

The contested novel at the turn of the millennia

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- Summary -

Based on the significance of the contested novel, I framed my research between 1990-2020. I investigated the contested imaginary and the literary philosophy of contestation, with the contested novel as a central reference point, as it emerges from a corpus of predominantly Eastern European texts.

Relying on a mainly French interdisciplinary theoretical base, the quality of the research has underpinned the confrontation of mentalities of contestation. By applying quantitative (25 novels targeted), qualitative (4 Nobel laureates in the corpus of study) and interdisciplinary (parallels with the post-communist film of the Romanian New Wave) methods, I deconstructed the contestatory universe as it presents itself following the neutral concept, according to Barthian acceptations. Over twenty volumes have been subjected to the critical collimator of paradigmatic deconstruction, in order to identify the elements of contestation and the contested writing context, a process in which we have aimed at the mode of implementation and dissemination.

The underlying assumptions went through the licensing of the contested novel as a literary genre and served to construct definitions. By the end, I have investigated the influencing factors, constitutive agents and analytic constants at the content level and captured paradigmatic directions.

To provide a brief itinerary of the thesis, I will capture some of the concluding remarks that defined three mentalist blocs: recuperative, deceptive and intellectualist. Literary engagement at the turn of the late twentieth century-early twenty-first century proposes four defining stages. In the foreground is the Sartrean model as motivator and political articulator in the relation of engagement with literature. The New Novel and formalism follow, "engaged literature" being oriented in this category on its own literary language through essentialist formalism and the theories of Alain Robbe-Grillet. The view that follows is represented by multiple voices. Among them is the authority of Tzvetan Todorov, who emphasizes on the diachronic axis how the paradigm of engagement substitutes itself in favor of referential language. The explanation corresponds to the ideational externalizations, liberating and emancipatory at the same time, which have a direct effect on the contested novel.

As predictably, the formulas of engagement did not totally recede: the theistic novel combated the field of "post" or "meta" literature, while new formulas of engagement were preserved, despite their valoric and didactic incapacity after modernism. The imperatives of

preserving the term "engaged" have brought to the first-class scene of claiming expressions with emblematic figures in the direction of responsibility, involvement, agency in general. As a result, field literature, literary journalism and biofiction support the emulation that provides a context for the emergence of the contested novel.

An important factor for understanding the contestatory novel is located at the level of important periodicity. The extension of the optzeciste period, as a reconfiguring impetus of the engaged function, is recomposed at the contestatory level by generating three reference levels: critical fictions applied on the human-history relation, complex associative thinking and aesthetic and ethical recovery procedures. In parenthesis, sociocriticism and anthropology constitute two levels of promotion in this complex of circumstances that operate with dystopian and antiutopian patterns. Moreover, in the plane of critical interpretation, the analytical directions aim at the relationship between human-authority-social ideal, which offers a varied interpretative spectrum for the framing of the contested novel, the modeling of protagonists and disobedient objects and the posture of otherness - more precisely, the common elements that edify the belonging of contemporary novels to contestation.

On the side of intentionality, the novels of contestation aim at denouncing the repressive regime present in these writings, be it Stalinist, communist or current. The challenges of history on the theme of otherness and the destinies of contemporary typologies have been captured in novel, socially confrontational situations. The autofictional imaginary structures emerging from this literary horizon offer a compensatory panoply, perceptible from the perspective of active contestatory repression, but oriented towards a well-informed contestatory neutrality.

The contestatory episteme is built on antinomic patterns. First of all, because the scale of the contestatory phenomenon needs a formative certification, but not a dogmatic or didactic certification. So the effort to revisit the reactive fundamentals first and foremost provokes reflection and attitudes. Without building itself on a direct confrontational mode, the contestation of the turn of the millennia reminds us that the tide of diffusion and absolutist propaganda did not pass through a detractor phenomenon, but, on the contrary, manifested its impetus through literary factions.

First of all, because the thwarting of contemporary paradigms brings with it a labor of compensation, and this is due to the impact of literature that addresses the cultural-economic vision of a fractal-period and that processes narratives with a post-traumatic effect (Herta Müller, Svetlana Aleksievici, Andrei Kurkov and Ion D. Sîrbu). And then, because taking a

stand is either technical (François Bon), essential (Annie Ernaux), declamatory (Ion D. Sîrbu, Tadeusz Konwicki, Vladimir Lorcenkov, Viktor Pelevin), formative (Ludmila Ulytskaya) or multi-discursive (Ion D. Sîrbu, Nichita Danilov). Literature of the extreme topicality turns into a discipline of the terrain applied to confrontation; ideologies put pressure on institutional and community factions, dynamism far-left orientations have dynamism and sensitize nation-states to the value of national dramas.

