Antonio PATRAŞ

Universitatea „Alexandru Ioan Cuza“ din Iaşi, Facultatea de Litere
”Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University from Iassy, Faculty of Letters

Ion D. Sîrbu. The Man behind Letters

Ion D. Sîrbu. The Man behind Letters

In the specific case of our country, the wholesale publication of diaries, correspondence, memoirs and different documents, shown up after 1989, met with the natural need of the public who wanted to find out the secret history the totalitarian censorship refused to bring forth for such a long time. Rarely the irrefragable value of these documents is doubled by a similar aesthetic value. There are few “professional” writers who had the inner strength to reject compromise, and correspondingly, to accept isolation and anonymity as facts. That is why, the so-called “pigeon-hole literature” proved to be, with few notable exceptions, pretty thick and unsubstantial. When the precious underground manuscripts of Ion D. Sirbu’s works were set into free circulation, the editing and printing event was synonym with the abolishment of censorship ban. The most important writing pieces are, in fact, the posthumous works, namely the diary, the correspondence and the novel *Adio, Europa!* (*Farewell, Europe*!). They might be taken both as an intellectual’s testimony, granted with his flawless behavior, and as a prose-wrighter’s fine expression, perhaps one of the most valuable in Romanian post-war literature.

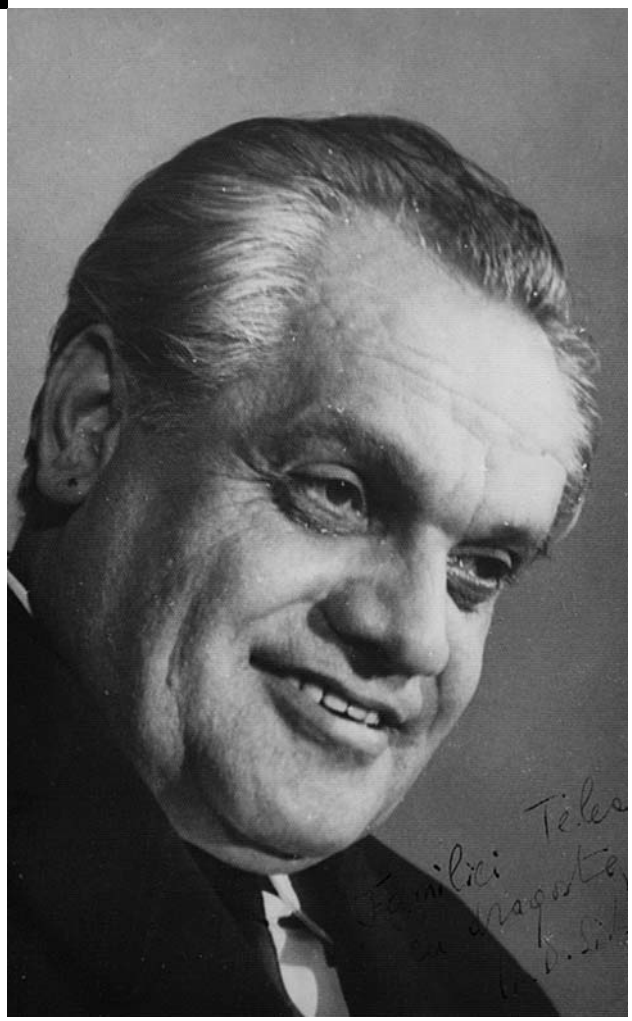
As a philosopher, Lucian Blaga and Liviu Rusu’s disciple, member of the Sibiu Literary Circle, Sîrbu has been seduced by Marxism, cherishing socialist ideals (just like Solzhenitsyn, Kolakovsky did etc.). Yet, becoming aware of the results of the Marxist utopia, being imprisoned for a long time, bearing the forced-residence, having his manuscripts confiscated and melted, being forbidden to publish, Ion D. Sîrbu gave up the ideals of his youth by radically criticizing the Marxism and the Marxist-Leninist dialectics. There is an extended area of Marxism and its variations in *Farewell, Europe!*, of ideas’ debate which grant the philosophical nature of the novel. The author denounces and discloses, in a lucid manner, the stupidity and the insanity of the political leaders, their duplicity, their lies and the *newspeak*, the whole net of unbelievable atrocities. And yet, I D. Sirbu’s work is still cast out by the Romanian writers. His particularly drawn back by the loss of interest for the chosen topics. But, although history goes on the totalitarianism will always represent the biggest temptation of the human being, even though it proved self-destructive (as Jean Francois Revel asserted). That is why, like Solzhenitzyn, Pasternak, Orwell, Kundera, Sirbu should always be regarded a nowadays writer in order that the facts already happened must not happen again.

