

SKETCH ABOUT THE INTIMACY OF THE SELF IN AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL FICTIONS

A.C. Cofan*

Our tour through the Eugen Simion living time as it emerges under the hand that writes from the postlude of confession, of recording the facts and events experienced, is based on the structuralist concept of Barthes *biographemes*, minimal units of existence, about the inner being of the one who weaves a discourse and weaves within it. The consciousness producing the text, like a spider in the center of its web, initiates a process of reification of the individual as fiction. The text appears impregnated by the subject who thinks it, even in a critical text, seen as a diary of the self, according to its own record: “Critical discourse becomes [...] something else than we were used to it being: a diary in which everything is mixed up because everything that concerns the inner being of the essayist has a right to expression. The critic does not communicate mere ideas, options, judgments, he communicates himself along with his ideas, options... The idea never comes in a pure state. It comes accompanied by what the subject who thinks it has put into it”. [*Living Time...*, 1985: 124] Biographemes illuminate like a flash the self, the inner and hidden part of the being, and help us to draw a biographical portrait of the biological man, on which foundation the cultural man was built. Of course, the question that arises is to what use it would be for us to “peel back the onion” (in the words of Günter Grass) in order to find out about a person’s interiority and intimate self, if the being has the will to build its own condition under the sign of culture and to create another identity in the form of the man of culture. The path to the center of the being is more than an atrocious and insensitive revelation, it is in fact a search for the truth, for the foundations on which the condition of the spiritual man has been built. An orderly and clear mind, with a permanent desire to classify and distinguish the spiritual models he approaches and when is spiritually modelled by, Eugen Simion shows what he admires, for example, in his interwar critical predecessor, Eugen Lovinescu, inside whose portrait he paints traits that suit him so well. In doing his portrait we have the impression that we are witnessing a self-portrait by ricochet: “Lovinescu was what is called a man of character. His moral ideal is the ideal of classicism: the honest man, that is: the man who respects the moral law, keeps his word, as they say, respects his principles, respects friendship and truth. A certain constancy in behaviour is obligatory. The honest man is not always predictable in his judgments, but he is predictable in his fundamental acts. He will never, for example, side with untruth. Aggression is not his weapon; he abhors violence and rudeness. The honest man, when he becomes a critic, does not

* Lector dr., Academia de Studii Economice; e-mail: alunitzacofan@gmail.com.

want to shine at the expense of the truth” [*Living Time...*, 1985: 225] Let us note a few things that are basically constant in his critical, publicistic, confessional, declarative discourse: “man of character”, “honest man”, man of principles, loyal to friends, lover of truth (moreover, he declares: “I would like it to be said of me, he is a man for whom the truth matters” – [*Living Time, Confessing Time*, 1986: 54]), who doesn’t love violence and rudeness, because his soul is gentle and sensitive, in a word, the critic’s being can be based only on the truth. The profession of a critic, and even more so of a man belonging to the family of great cultural spirits, cannot be done outside the principles of honesty and truth, otherwise there is no point in a life wasted in “falsehood” and “dishonesty”. Why does the critic care so much about truth? Because, he says: “the search for truth is a form of manifestation of morality” [*Living Time...*, 1985: 300] So now, perhaps, it is more obvious why intellectual biography cannot be done without the biography of the deeper self. Undoubtedly, only the construction of a spiritual biography transforms a life into destiny. His belief was in the salvation of man’s being through culture. There is, therefore, a way of being authentic as a human being which can also be transmitted to the way of being in culture, without mask, the moral and authentic being doubling both. Between the two modes are interwoven fine communicating vessels, like almost inscrutable capillaries, which create a network underneath. The critic Eugen Simion himself does not allow himself to be blinded only by the achievements of a personality’s spiritual biography; he also seeks the intimacy of the creative person, he delves, in the name of configuring the authenticity of a model, into the intimacy of the personality he meets. For there is nothing wrong with having a cult of masters, a cult of great men, a cult of elders. In Murraykriegerian terms, Eugen Simion is interested in revelations about the person (the man) that illuminate or overshadow the public persona (the author), contributor to the great cultural history.