As a result, the emancipation that the current contestation implements seeks to confirm a crisis of the pulverization of meaning that is constructed from different stages: narrative ideation, main typologies and the relation to authority. the abject as a fictional state and the transformative elements validated aesthetically. In this whole process of epistemic reconfiguration, protest activity denotes a dynamic of passivity. As such, the thematic paradox of insurrection becomes a sweetened narrative factor attributed to dystopian and anti-utopian constructions.

Rather, the contestatory novel enters the episteme of extreme contemporaneity as a necessary element of the ultra-contemporary evolutionary spirit, but most likely functions according to the vision associated with politically correct rebellion. In a broad sense, literary contestation emerges as a civic conlocutor and risks offering, beyond its potentially militant allure, a variegated literary contestatory consumerism. Thus, the reader actively assists in the direction of humanism, as an accomplice-witness to a potential act of protest, introduced in the spirit of paradigmatic deconstruction.

From a stylistic point of view, the quality of humor with which the authors embellish their writings denotes a superior focus on the level of language, with some writers preferring to transform possible dialog into introspective lyricism. Out of this creative magma emerges a discursive context of the lines, brought as close as possible to historical reality. Consequently, the effect of the writing in some cases builds a substantial memory. This is the case with three subjective writers: Herta Müller, Svetlana Aleksievich and Ludmila Ulytskaya. For their part, the novels by Ion D. Sîrbu, Tadeusz Konwicki and Andrei Kurkov position themselves from this angle of dialogical repression closer to ideological complicity: political multi-discourse (Farewell, Europe!), condemnation of the lack of collective reaction (The Little Apocalypse), and the befriending of enemies as a solution to progress (The Midnight Milk). Viktor Pelevin places himself at the center of the argumentative contestation in a journalistic-essay. Alongside the aforementioned, Nichita Danilov and Vladimir Lorcenkov also contribute with common

contestatory functions: the dystopian vision, the incursion of lament, typological predispositions, and topicality.

Consequently, the novels function as pleas for social reform. At the same time, they confer a disobedient validity, and this becomes all the more significant when it is reinforced by the qualification of an imaginary analogous to the current society, as well as by recognition through international literary honors.

Din acest motiv, vectorul discernământului critic face posibil caracterul sentențios al contestației. Fundamentat pe un bagaj al memoriei istorice, acesta este infuzat de un ecou anarhic. Așadar, acest concept filosofic devine semnificativ pentru traseul de luciditate pe care îl oferă narațiunii. Prin urmare, controversa tematicii contestatare trece în planul cunoașterii prin diferite cadre distopice narrative, cu un aparent itinerariu al dezorganizării bazat pe valorizarea indirectă a funcției de culpabilizare. Aici intervine un efect diegetic esențial pentru producția ficțională în care se de-dramatizează umanismul mentalitar socio-politic, prin aceste filtre contestatare.

În final, sistemul contestatar procesează sensurile unui vid de încredințare a suferinței împărtășite. Prin urmare, contestația devine un spațiu mentalitar în care prelucrarea acțiunii devine un potențial înăbușit eliberat de răgaz. Adică prin contestație dinamica salturilor de conștientizare este adusă la zi. La turnanta dintre milenii acest lucru se aplică prin constituenți diferiți, de la elemente discursive recognoscibile până la formule-hibrid: divinația cu personalități anarhiste (*Generation P* de Viktor Pelevin), tipologii ale abjecțiunii animalice manifestate în plan uman (*Mica Apocalipsă* de Tadeusz Konwicki), obiecte-portal (*Omul din eprubetă* de Nichita Danilov) ș.a.m.d.

For this reason, the vector of critical discernment makes the sententious character of the contestation possible. Founded on a baggage of historical memory, it is infused with an anarchic echo. Therefore, this philosophical concept becomes significant for the route of lucidity it offers to the narrative. Therefore, the controversy of the contestatory thematic passes into the plane of cognition through different dystopian narrative frames, with an apparent itinerary of disorganization based on the indirect valorization of the guilt function. This is where an essential diegetic effect intervenes for the fictional production in which socio-political mentalitarian humanism is de-dramatized through these contestatory filters.

In the end, the contestatory system processes the meanings of a void of entrusting shared suffering. Therefore, contestation becomes a mentalizing space in which the processing

of action becomes a stifled potential freed from respite. That is, through contestation the dynamics of leaps of awareness are brought to actualization. At the turn of the millennia this applies through different constituents, from recognizable discursive elements to hybrid-formulas: divination with anarchist personalities (Viktor Pelevin's *Generation P*), typologies of animal abjectness manifested on the human plane (Tadeusz Konwicki's *Little Apocalypse*), portal-objects (Nichita Danilov's *Man in the Test Tube*) and so on.