Keywords: Censorship, ironic dialogue, allusion, subversion, Marxism, utopia, friendship cult, politic literature, imaginary letters, confession, intimate space/private space

Institution’s address: B-dul Carol, nr. 11, Iași, România, tel.: + 40-232-201.052, fax: + 40-232-201.152; e-mail: *admlit@uiac*, web: http: //letters.uaic.ro

Personal e-mail: *antoniopatras@yahoo.ca*

While there is an art of dialogue, in which very few can succeed, there is also an art of letter writing that encourages an even smaller amount of success. Few Romanian writers have cultivated the epistle as literature, although, in the 19 century, Ion Ghica, a fine example of letter-writing artistry, brilliantly exploited the resources of this genre. The postmodern sensitivity is also receptive to this phenomenon, but in the actual literary practice, the epistle is often mystified through an excess of art, and thus loses its relevance as far as its existential value is implied. The most fascinating letter exchanges are those imperceptibly sliding into fiction and becoming great examples of literature. This is why, perhaps, as Livius Ciocârlie once stated, “The reading of correspondence may contribute in saving literature from solipsism, as it compels people to an ever-going switch between life and text”[1]. From this point of view, Ion D. Sîrbu’s correspondence is a perfect example, as it reflects the obvious unity of substance and style with the rest of the author’s works and stands for - together with *Jurnalul unui jurnalist fără jurnal* (*The Diary of a Diarist with no Diary*) - a valuable document of social, psychological and literary relevance.



Ion D. Sîrbu's letters and diary entries bring out two distinct facets of the author, organically bound together. Metaphorically speaking, they constitute the "pitch" and "toss" of his personality. The liveliness, stylistic exuberance and fierce jocundity of the epistler make way, in the pages of the diary, to a severe, affected meditation, revealing a sense of objectivity through lucid pessimism, rightly justified by the heavily clouded times experienced by the Romanians. Indeed, Sîrbu's correspondence bursts out as a profound and natural desire for communication and fondness in a man who, although isolated in a corrupt world, tries to survive by writing his diary, a terrible testimony of his anguish. Whereas veiled in irony or simply left out in his epistles, the painful biographical episodes are more often imparted in his diary, thus conferring truthfulness and poignancy to his socio-political reflections. As Ion D. Sîrbu writes his diary, he projects his writing as a compensation for a life he considers forever wasted. In wintertime (a "total and totalitarian winter" as the author labels it), in the cold one-room apartment, alone, a blank page in front of him, the writer confronts, while he still can with the last drop of energy, his posterity. This is what gives the peculiarly martial tone of the diary, which does not show in the theatrical space of the self-censored correspondence. It is only in the diary that we can understand Ion D. Sîrbu's impersonation as a "king's jester" and see his tiredness-concealing verve reaching out to his fellows, asking for and generously offering help and affection. Even though he is an extrovert, he hides his own pain, dispelling irony to others and himself in order to amuse the addressee.

Ion D. Sîrbu's vast correspondence may be considered, on the other hand, as a treaty of practical ethics, uncovering the fascinating identity of the author as a friend to the others. The virtue of friendship, valued and praised in antiquity, was also respected by Sîrbu, a man who proved himself modest, noble and generous. He was driven to write by an irrepressible need to communicate, to fill up his solitude. Deserted and facing eternity alone, he asked himself: "Does anyone die without having survived a wound made by a friend?" One might think that, even though Sîrbu underwent such an experience, he did not wound anyone else.

The author's appetite for conversation, transferred into writing, turns into a fascinating performance. Directly or indirectly, speaking out freely or displaying a false gaiety, Sîrbu shows honesty in his attitude towards interlocutors, whom he never betrays, in spite of his many masks, either imposed by censorship (the censor is always addressed ironically), or simply worn in order to gratuitously amuse his dialogue partners.

Just like his diary, Ion D. Sîrbu's letters represent, at least partially, an authentic "workshop" of his literary work; but this "workshop" is in itself a literary achievement, being no less valuable than the other writings. Although he is no champion of the "exquisite style", Sîrbu masters the verb and opens up new fictional worlds with genuine spontaneity. His prodigious spirit invades the reader with loads of aphorisms, paradoxes, sharp reflections, subtle judgment of infinite nuance, puns, grim meditations and ironic addresses. In just a few pages, sometimes inside a single, long sentence, all these attitudes are present. Here, "the words sing" – suggested Marin Sorescu – not randomly, but rather carefully conducted by a *chef d'orchestre*, by a *maître* with a refined ear able to distinguish the feeblest note out of the loudest turmoil.

