Romania  
Dimitrie Cantemir Christian University, Faculty of International Business and Economics, Bucharest, Romania, E-mail: [ligdiana@yahoo.com](mailto:ligdiana@yahoo.com)

**Abstract** One of the leading Romanian poets, Tudor Arghezi had many problems with the Communist regime that ruled our country, especially after 1948. The poet was excluded from the Romanian literature for approximately eight years, but his late recognition (after 1956) came as a normal consequence of the impossibility of the Romanian authorities to deny the overwhelming influence the poet had on our culture and literature.

### Keywords

Tudor Arghezi,  
Communism Romania,  
Romanian literature

### 1. Introduction

In the 60s an ideological thaw takes place, following the death of Stalin (on March 5th 1953) and the change of the internal political climate. The ideological thaw and the emergence from the dominance of the Social Realism current will happen until 1956, the year of the Hungarian revolution. After this year, a period begins in which there will take place trials of writers and arrests, everything because of fear of a possible "contamination" from Budapest.

Congress IX of PMR (which becomes PCR, the Romanian Communist Party), also has the significance of a thaw, of a De-Stalinization and the country's liberation from the *ghost* of the former ruler Gheorghiu-Dej, sanctioning the new leader, Nicolae Ceaușescu. Until 1971, the year of "Theses" brought to light by Nicolae Ceaușescu, the Romanian interwar literature is recovered. And Tudor Arghezi is among those accepted once again in the new political regime.

In 1960, the poet has the venerable age of 80 years. Still, he has a great power of creation. In the new political and cultural circumstances, he is considered a "national poet" and treated as such. Starting with 1960 there is a process through which Arghezi is recovered, after many years (1948-1956) during which he was cast aside by the Communist regime from the Romanian literature.

The poet withdraws from the world and is reborn under his own feather, retakes the old themes and gives them a greater depth. His poetic creation in the last years of his life is characterized, firstly, through a dense spirituality. There is a "breeze of death" which lingers above the Arghezi poems, and it is felt more acutely towards the end of his life and his creation, in the years 1966-1967. Tudor Arghezi published until the last year of his life. Moreover, he wrote until his

last days. The year 1963 represents the beginning of the publishing of various books: *New Poems* - 1963, *Cadences* - 1964, *Syllables* - 1965, *Rhythms* - 1966 and *Night* - 1967.

Subsequently there are published three more volumes: *Your Leaves* - 1968, *Branches* - 1970 and *XC* - 1970. In these books he recaptures the old theses, his poetry having "the same compartments: patriotic verses, verses on the theme of art and the creator, new fragments from the large, unfinished poem of the psalms, poems pertaining to the small universe, verses (...) which spring from the state of joy and disturbance of the old age" <sup>1</sup>. His old age is not an ordinary period for Tudor Arghezi, but it represents "an open eye with great gravity toward the world (...), a more accentuated sentiment of the limits"<sup>2</sup>.

In the new cultural climate, Tudor Arghezi is able to return to older ideological standpoints, to the religious problem. He *paid* his debt to the Communists political regime. Now is the time of his freedom. In the volume *Song to the Man* (1956), he adopts a materialistic stance, he rejects his faith. Now, however, Tudor Arghezi becomes once again the poet of questions. Arghezi wants to show that he did not forsake his way of thinking, but managed to adapt. Nevertheless, he is, essentially, the same "psalmist" from the past.

### 2. An improved relationship with the Communist political regime

In January 1965, Tudor Arghezi is nominated by Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei from Italy for the Nobel Prize for Poetry, at the initiative of Rosa del

<sup>1</sup>Eugen Simion, *Scritori români de azi, vol II*, Românească Publishing House, Bucharest, 1976, p. 71.

<sup>2</sup>Ibidem

Conte. The proposition is supported by intellectuals from various European countries<sup>3</sup>.

In the beginning, he was not supported neither by the Romanian Academy, nor the University of Bucharest, because of the period in which the poet had been excluded from the literary life, between the years 1948-1956. Ultimately, the Department of Literature of the Romanian Academy sustained his nomination. The news was so surprising for the authorities that not all the volumes of his poetry could be found in order to be sent to Stockholm. Eventually, the collection from the poet's library was used. Many of his volumes no longer existed, because they were destroyed in the period of the years of his exclusion from the Romanian literature. The effort of isolating Tudor Arghezi was so great that, in those years, no one talked about him.