From the volume *Conversations with Petru Dumitriu* (a risky undertaking of critical reassessment of a tainted writer, a former collaborator of the communist regime, fact that the author of *The Family Chronicle* now humbly admits as part of the “mistakes of youth”: a sin he honestly admits to himself, namely that he “fraternized with the devil”, but paid with thirty-three years of exile, a “kingdom of cold” for him – 2011: 65), a performance of mutual confessions and confessions, we learn that both interviewer and interviewee are interested in “the cult of successful people”, “those who have done something” and that they cannot limit themselves, puritanically, to oeuvre, saying to themselves “Who did it [the oeuvre – n.] I don’t care!” The question of the identity of the author or of “who is the author” beyond the work is not part of an intention to “beat about the bush”, but only of an effort to understand, “to see clearly and to judge fairly”. Petru Dumitriu’s and Eugen Simion’s tastes and idiosyncrasies sometimes overlap and fix the man in traits contrary to those officially accredited: “Valéry ...is good, he is perfect, he is polished...but he is not a great poet. The great poet is the one who, when you read him, puts a lump in your throat. And this is not Valéry, but Gérard de Nerval, who

hanged himself on a Paris street...” (P. Dumitriu); “Or François Villon’s The Thief. Or Arthur Rimbaud’s scoundrel...slave trader and arms dealer” (E. Simion); “Isn’t his biography interesting? [of Arthur Rimbaud – m. n.] I’m not interested in the man who wrote *A Season in Hell*? Of course not! Not, of course, to justify his poems, but as a “structure of existence” as Barthes says – as a destiny, as the ancients used to say... And then [...] when I read that Alfred de Vigny was a police informer and that Benjamin Constant denounced a priest who was his opponent for parliament and that poor *abbé* was picked up by the police on the basis of this denunciation and sent to Guyana in exile, I wouldn’t say I feel happy... You see, however, that even after two centuries such facts are not forgotten...” [*Conversations...*, 2011: 312-313] We distinguish here two categories of biographies, those relating strictly to personal life and those including narrative references to the lives of personalities with whom the author of *The Death of Mercutio* came into direct contact. The veil of discretion is left over the former, knowing that Eugen Simion feels he belongs to the civilization of modesty (or shame), a traditional civilization, while Greek civilization, for example, is more a civilization of guilt (Greek tragic guilt), as he obsessively argues with a permanent desire for order and classification [*Defiance of Rhetoric*, 1985: 372-373; *Conversations...*, 2011: 125]. The biographies in the second category, of well-known illustrious people (French professors and critics, Romanian professors and critics, French and Romanian writers) are much more numerous, practically littering the text wherever we turn the page in these *Conversations...* but, from time to time, personal memories burst out, spurred on by the convivial and friendly atmosphere established in the dialogue, which throw colourful spots on life lived in the post-war period, because one of the aims of the *Conversations...* is to bring to the surface the history lived with all the responsibility of moral attitude. Here is a small excerpt about the life of Romanian intellectuals in the proletarian period, known directly: “There were genuine intellectuals in post-war Romania, people with their heads on their shoulders, untainted by the drug of Bolshevism. Not all of them were in prison. I talked a lot with Marin Preda about this and from him I learned that behind the official culture there was a genuine intellectual community. [...] Arghezi, Blaga, Barbu, Voiculescu, Vianu, G. Călinescu, Șerban Cioculescu, Streinu, Anton Dumitriu, Noica... Not all of them were in prison. Some were allowed to publish, others not... I myself got to see Bacovia in the flesh, to visit Lucian Blaga in Cluj when I was a first-year student at the University of Bucharest, to see the great Ion Barbu walking down Edgar Quinet Street with a huge stick in his hand, a beanie on his head and a big moustache. I even shook hands with Tudor Arghezi at an anniversary... And I never miss a public lecture by G. Călinescu, who was then banished from the University... I followed the lectures of Rosetti and Iordan, great philologists, and I was very close to Tudor Vianu, a moral man and a first class intellectual. These intellectuals existed in the Romanian landscape. Not at the forefront – there were the ones you mentioned before, the lamentable “tutors”, the tireless..., the vigilantes of revolutionary ideology..., but