Sîrbu's correspondence cannot be justly valued without considering its context, namely the author's personal history. These letters have an exceptional existential relevance, as they paradigmatically illustrate the condition of the marginalized intellectual in a totalitarian regime, with an inevitably fractured biography. In a text of testamentary value, a veritable

credo of the author, he states "one is stupid and cruel to sing the beauty of the pearl and not to listen to the pain of the shell that cried it into matter"[2]. His correspondence, like his entire work, is an "anatomy of anguish" shrewdly hidden in brilliant phrases.

Sîrbu is one of the authors who passionately wrote letters for their entire life. In his college years, he sent letters, mostly to women – according to his words, he sent more than two hundred to Ştefania Dorn – who were seduced by his irresistible charm, evoqued by Viorica Guy Marica in a "portrait of the writer as a young man."[3] These letters have not been recuperated yet, and neither those sent to Blaga, presumably confiscated by the "*Securitate*". Ion Barbu once wrote to Tudor Vianu, after a swift love affair: "The things I told her then are lost for the world of men." As Sîrbu was sensitive to feminine charms, just like Barbu, the poet-mathematician, he must have uttered many scattered words in his romantic youth. Such spoken words vanished, while those written must still be waiting somewhere, in secret, temporarily inaccessible places.

Among his colleagues in the Literary Circle of Sibiu, Ion D. Sîrbu was closer, by education and beliefs, to Deliu Petroiu, with whom he kept a life-long correspondence, as he found in his friend a rare honesty in the climate of generalized suspicion during the totalitarian "obsessive decades". The level of communication achieved in the correspondence with Deliu Petroiu is different from the one with his other writer-friends (where he changed his masks according to his spectator, circumstances etc.): it is an authentic, open, sincere communication, conveying existence in all its minor aspects, essential in understanding man's situation in the world.

The letters to Deliu Petroiu, gathered in the volume *Iarna bolnavă de cancer* (*The Winter of Our Cancer-sickness*) illustrate, as Cornel Ungureanu (the editor) observed, "a different face of the Literary Circle"[4] from that presented in the "epistolary novel" of I. Negoiţescu and Radu Stanca. In this correspondence, one does not find frantic debates on creativity, but narrations of minor events, of quotidian concerns about tomorrow. Sîrbu encourages his friend to leave the countryside, tries to bring him closer, to find him a job or a grant. He indicates lists of compulsory readings, desperately asking for bread in return, he complains about his loneliness, about the sadness of alcohol drinking and random love affairs, he gets obsessed on failure and considers "writing for pigeon-hole" as "the noblest vocation of these times". Sîrbu's attachment to Deliu Petroiu is deep and true, their friendship being confirmed once more when Sîrbu is released from prison: "I was sure – even there – that you would be the only friend who would not forget me. And I was right! You were the only one who found the time to pass by my poor mother and tell her a few kind words. I am grateful and I hope I will have the chance to prove it to you in this lifetime. (Especially since the most horrid blows a man can receive were given to me by the so-called friends)."[5]

Given their common prison experience and out of admiration for the personality of a man who paid a dignified attitude with long years of imprisonment, Sîrbu writes to Ion Maxim in the same austere and heavy tone, deprived of irony. To this "brother of destiny" (Sîrbu addresses Maxim in his letters with "Brother Ioan", "Brother Maxim" etc.) does the writer relate an episode from prison: the ecumenical Resurrection mass in a miserable barrack, a moment of Christian unity preserved by the memory with the name "the Union from Strâmba". After the unexpected death of Ion Maxim, Ion D. Sîrbu writes to his widow[6], trying to comfort her and to distract her from sorrow, by offering his help and congratulating her on holidays etc. He nostalgically evokes to Delia Cotruş their youth in Cluj, expressing in touchy words his appreciation for the personality of her prematurely departed husband: "Delia, I am not just making a polite gesture. I feel Puiu too close to me and to my destiny, to feel obliged in any kind of reverence. A complete spirit and intelligence, a talent of great culture and at the same time a formidable *character*"[7].

Ion D. Sîrbu did not feel too close to Ovidiu Cotruş, as they had been separated, in their youth, by both character and political convictions. He had never corresponded with him, but after his death, he generously tried to consulate his wife by sending her letters, books, and gallantly overwhelming her with homage. In these letters addressed, in his old age, to women, Sîrbu appears, as Viorica Guy Marica notices, an "anti-Gary"[8], slightly sentimental, gallant, and protective in a Fatherly manner. Once terrible "proletarian and provincial Don Juan", in his youth, he is now fascinated by the image of a pure, spiritual love, shaped by the paradigm of "Philemon and Baucis": "…although I had a terribly donjuanesque life in my twenties, *I actually never loved anyone*. […] Now, since my body was liberated from sex and Eros, I love my wife graciously and passionately; she is integrated in my being."[9] Baleful, with a wounded ego, hurt by the unfavorable or reserved opinions of the critics on his writings, he declares somewhere that only women can understand his literature.