In terms of creed, Ion D. Sîrbu uses the linguistic spectacle of camouflage. Herta Müller tackles an agonizing spleen, Ludmila Ulytskaya traces a cult of resistance through culture and family relations. Tadeusz Konwicki, Ion D. Sîrbu, Andrei Kurkov and Vladimir Lorcenkov expose decadent typologies of intellectualism. Viktor Pelevin deconstructs the current generation of capitalism. In contrast, Svetlana Aleksievich offers literature an emancipated spectator's position of mosaic-memory recreated through acts of confession, thus offering the technique of writing akin to a survey of living history. Broadly speaking, the inner monologues, rhetorical pirouettes and forms of figuration bring victory to a contested system that has been created as a result of an engagement that supports the assertion of otherness.

Such ideational operations configure the episteme that can be called, according to these provisions, a 'contestatory' one. The manifestation through politicized social techniques of the contestatory novel detects and controls contestatory dynamics that encompass numerous classes and typologies. In conclusion, the humanity created by this contestatory universe retracts a pulverization of guilt, filters it through various forms of committed denunciation, and contributes to the rectifying function of history.

On an interdisciplinary level, there is a direct correspondence between the intellectualist framework of literary contestation and the cinematic manifestation of post-communist film in the Romanian New Wave. It is noticeable in this overlapping of fields how the politics of liberation function at the thematic watershed of the Revolution. First of all, it is presented with detachment from its own niched cinematic baggage, then it emerges in terms of the Romanian humanist mission erected on the stakes of the still active empirical realism.

Thus, after researching the feature films, I noticed the ubiquity of a demand in the contested cinematic space: the intellectualization of the guilt-guilt drama. Specifically, there is an implicit demand that, through contestation, the collective mentality targeted by cineastic conjugations seeks to engage critical spirits. A process of reconfiguring an already activated episteme is mobilized to achieve this collaborative goal, which focuses in particular on the

evaluation of aesthetically valid actions of contestation. Throughout the analyses, we have identified that there is a dose of implicit culpabilization of filmmakers

In the diachrony up to the turn of the millennia, the perspective of contestation signals when a reaction to authority, when the co-responsible insertion of an implication. Whether one opts for commitment to a cause, a creed, or a stake of ideological recuperation - cinematographic works generate a leap of awareness. The crossing from one level to another is activated with visual functions that localize a community integral to the episteme of contestation, both through revelatory aesthetic momentums and cultic inserts in which feature films reveal how transformative generative potential has been lost and can be recovered.

On the whole, the contestatory novel encounters cinematic productions recognizable at the level of epistemic intention: Manichean dichotomies, associations with regime representatives, anti-heroes and existential dramas). At critical points of the unfolding of visual content the quality of assimilation of a toolkit of subversive techniques confirms the ingredients of a levelled platform of thought - of intelligent humour, demonstrative - through carnivalesque formalism, provocative - through abjection and absurdity, and framed in extremes - through delirium and flashing moments of revelation. Each criterion also oriented towards a desensitization of the traumatic mentality, implicitly offers space for reflection for new agents of contestation.

Moreover, cinematic contestation sublimates the two criteria of aesthetic expression, from which it extracts the meanings of influences and poles of power. In concrete terms, the framework in which these visual meanings are processed sediments attention to character groupings, strategic alliances, environmental geographies - while at the same time transposing a systemic contestatory character that is revealed through the dramatized paradoxes of social involution.

The positions of a European Romania were undermined imaginary through the impact of the fantasy of free cultural expression. This contextual mixture was at the basis of the application of the socio-cultural field of exploitation from the sap of which cinematography fed itself ideologically. From a methodological point of view, however, the socio-political trajectory of post-communist Romanian cinema adopted a symptomatic political discourse. Without knowing any alternative versions, the interest in the cinematic imaginary acquired an authoritarian comfort stake. Starting from the evolving complex of financial support for their

projects, filmmakers combined the status of rebellion, sometimes experimentally, sometimes selectively-evasively, but always imbued with a perceptible subversive tendency.

Starting from here, a first fractal - that of the communist regime - reveals its spectrum of affectation of the community masses. It will be discovered in the following where the confusion arises between the progress of a contestatory order (centered on capturing tensions between communities or between authorities and the community) and when the politics of "contestation" (where documentary aesthetics reacts to contexts of awareness and offers tertiums to liberate the perception of revolt) appears.

In the process of edification, the revolutionary cinematic infusion turns out to have acted as a contestatory substitute. Signs in the direction of contestatory developments were energized by groupings, isolated manifestos or echoes of recognition from abroad.

The films mentioned here are concerned with aspects of psycho-social transference in relation to themes of current conversion. Contestation emerges from these filters of thematic autopsy like critical mines that the directors, and implicitly the screenwriters, identify in the ideational threshold at the turn of the millennium. Throughout the analysis, we have argued the circumstances that have been transposed onto the aesthetic plane, thus obtaining an inventory of subversive diversity. The stylistic horizon on which the New Wave consolidates its evolution adopts contestation as a sine-qua-non.

Keywords: contestatory novel, engaged literature, disobedience, field literature, biofiction, countercultural novel, subversivity, agency, literary contestation, postcommunism, current literature, militantism