on the fringes of society or even in its underground” [*Conversations...*, 2011: 46-47] At the age of almost 80 (when the *Conversations with Petru Dumitriu* take place), he has become illustrious and “immortal” (he had already held the position of President of the Romanian Academy for two terms, 1998-2006), considered (even by his enemies) as an outstanding personality of Romanian culture, Eugen Simion has the temerity to discuss many hot topics of Romanian culture that have polemically stirred the intellectual spirits from yesterday till today. And we say “temerity” because he has faced enough accusations, challenges and adversity to undermine his authority. Among these passionate subjects, of course, from the position of restoring the truth, without anger and without bias, is the question of the great writers, “collaborators” of the “Tatar socialist” regime [*Conversations...*, 2011: 85], and combating the idea of a “Siberia of the spirit” in post-war Romania, Sovietized at first, liberalized slightly in post-Stalinism and cornered again under Ceausescu. A great lover of confessions, diaries and memoirs, an undeniable theorist of biographical genres, Eugen Simion makes a remarkable revelation in his conversations with Petru Dumitriu, which is found nowhere else, a revelation about life after the war and his life as a schoolboy, when he was around 13, barely out of childhood, a teenager: “I was [...] lucid enough to realize what was going on in my family and around me. It was a tragic and confusing time, coming on the heels of an even more tragic one: war. At that time, in 1945-1948, I was a pupil in the first classes at the “Saints Peter and Paul” High School in Ploiesti. I was taking lessons in a building almost entirely destroyed by bombing. I remember the landscape well: of the beautiful, sturdy, well-built high school building on Railstation Boulevard, only one wing remained, and that one was in tatters. The walls were shifting, the windows and doors were crooked and chipped. And we, the ten and eleven years old boys, were wandering with great enthusiasm through the ruins...We came to school in the morning, with the ever-present packet of bread greased with plums jam...Since then I can’t stand this combination. I can still smell that sour, rancid smell. “My little madeleine”...” [*Conversations...*, 2011: 23] Notice to today’s pupils and students who think that the life of the illustrious goes smoothly and without problems! Eugen Simion was a teenager who experienced the aftermath of the war, and a little later, as a young graduate – the rigours of unemployment, he did not have an easy life, even if he did not go to prison. And, it is said that it is in the fires of fate’s vicissitudes that strong and upright characters are forged. In this exchange of impressions, tastes, observations and discussions, the empathetic nature of the critic Eugen Simion comes to the surface, among many other things, empathy being a stoic quality (as recommended by Epictetus, Seneca and Marcus Aurelius) whereby he puts himself in the shoes of others, this superior understanding of the reactions and behaviour of others helping him to control his negative emotions and react with humour and balance. For example, taking an interest in his interlocutor’s writing habits, he recounts a personal story in a comic-tragic, laughing-crying key, mixing, as always, the bookish and the vivid facts: “Schiller, if I am not mistaken, could not

write a line unless he smelled a slightly rotten apple. Or something like that. Others can only write with a certain kind of pen. I know a poet, admittedly a minor one, who lives in my apartment block. When he starts writing – and he writes every day – he takes his wife, child and mother-in-law out of the house. He can't stand anyone around his work. His inspiration runs away... I see the poet's mother-in-law, an old woman, almost every day on the street, walking without a heading direction. She waits for the poet's son-in-law to find the precious metaphor and the right rhyme... She brought me his books of verse one day, and I was filled with a boundless pity for the author's poor mother-in-law...The verses were remarkably dull..." [Conversations..., 2011: 171].

It is also about empathy, kindness and patience towards those who are unfortunate in spirit or in need in a short narration in *Time of Living, Time of Confession* (1986), when he was a lecturer in Romanian language at the Sorbonne (1970-1973), about the romance of the French girl Marceline, a salesgirl in the pub *Le petit Cluny*, with the Moldovan pitch-black she met on the Romanian coast, on a holiday. Surely the important post-war critic and university professor could not have imagined himself in such a funny situation, with Cupid brokering Franco-Romanian love affairs. So, as a lecturer in Romanian, he is forced to translate from Romanian into French and vice versa the longing, illiterate letters between a young French girl and a black "musician" from the Moldovan lands. The critic helps to develop the romance, a narrative made dynamic by the free indirect style, and the epic flows on the waters of a juicy humour, doubled by self-irony, and the ending illustrates very well Baudelarie's saying "par delicatessen, j'ai perdu ma vie", because the professor finds himself caught in the trap of his own amiability: "Marceline A. [...] comes to our lecturer's office with a letter in Romanian with the request to translate it. I am here to pass it on to her. The letter is the masterpiece of an illiterate. Fanciful spelling, sentimental musings of indescribable (involuntary) humour. The "musician" plays in an orchestra and is now "on a big tour" in Botosani, Husi, Vaslui, etc. He thinks a lot about M.A. (otherwise a married woman with two children) and doesn't know how to get her to come to France to see him. [...] I conscientiously translate the text sent by the artist, I throw in a strong metaphor every now and then, Marceline is simply moved, destroyed. What can she do to help the artist, now on tour in Botosani?! I don't know, I have no idea. But couldn't the orchestra in which he plays come to France to give concerts? I don't know this either, in myself I deeply doubt it, but I don't communicate anything to the bereaved Marceline. [...] At least try the epistolary solution. Wouldn't it be kind of me to translate her reply into Romanian, to facilitate communication? I'm beginning to lose both my kindness and my patience, but I can't help it, I've entered into a sentimental Franco-Romanian affair and, in the eyes of the young saleswoman, I have certain moral obligations. I'm just the artist's compatriot.