Writing letters all the time and sending them in all parts of the world, Ion D. Sîrbu seems to have lived in a virtual universe, gazing at the illusion of free conversation, of lively dialogue with the others. He can hardly stand solitude, as he is used to winning the crowds, whether they are circles of literati or full theaters. After a brief journey in Western Europe in 1980, he endures, at his return, countless shortages, following the anomalous, unbearable forms taken by the Ceauşescu regime at the time. He is forbidden to

exit the country again, to travel, and the "Securitate" constantly watches him. He asks from Virgil Nemoianu illustrated magazines, with images from all over the world, he regularly visits cinema theatres. In the late summers, he goes to the seaside and swims to exhaustion, at over sixty years, proving an amazing vital energy, which helped him win over posterity. His books seem to be the tardy fruit of a secret labour. Aware of the compensating function of writing, he sends to Delia Cotruş these lines: "I am not writing this in order to get a response from you. I have a special glandular secretion, feeding my terrible solitude, together with the illusion that I can talk, from the center of my Circle, to all the beloved points on the circumference of my memory and my love. I write because I need you, not because you need me"[10].

Sîrbu sees writing as a lucid preparation for death, an "art of dying graciously", and imagines his departure into the valley of shadows as a crossing scene. This is, in his opinion, the triumphant reintegration in a "mystical family", hierarchically and traditionally structured: the Mother, the Parents, the teachers, the colleagues that shared the same "ideal of the Circle", those who passed through the communist prisons[11]. "I have moments when I see my old friends, Puiu, Eta, and Blaga, Maxim, Rusu, and Ghibu etc., waving their flags and shouting (in the Otopeni station beyond): «Welcome, Gary, we've been waiting you for so long! »"[12].

Ion D. Sîrbu's letters (to Horia Stanca, Eta Boeriu, Ion Negoitescu, Viorica Guy Marica, Virgil Nemoianu, Mariana Şora and others), gathered inside the volumes *Iarna bolnavă de cancer* (*The Winter of Our Cancer-sickness*), *Printr-un tunel* (*Through a Tunnel*), *Scrisori către bunul Dumnezeu* (*Letters to Gracious God*), *Traversarea cortinei* (*Trespassing the Curtain*), give the author's measure as genuine master of the epistle, a genre few Romanian authors could and, in fact, would handle. His letter-writing embeds recrudescent obsessive ideas that act as nuclei for his entire work, iterative themes that can be also traced in his diary, short-stories, novels and plays. Nevertheless, his harsh and direct criticism toward Ceauşescu's dictatorial regime, rather prominent in his diary, is efficiently camouflaged within his correspondence. He prefers converting his reflections into a buffoon like attitude and, after he realizes that his correspondence is being violated by censorship, he subtly and ironically confronts his "ghost" readers. In fact, these letters, particularly the ones dating from the 80's, are marvellous monologues declaimed by Sîrbu, the actor on a stage. The fool spills off tirades to an empty amphitheatre while from the side-scene he is encouraged to go on saying his things by discrete voices belonging to those sheltered by the exile and, therefore, immune to the censor's guardianship. This is why his letters appear as more domestic and more narrative than his diary pages. In his letter-writing he is often a raconteur of anecdotes while in his diary pages he dives into political and philosophical reflection, being more of an essayist.

However, his letter writing does not lack essay-like considerations. In essence, he is transmitting ideas, even if they seem life corroded, and not abstract ideas, as one would expect. The Romanian critic Virgil Nemoianu considers Sîrbu's epistles "of great coherence and balance" and identifies within their structure a distinct form of the epistolary genre; that is the conversational essay, which bears the sign of an oral dimension of texts. The critic also considers this "cross-boundaries literary field" as a marker for Ion D. Sîrbu's creative genius: "the erudition and colloquialism, the vulgarism both refined and ironical, the most particular and fishy detail together with the ascension to the philosophic, scholarly, abstraction, the quotations from three, four or five languages along with the red neck talk, the universal history and the folklore are indissolubly linked"[13]. The theorist of the "secondary principle", a great fan of De Quincey' s works, of all dabblerish intellectual postures, of all minor literary genres, finds the root of this "generic mode" (the epistle) back to a venerable Central-European tradition, which illustrates itself in the Romanian space, through Timotei Cipariu or Ion Codru-Drăguşanu's letters.