The poet was considered the favourite for winning the prize, the foreign press having come to Bucharest for interviews with him about the Nobel Prize. Furthermore, the other writers nominated for winning the prize had abandoned this competition as a sign of veneration for Tudor Arghezi. The surprise was great when the announced winner was the Russian prose writer Mihail Șolohov for the novel *The Quiet Don*.

For Tudor Arghezi, the recognition of his merits at an international level is made through the awarding of the prize *Gottfried von Herder*, on April 30 1965, as well as through his election as a member of the Serbian Academy of Science and Letters, in the same year. These are signs of the appreciation the poet enjoys on an international scale, and the celebration as "national poet" at his 85<sup>th</sup> birthday rehabilitates him fully after the difficult era of the past. Numerous translations of his literature are made now: in Portuguese, German, English, Russian, Serbian-Croatian, Bulgarian, Hungarian, Greek, Swedish, Ukrainian, Czech, Arabic, Armenian, Tatar and Georgian.

After his wife's, Paraschiva, passing, on July 29, 1966, Tudor Arghezi dies on July 14 1967, leaving behind an inestimable literary treasure, a testament to those who will be. The cause of Tudor Arghezi's death is a pneumonia which triggers cardio-vascular, renal and hepatic problems. The poet dies through cardio-pulmonary arrest.

The first page of the official newspaper *Scântea* announces the passing of Tudor Arghezi in the number 7403, from July 16 1967: "The Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party, The State Council and The Council of Ministers of the Romanian Socialist Republic expresses their deep

sorrow with the event of the passing of the bright representative of the Romanian culture - Tudor Arghezi"<sup>4</sup>.

In this obituary the great merits of Tudor Arghezi are highlighted. His fellow Romanian writers also underline the outstanding contribution of Tudor Arghezi to "the social progress" made through the poems written in his 67 years of creation. The most important distinctions received by the poet are mentioned as well: he was member of the Romanian Academy, President of the Union of Writers, but they do not mention an interesting fact: these were the things that he rejected his entire life. In his articles, Tudor Arghezi always criticized other writers and the Union because of the controversial practices that existed among writers. After his release from Văcărești prison, in the year 1919, he was actually excluded from the Union of Romanian Writers, led by Mihail Dragomirescu.

The obituary from *Scântea* is coupled with a micro-biography of the poet. It contains much fake information regarding the poet's life, all being invented by some Communist writers. His presence in the conscience of modern writers is also made evident through his activity as a journalist. The vehemence with which Tudor Arghezi wrote against the "Fascist dictatorship and Nazi occupation"<sup>5</sup> is also mentioned, Tudor Arghezi being considered a fighter alongside the communist political regime. *Scântea* brings homage to Tudor Arghezi in its pages for three days, continuing in the numbers from July 17 and 18, 1967 to publish articles in which the poet is described as one of the most important European writers. Now all the praises are destined to "the one who sang as no other the superior virtues of the Romanian people"<sup>6</sup>.

All the political figures pay their respect to Tudor Arghezi at the Romanian Atheneum. From all of them is remarked the figure of the General Secretary of the Communist Party, Nicolae Ceaușescu.

The moment of Tudor Arghezi's death is very well speculated in the funeral speeches. Firstly, the poet's merits are praised through the publishing of the volumes 1907 - *Landscapes* and *Song to the Man*. Some concepts are endlessly repeated, such as: peasants, work, humanity, peace, the new social accomplishments, and the original approach of reality in his poetry (through volumes like *Flowers of Mildew* or *Fitting Words*, the ones for which he was fiercely criticized in the past):

"Adhering to the contemporary existence of the country, Tudor Arghezi also engaged in the service of the ideals of Socialism, along with his civic

---

<sup>3</sup> D. Vatamaniuc, *Tudor Arghezi (1880-1967). Biobibliografie, vol. I – Opera*, Institutul Cultural Român Publishing House, Bucharest, 2005, p. XXXI.

<sup>4</sup> *Scântea*, XXXVI, no. 7403, Sunday July 16, 1967, p. 1.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>6</sup> *Scântea*, XXXVI, no. 7404, Monday July 17, 1967, p. 1.

conscience, the profound origin of thinking, the great amplitude of sensibility"<sup>7</sup>.

In the poet's evolution, the critic Dumitru Micu underlines the ideological jump made by Tudor Arghezi. He considers it being crucial through the ample poem *Song to the Man*. What is made evident in his poem is "the ardent patriotism" which changed the writing of Tudor Arghezi, the poem representing a "poetic image of the great transformations from the bright years of the creation of Socialist Romania"<sup>8</sup>.