I must translate her cheerful, encouraging lines. I translate them, put in a little more of my own and hand the text over to M.A. She brings me the answer three

weeks later, happy, curious, and the story begins again. I find a place in Paris, I soothe the sighs of the musician now in Mizil with thoughtful translations, and the elegy of the shop assistant at the pub Le petit Cluny blossoms.

— What does your artist look like? I ask Marceline one day.

— Il est brun, très brun, très beau and, to confirm, she pulls a photo out of her purse.

Familiar physiognomy, very brown indeed, and if I had any doubt about the artist's true profession, now I didn't had none...

The new messages (from Buzau, Faurei) are angrier. The musician has lost his patience, he wants more concrete things, a packet or two, his feeling would get a relief...I skip this passage, I don't translate it, I want this love story to remain in a sphere of purity. I communicate only sweet things. Finally, M.A. decides to learn Romanian. Couldn't I give her lessons? Oh, no, not that, but she can sign up for the beginners' course at our lecturer's office. She can't, though, because Marceline doesn't have her baccalaureate! The ultimate solution is that M.A. can come to classes without any school obligation. I feel complicit with her, I have encouraged a romance that is having great difficulties. M.A. comes to class for a couple of weeks, then disappears. I see her again after a few months, when I go in for a beer at the pub where she works. She couldn't come to class, she doesn't have time, she's going to Romania in the summer. But from her account I see that interest in the musician has waned" [*Living Time...*, 1986: 62-63]. Very few, if there are any, biographemes of his teaching practice reveal to those who did not know him in this posture how he behaved and related to his students. The French students, especially the female students, seem more demanding, fierce and oppositional towards the educational institution and certainly not as docile and compliant as the Romanian students (from Ceausescu's terror regime). In a confrontational situation with a student, C.B., who doesn't want to sit the end-of-year exams on the grounds that it would mean accepting bourgeois conformism and ideology, and she disputes any institutional authority and, in particular, Eugen Simion's teaching authority, both of which violate the student's freedom of choice, because, anyway, "what can exams prove?" Professor Eugen Simion doesn't get into a political doctrinal polemic (useless, by the way, for a young woman who was already convinced of her own righteousness!). and allows himself to be initiated, with apparent innocence, by the rebellious student into "situationism", an offshoot of the 1968 protest movement, known as the "Prague Spring", which stirred the spirits of young people in several European countries (France, Italy, Czechoslovakia, Poland). In his conversation with the "leftist" student, E. Simion questions the validity of Marx and Engels' theories, is one of the few references to the basic theories of communist doctrine (by which tribute is paid to Caesar), and her impassioned speech is described as "realism", when in fact it borders on "anarchism": "Only when it comes to questions of revolutionary practice does C.B. become inflamed, intolerant, sees around her only conformism, odious politicking. I don't insist, my initiation is on the right track, however some

notions are not clear. Do C.B. and her situationist friends believe in the validity of Marx and Engels' theses? Do they recognize the revolutionary role of the working class? I believe, I admit, but the situationists do not want to make a revolution to institutionalize, because it would become a brake on the revolutionary spirit. The appetite for power, the will to dominate in society, even that which is exercised in the name of freedom, must be destroyed. The only acceptable authority is the authority of freedom. A continuous revolutionary practice that prevents the transformation of revolutionary society into a society of the spectacle: hierarchical, repressive". [*Living Time...*, 1986: 60-61]