Ion D. Sîrbu's letters strike the reader's eyes, as the sender is prone to drawing up balances, perhaps a sheer consequence of "late-ness" feelings, turned into a real "backwardness" complex, when the comparison with the generation fellows is in question. The writer always reminds us "the years he put aside in CEC reserves", "the stolen years" or the "missing years". Trying to catch up with the rest, he works like a "tractor" (as he prideful and auto ironical confesses). He rejects, with a total lack of patience, the contemporary literature (the modernism, the textual-ism etc.), explaining that he cannot "stand" it in his eyes: "We, the Romanians, have a bridged literature, set between the great accomplishments of inter-war Realist writers and our fast shut, hermetic Modernists. (…) in a world fed up with prose, there might show up some experiments, but for those who knock about this world (where truths are shouted out, but nobody would hear about them) the overspill of stylistic devices is just synonymous with the overspill of circumspection and Ploiesti-like caution"[14]. Then he considers literary criticism a crossbred genre that sets its seal to the death warrant of philosophy and acts as a bleeder for the entire literature of his time: "I feel that, right now, there are more critics than works to be criticized. But for the literary critics' reading, the literary criticism would not be digestible. Thus, it became an autonomous genre with a faint obligation: to pay Literature what it owes; the genuine literary works scarcely crop up, and when they do, they are

more and more anemic and frail. (…) Now we can see that the literary critics put up with the absence of tough study in schools. (…) There is just one Preda, but there are thousands and thousands of predators; there is just one Eliade, but there is a Babylonian pile of interpreters. The literary criticism is the shortest and safest way to the core of philosophy – and, consequently, the philosophy tries to reassemble as far as possible from the literary field"[15]. In a similar vein, the poetry would be, in his opinion, an autarchic realm, isolated from the mainstream: "… Whenever I bump into the self-assured quietism of poetry, I am disputed between feelings of frustration and injustice: I think that, nowadays, poetry (as well as literary criticism) wastes at ease an enormous quantity of freedom and paper. Without taking any risks and without any response from the low public, they read and comment each other and no other but each other"[16].

Sîrbu has in mind to write "against fashion, so as not to get old fashioned meanwhile", most of the times scourging "the style abuse": "In my opinion, (…) the word is nothing but a means for the truths that must be said, at any rate. My *credo* is: I do not intend to write as nobody did, but to write about something nobody has written about yet"[17]. His opinions on film and theatre directors might be counted amongst the worse; most of them, perhaps consequent to his plays misinterpretation and wrong setting.: "After the crazy fashions of "erotic", "shitty", "nude", "butchery", "polibrecht", "shouting", "schizo" etc. were worn out, the last directing trend in England is the character's change of gender. Hamlet is a girly, Lady Macbeth is a man, Lear is an old hag etc."[18]

Totally unfriendly and scratchy towards the sixties "generation", Sîrbu mocks at Nichita Stănescu or Marin Sorescu: "…Now, to get back to Nichita: I encountered in his poetry – and I must say I felt his verbs were as boozy as him – verses such as: "Life born from water" or "Dilly-dally, blue blood horse". He certainly achieved the performance to write about anything (and, yet, He was Bathed in rivers of praise, and He received these praises like a thirsty desert, transfigured by leaky drizzles, like an undrenched Sahara), I think, and all these odd curiosities are but syndromes of his poetry approaching death". He considers that Sorescu is "just an intelligent actor, acting his ironical puns; and when translated, these plays on words become metaphysical, his popular roots take after myth and transcendence discourses"[19].

His assertions about Eugen Barbu or D. R. Popescu seem to be fairer, although his judgments tend to be more ethical than aesthetic, pointing at literary careers built up on compromise and imposture: "Eugen Barbu had everything. Everything a Wallah just gotten out of the pit could dream of. He might have written, he had to write a great work and he did not lack the means to do it. He lacked just one single thing: the backbone"[20]. In Sîrbu's opinion, "D.R. Popescu writes a hermeneutical theatre. A symbolical theatre. I read his literature and I discover that I did not understand one single thing. Valentin Silvestru insists on explaining it to me: this is a myth, this is a Graal, this is Păcală poached into the Graal, this is the "mioritic" Sphinx, and Manole the Master, who is, in fact, Siegfried. (…) D.R. discovered, on the run, the great myths, and he places them randomly, embroidered in special effects, and he uses them continuously, without hold-ups or jams"[21].