After a special approval is given by the Romanian authorities, Tudor Arghezi is buried in the home garden, next to his wife. In Bucharest, people had in the past the habit of burying people in their yards. Alexandru Ofrim mentions this old custom of the inhabitants of Bucharest:

"At the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Bucharest grew bigger, the population number increased and, for hygienic purposes, the interdiction of burials around the churches from inside the city was mandatory. The first measures are taken during the time of the Organic Regulations, in the year 1830 Pavel Kiseleff ordering "to forbid city inhabitants to bury their dead in their personal gardens or in the churches' yard and, instead, to take them outside the city, in cemeteries. Since The Garden of Bellu remained hollow - after the vines covering the entire Southern part of the city had been destroyed by Phylloxera - , the land came in the possession of the municipality, which chose it as a big cemetery of the city.

With all the parishioners' protests, the mayor of Bucharest at the time, C.A. Rosetti began setting up a modern cemetery on the former land of baron Bellu. The first deceased buried here was the son of the mayor, his death being unexpected on November 16, 1859"<sup>9</sup>.

Tudor Arghezi was buried with state funeral on Monday, July 17, 1967. The grave in which he poet found eternal peace alongside his wife Paraschiva has a symbolic significance: it is the one on which, after they bought the land, they first built a small house, in which they lived temporarily.

If in 1948 his poetic work was qualified as "poetry of putrefaction", now it the same critics consider that he "unveiled with vigor and destructive sarcasm all the putrid matter of a social system in agony. For his art and his fellow people, Arghezi, believer of the power of the word, fiercely fought with his verse, sometimes

stinging like the bee's needle, sometimes tender like the mother's carress"<sup>10</sup>, says the president of the Romanian Academy, Miron Nicolescu.

To be as convincing as possible, even workers are invited to speak up, to show their appreciation for the one which "over 70 years served day in and day out, with his genius, his country and people, felt as a brother for many (...). In our bright years, seeing his dreams fulfilled, spring sang, a symbol of novelty, joy of working under the sun of liberty, the satisfaction of being contemporary with the epoch in which the flame of socialist conquest flutters"<sup>11</sup>.

Mourning gatherings take place in many of the great cities of the country. At Craiova also, the center of Oltenia, a place where Arghezi's thoughts always took him, people pay their respects to the Romanian poet. Likewise at Târgu Cărbunești, the city of origin of his ancestors. Thus, Tudor Arghezi becomes more important after his death than when his was living.

### 3. Conclusions

The late recognition of Tudor Arghezi by the Communist regime came after a series of conflicts between the poet and the authorities. After he was excluded from the Romanian literature, Arghezi was reinstated in the position he deserved in our culture, becoming "The National Poet" of Romania.

### References

1. Simion, E., *Scriitori români de azi, vol. II*, Românească Publishing House, Bucharest, 1976, p. 71.
2. Vatamaniuc, D., *Tudor Arghezi (1880-1967). Biobibliografie, vol. I – Opera*, Institutul Cultural Român Publishing House, Bucharest, 2005, p. XXXI.
3. Ofrim, A., *Străzi vechi din Bucureștiul de azi*, Humanitas Publishing House, Bucharest, 2007, p. 258.

### Periodicals:

- Scântea*, XXXVI, no. 7403, Sunday July 16, 1967, p. 1.  
*Scântea*, XXXVI, no. 7404, Monday July 17, 1967, p. 1.  
Dumitru Micu, *Asemenea străbunilor*, in *Scântea*, XXXVI, no. 7405, Tuesday, July 18, 1967, p. 5.  
<sup>1</sup> *Scântea tineretului*, XXIII, Series II, no. 5647, July 16, 1967, p. 1.  
<sup>1</sup> *Funeraliile lui Tudor Arghezi*, in *Scântea*, XXXVI, no. 7405, Tuesday, July 18, 1967, p. 5.

<sup>7</sup> Dumitru Micu, *Asemenea străbunilor*, in *Scântea*, XXXVI, no. 7405, Tuesday, July 18, 1967, p. 5.

<sup>8</sup> *Scântea tineretului*, XXIII, Series II, nO. 5647, July 16, 1967, p. 1.

<sup>9</sup> Alexandru Ofrim, *Străzi vechi din Bucureștiul de azi*, Humanitas Publishing House, Bucharest, 2007, p. 258.

<sup>10</sup> *Funeraliile lui Tudor Arghezi*, in *Scântea*, XXXVI, no. 7405, Tuesday, July 18, 1967, p. 5.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibidem*.