About the empathy inherent in the critic's nature we also learn from another memory, about how literary friendships (the one with Marin Preda in the present narration) subjected him to ostracism by the great men of the day, such as Eugen Barbu, who attacked him (in the 1970s), trying to undermine the value of his writings, but Eugen Simion always made the necessary distinction, in his profession, between the biographical man and the axiology of the work: "[...] I almost never knew the man Barbu. Being a friend of Preda, his enemy, Eugen Barbu, took me – to use his style – 'in the flu'. His newspaper "The Week" didn't let me down for years. He denied almost all my books, he always made fun of me. My wife, a high school teacher, could no longer go into the school's chancellery on Fridays – the day on which "The Week" appeared, if I'm not mistaken – because all the teachers were reading "The Week" and couldn't take the satisfaction of having the magazine mock us. A story from long ago. It's not nice to be challenged, mocked, belittled like that, all day long. It's not easy to be a literary critic in Romania [...]. But you get used to it. Barbu was by no means a comfortable writer. On the contrary. I wrote objectively about his literature. I made the effort to forget the man and discover the talent. He truly represented the harsh world of the urban periphery... A remarkable talent" [*Conversations...*, 2011: 209] And, from these conversations in which the roles are always changing and the interviewee becomes the interviewer, another story that shows him as a man of his word, a man who keeps his word, even if another friend (Nichita Stanescu) put him in a not exactly pleasant situation, compared to another older and, at that time, better seen from above, A.E. Baconsky, editor of the magazine "Steaua" and among the first writers to put his finger on the wound of proletarianism, denounced the schematic literature of party activists: "He was a well-read man, but to my taste a bit of a snob. He always looked down on me and slightly meek. Besides, I only spoke to him once. He had been expelled from Cluj and had moved to Bucharest, somewhere on Dionisie Lupu Street, I think. I asked my friend Nichita Stanescu to introduce me, and he phoned the poet A. E. Baconsky about it. The poet accepted, fixed the date and time. Said and done. I, in turn, fixed a meeting place with Nichita Stanescu to go together. Only Nichita Stanescu didn't come. He met an attractive woman on the way and light-heartedly abandoned the Baconsky project. Me, a trustworthy man, I spent half an hour waiting for my former schoolmate from Ploiesti and seeing that he wasn't coming, I took my courage in both hands and rang at A.E. Baconsky's doorbell. He

opened the door himself, all dressed up: fine suit, modern cut, matching tie, cicero haircut...I apologized, explained what had happened, he understood immediately and blamed it all on the changing temperament of the Romanian poet. He didn't take the event as tragic, however, and, in my heart, I thanked him for his intelligence in understanding an unpleasant situation. He was not a communicative man. I had the feeling at the end that I could not be friend with him. [...] He created a poetic school and he was, I think, the first Romanian writer to denounce proletarianism. This cost him a lot..." [Conversations..., 2011: 207-208]. A first stop on this portrait that we want to make visible from his own confessions shows the critic Eugen Simion as an empathetic nature, having the cult of friendship, man of his word, honest and, above all adversity, keeps the fair judgment required by profession between the talent demonstrated in the work and the wickedness of the character of the writer examined critically. He knows very well that there is a gap between the public and the private image of a writer, and he does not credit the one to the detriment of the other until he has done careful and rigorous research, a task which is helped by his intimate writings. This is the situation that Petru Dumitriu is found himself in, and he is now exploring it through these dialogues: "your contemporaries in the 1950s left the image of you that I mentioned before: a talented and vain writer. Well, when I read your confessional books, I realized that this image did not fit at all. There I encountered another fantasy of the author. One who knows the abysses of anguish, human kindness, hope, the fervour of prayer... More specifically, a writer who thinks about the great themes of existence and suddenly feels himself trapped between two systems that he rejects and is rejected by...Where is the talented and vain writer?" [Conversations..., 2011: 200].

It can be observed from the exposition up to this point that we have added two more writings, *Time of Living*, *Time of Confession* (1986), and *The Defiance of Rhetoric* (1985); they have requested our endoscopic attention for a not very complicated reason, namely that the later theorist of biographical genres has himself classified them in this literary genre of confession, but the differences between these two writings are quite visible, even being included under the same hat of memoirs. Eugen Simion has never written, at least not to date, any intimate writings in the nature of a diary or memoirs. But he has sprinkled throughout the works named "diary" references to his own human nature and character. Of course the question that arises is how much we can believe from his confessions and statements, knowing that they are often not to be taken *ad litteram*. How well he knows himself, how much bovarysme he had, if there is a great or a small distance between how he sees himself and how others see him, these are some questions that anyone but not only a literary apprentice can think about. Regarding his public image, there have always been reproaches, accusations and disassociations, if we only consider Nicolae Florescu's articles in *Back to Aristarchus*, vol. 1, where we found cutting, mocking and preachy texts about both the man and the critic's writings, especially those in which he was coordinator, such as *DGLR*, and studies on Mircea Eliade, *spirit of*