When he addresses Virgil Nemoianu the theme of discussion is the decline and fall of philosophy. Upon the contents of *Păltiniş Diary*, Sîrbu comments that Noica's factious attitude is a fake because he compromised himself during detention time. "Today, any philosopher is an epigone. The French still nurture with Hegel's, Kierkegaard's, Marx', Freud's, Heidegger's writings, while we, the Romanians, hang about and try to establish the correct meaning of a single preposition: "*întru*" (to, towards, at) Being, Nature, Meaning"[22]; "Noica is a chicken liver, an athlete of caution and a runaway champion in the responsibility-taking race. (…) Noica did not take refuge at Păltiniş to heal his cold feet, or to abjure his cowardice and treason: he went there to make a style out of his volts and wriggles (…) when the whole country is in flames, or even when the whole Europe is in flames, Noica says good-bye to Goethe. The Romanian language perishes, and he pleads for a sort of openness that closes, the limit that does not limit, the One that divides without divisions. And, all around him, you can see all these talented young men (he accepts Dalai-Lama-isation), who, instead of writing philosophy, literature-ize"[23]

Moreover, Sîrbu does not leave out the "intellectual" class from this vituperative and acid attack, placing it under the ominous accusation of political "engagement": "…nowadays, under the shield of objectivity, the French scholars switch sides. A bunch of tag tails! Aragonic blindness, Triolet hysteria, and, of course, in a blind people's country, Sartre is crowned king"[24]; "My mother used to say: "it is when you are smart, that you are the most stupid". She knew her thing when he told me that! My father, who suffered gigantic deceptions from his intellectual friends, (…) when stabilization came, appointed the precise order in which various workers would change their money. I and Liviu Rusu almost doubled up with laughter when we saw that the intellectuals were left in the end, "after the strumpets", because, as my father said, the strumpets really earned a white and honest bread"[25].

What proves, beyond the shadow of a doubt, that I. D. Sîrbu was not a lumpish and narrow-minded spirit, is the tresure of unpublished novels, short-stories, comedies and, last but not least, his diary and

correspondence. Mocking at the style fastidiousness, at those who still believe in the „art for art's sake" principle when the social and historical time claim matter-of-factness, the "pigeon-hole" works divert their attacks towards all the expressions which lack ethical spine. His radical assertions, most of them inequitable, should be connected with Blaga's own moral hard line, always blaming, of all blamable deeds, the moral unsteadiness. It is understood that there is a hue of frustration in Sîrbu's rough sentences, subsequent with his marginal writer status. On the other hand, the anonymity stubbornness, the obstinacy to keep everything underground are simply stunning. Once we admit the fact that the writer's gestures are morally emphasized, the charges against the public notoriety and against the system round up in the same anti-totalitarian discourse. In fact, Sîrbu refuses to step into light because he wants to avoid compromise.

In his epistles, a mordant irony diverges into his literary friends' direction. Favored darting points seem to be, successively, Doinaş, Negoiţescu, Balotă and Regman. The writer does not absolve himself from bitter jokes; that is why auto ironical references are frequent in his letters. It is also true that Doinaş and Negoiţescu are cruelly tortured and leave this tilting match a little bit tousled. The reader feels the poignant exaggeration and the sarcastic leeway, both justified not only by the biographical "accidents" caused by "Doinaş and Nego's ugly contribution"[26], but also by taking into consideration the disillusion of an exhilarant companion, to whom his friends do not concede any attention now, because Gary's effusions are, most of the times, annoyingly extravagant. Yet, in spite of their emphasized affective tone and contents, Sirbu's letters could be analyzed and judged unless we consider the circumstantial data and the biographical tittles.

In their main features, Sîrbu's letters breathe a tolerant attitude towards the addressees, even though between their opinions there is complete remoteness. The writer is convinced that "an authentic dialogue can be established anytime between divergent spirits" if they share the same ethical ideal. Originating from a left-ist family who nurtured him, by means of education, with the socialist ideals, Sîrbu was a left wing intellectual who strongly disagreed with any kind of tyranny, be it either from the left or from the right side. "Idealist traditionalist"[27], he recoiled from any nationalist-protochronist distortions, which, during the Communist "Golden Age", impoverished the genuine definition of the nation: "I do not pertain to any nationality (I cannot be a conational to all the guys who sail down the river). I think I got to a sort of Yalta understanding of this concept: I believe that political endurance brings people together more than language and traditions do"[28]. Further, "…You cannot be a Romanian all day long; maybe just for an hour or two, because for the rest of the day you are a common guy like the others"[29]. The author makes a plea for moderation and common sense, for understanding among people, whatever their religion, nationality and social class might be.

Sîrbu feels that his friends, from the country and from abroad, do not understand and appreciate his literature. Negoitescu's silence pulls him to the brink of patience. In the same manner, abstruse causes draw to an end the correspondence with Virgil Nemoianu. In his last years of life, he writes letters to persons who were not very familiar to him. For instance, Mariana Şora is addressed with "dear and beloved Bovaric ghost"[30]. He also writes letters to Viorica Guy Marica, whom he vaguely knew in his youth. Now, as the end gets closer and closer, he finds real support only in women with whom he manages to communicate through emotions, freed from the frightening pangs of ridicule. He confesses, several times, that he is waiting for his own death and that he regrets all the wasted years and all the unwritten works. On the other hand, he is perfectly aware of his future acknowledgement that the public will one day appreciate. More than a posthumous homage, Sîrbu wishes that the same public would never forget his flawless behaviour under the tyrannical historical circumstances. The signs of the rushed end do not cease to appear. Ion D. Sîrbu is diagnosed with cancer in the fall of 1988. After a few months, he passes away, lacking the happy and euphoric times of the Communist fall, which he considered, in his diary pages, imminent. His friends were touched by the sobriety and humor of his considerations about illness, especially the obstinate avoidance of the embarrassing conventional compassion. Virgil Nemoianu said that the prose writer who exiled himself at Craiova-Isarlâk "dies as dignified as a Roman senator"[31].

Had he lived in other times, Ion D. Sîrbu would have been the treasured guest of the most famous literary "*salons*", where he could have amazed and pleasured a very heterogeneous and finical public with his bright and effervescent spirit. Being at ease both in the Library of Vatican and in the caves of Bastille, Sîrbu hoists from one to the other, from the aphoristic formulae (bespeaking about a insightful understanding of human nature, about a deep perception of inextricable abysses and contradictions, revealed by means of paradox, like in La Rochefoucauld's works), to Voltaire's contentious irony. Convicted to loneliness, which is felt like the worst exile, Ion D. Sîrbu outtantals Tantal, and discovers the privilege of evasion into fictional spaces. This is, in fact, the only luxury he could afford: to write for the "pigeon-hole", for the underground, to send in the air "letters to gracious God". As we go on reading his letters, we get the impression that all the addressees' figures transform into "fictions of loneliness" and that they live in his

mind like the diary characters. These "fictional" beings are his real dialogue partners; perhaps the only ones who gave the writer a chance to survive by using his transitory art. We also believe that Ion D. Sîrbu did not miss that chance.

Note:

1. Livius Ciocârlie, *Mari corespondenţe*, Bucharest, Cartea Românească Publishing House, 1981, p. 15.
2. Ion D. Sîrbu, *Să nu uit…*, in *Scrisori către bunul Dumnezeu*, Cluj, Apostrof Publishing House, 1996, p. 194.
3. Viorica Guy Marica, *Un portret plauzibil*, in "Caiete critice", no. 10-12/ 1995, p. 109-115.
4. Cornel Ungureanu, *Post-scriptum (I)*, in Ion D. Sîrbu, *Iarna bolnavă de cancer*, Bucharest, Curtea Veche Publishing House, 1998, p. 63.
5. Ion D. Sîrbu to Deliu Petroiu, Petroşani, 23 april 1963, in *Iarna bolnavă de cancer*, ed. cit., p. 53.
6. Ion D. Sîrbu to Mina Maxim, Craiova, 15 december 1982, in *Iarna bolnavă de cancer*, ed. cit., p. 85-86.
7. Ion D. Sîrbu to Delia Cotruş, Craiova, 9 may 1983, in *Iarna bolnavă de cancer*, ed. cit., p. 99.
8. Viorica Guy Marica, art. cit., in "Caiete critice", no. 10-12/ 1995, p. 112.
9. Ion D. Sîrbu to Virgil Nemoianu, Craiova, 26 january 1985, in *Traversarea cortinei*, Timişoara, Editura de Vest Publishing House, 1994, p. 330.
10. Ion D. Sîrbu to Delia Cotruş, Craiova, 11 january 1988, in *Iarna bolnavă de cancer*, ed. cit., p. 109.
11. Cornel Ungureanu, *Post-scriptum (III)*, in *Iarna bolnavă de cancer*, ed. cit., p. 117.
12. Ion D. Sîrbu to Delia Cotruş, Craiova, 14 april 1988, in *Iarna bolnavă de cancer*, ed. cit., p. 110.
13. Virgil Nemoianu - *I. D. Sîrbu: satira şi lirismul*, preface to the volume Ion D. Sîrbu, *Traversarea cortinei*, ed. cit., p. 6.
14. Ion D. Sîrbu to Virgil Nemoianu, Craiova, 5 June 1984, in *Traversarea cortinei*, ed. cit., p. 282.
15. Ion D. Sîrbu to Virgil Nemoianu, Craiova, 6 April 1982, in *Traversarea cortinei*, ed. cit., p. 42-43.
16. Ion D. Sîrbu to Virgil Nemoianu, Craiova, 5 June 1984, in *Traversarea cortinei*, ed. cit., p .282.
17. Ion D. Sîrbu to Virgil Nemoianu, Craiova, 6 April 1982, in *Traversarea cortinei*, ed. cit., p. 42-43.
18. Ion D. Sîrbu to Horia Stanca, Craiova, 5 aprilie 1986, in *Scrisori către bunul Dumnezeu*, ed. cit., p. 122.
19. Ion D. Sîrbu to Ion Negoiţescu, Craiova, 2 December 1982, in *Traversarea cortinei*, ed. cit., p. 122.
20. Ion D. Sîrbu to Virgil Nemoianu, Craiova, 2 March 1984, in *Traversarea cortinei*, ed. cit., p. 259-260.
21. Ion D. Sîrbu to Virgil Nemoianu, Craiova, 22 March 1985, in *Traversarea cortinei*, ed. cit., p. 347.
22. Ion D. Sîrbu to Virgil Nemoianu, Craiova, 6 April 1982, in *Traversarea cortinei*, ed. cit., p. 42.
23. Ion D. Sîrbu to Horia Stanca, Craiova, 28 December 1984, in *Scrisori către bunul Dumnezeu*, ed. cit., p. 103.
24. Ion D. Sîrbu to Virgil Nemoianu, Craiova, 2 March 1984, in *Traversarea cortinei*, ed. cit., p. 261.
25. Ion D. Sîrbu to Mariana Şora, Craiova, 5 September 1987, in "Caiete critice", no.10-12/1995, p. 39.
26. Ion D. Sîrbu to Virgil Nemoianu, Craiova, 2 March 1984, in *Traversarea cortinei*, ed. cit., p. 261.
27. Ion D. Sîrbu to Virgil Nemoianu, Craiova, 5 February 1983, in *Traversarea cortinei*, ed. cit., p. 154.
28. *Ion D. Sîrbu to Horia Stanca, Craiova, 26 November 1985, in Scrisori către bunul Dumnezeu*, ed. cit., p. 117.
29. cf. Virgil Nemoianu - *I. D. Sîrbu: satira şi lirismul*, in in *Traversarea cortinei*, ed. cit., p. 13.
30. Ion D. Sîrbu to Horia Stanca, Craiova, 21 MaY 1988, in. *Scrisori către bunul Dumnezeu*, ed. cit., p. 139.
31. Ion D. Sîrbu to Ion Negoiţescu, Craiova, 7 July 1982, in *Traversarea cortinei*, ed. cit., p. 79.

Bibliography:

1. Arendt, Hannah, *The Origins of Totalitarianism,* Humanitas Publishing House, Bucharest, 1994.
2. Aron, Raymond, *The History and Dialectics of Violence*, Babel Publishing House, Bucharest, 1995.
3. Besançon, Alain, *The Intellectual Origins of Leninism*, Humanitas Publishing House, Bucharest, 1992.
4. Boia, Lucian, *History and Myth in the Romanian Consciousness*, Humanitas Publishing House, Bucharest, 1997.
5. Booth, Wayne C., *A Rhetoric of Irony*, University of Chicago Press, 1974.
6. Buber, Martin, *Me and You*, Humanitas Publishing House, Bucharest, 1992.
7. Châtelet, F., Pissier, E., *The Political Conceptions of the 20iest Century*, Humanitas Publishing House, Bucharest, 1994.
8. Chevaller, Jean-Jacques, *Les grandes oeuvres politiques de Machiavel à nos jours,* Paris, Armand Colin, 1970.
9. Ciocârlie, Livius, *Great Correspondences*, Cartea Românească Publishing House, Bucharest, 1981.
10. Cioran, Emil, *History and Utopia*, Humanitas Publishing House, Bucharest, 1992.
11. Ciorănescu, Alexandru, *The Future of the Past. Utopia and Literature*, Cartea Românească Publishing House, 1996.
12. Cohn, Dorrit, *Transparent Minds: Narrative Modes for Presenting Consciousness in Fiction*, Princeton University Press, 1979
13. Hamburger, Käte, *The Logic of Literature*, Indiana University Press, 1973
14. Krauss, Henning, *Literature between Resistance and Colaborationism*, Junimea Publishing House, Iasi, 1992.
15. Lejeune, Philippe, *Le pacte autobiographique*, Paris, Seuil, 1975.
16. Negrici, Eugen, *Literature and Propaganda in Communist Romania*, Bucharest, The Romanian Cultural Foundation Publishing House, 1999.
17. Orwell, George, *Inside the Whale and Other Essays*, London, V. Gollancz Ltd., 1940.