amplitude and *the knots and signs of prose* [N. Florescu, 2009: pp. 305-313]. But Nicolae Florescu, with a French saying, “il n’était pas facile à vivre” and that can be seen by examining his frowning eyes and rough face, framed by the wrinkles of anger. Contemporary testimonies confirm that he was a complexed man and double-dyed by the circumstances that were inimical to his own professional ambitions, though known as a serious publisher (he was the owner of the publishing house “Jurnalul literar”/ “Literary Diary”) and a systematic researcher of the Romanian exile.

But let us return to what we wish to accomplish in this exposure. We do not deal, it goes without saying, with all the *biographemes* we encounter, for it would take a whole book to include all that we have found. But we could not fail to notice that, at the age of 45, when he writes *The Parisian Journal*, as a result of a three-year stay in Paris, the Sorbonne university, with the mission of a Romanian language lectureship at the Sorbonne, the pages are imbued with references to the way the man, professor and critic Eugen Simion behaves. The self is revealed from these intersections of its nuanced behavior. At 53, the writing hand makes only rare references to the biographical self; the volume bears, moreover, the title of an article about the eightieth generation (for which the critic did not have a great receptive sensitivity, although he intelligently acquitted himself of drawing the distinctive lyrical features belonging to Mariana Marin, Romulus Bucur, Alexandru Musina, Bogdan Ghiu and Ion Bogdan Lefter, all poets coming from the Monday Cenacle and the Criticism Circle), defiance of rhetoric (the whole title of the commentary being *Defiance of Rhetoric, Rhetoric of Defiance*, including a figure of speech so cherished by our critic: antimetathesis), and, in the alternative, the subtitle of the confession, *German journal*, which counts only about 40 pages out of a total of 420 pages of the entire volume. Which means that the focus is not on the stories of the cultural tourist, who discovers Germany in a summer for a few months resident there, but visiting Frankfurt, Heidelberg, Munich, Berlin, where he travels with a spiritual baggage of a rich scholarly culture related to the places visited. In fact, he is trying to find some images (about the romantic thinker in Weimar, for example, about the Pinacoteca in Frankfurt, etc.) already constituted from his previous readings. His knowledge is, in a first stage, a recognition, around which the lace of vivid impressions from direct contact with the reality is caught. Eugen Simion starts from scholarly knowledge and discovers the geographical, Museum, everyday realities. The critic Eugen Simion is not a naive tourist, he does not get excited easily and does not fall into an admiring stupefaction towards anything that comes in his way, as once, with a slightly exaggerated comparison, The Boyar Dinicu Golescu in front of the Schönbrunn Castle. The scholarly filter sometimes acts as a brake, and sometimes it potentiates its perceptions, especially related to the people it meets, personalities of the university environment or, simply, guides.

Based on these minimal units of vitality and confessions, is there about decomposing or recomposing in order to discover the depths of the critic Eugen Simion’s being? In a book of studies, like the *Defiance of Rhetoric* (1985), the strict diary elements are placed in the queue of everyone, it seems to be an editorial trick

(for the unsuspecting reader might think that it is a memorial writing in the entirety of the book) but we find confessional sequences in each of the topics addressed, they function as flashes, fulgurations, towards the object of being, that barthian *ergography* or nichitian *hemography* [*Defiance of Rhetoric*, 1985: 353] in which the self itself is the subject and object of writing. The book itself is a tribute to the father of his reign, Dragomir R. Simion, passed in the world of shadows not long before the publication of the book, and the article signs and meanings (excerpts from a diary) includes a mourning, a heartbreaking wail (similar to the cry of the unicorn in Cantemir's work), related to the disappearance of the father and the inability of the son to do something concrete to save him from the imminent end: "speculation cannot prevent the manifestation of evil, ideas are powerless in the face of the tragic. [...] And then? Then he remains alone in his misfortune as in a huge void that he can only fill with his own despair. Here is this young doctor who carefully files her nails and resolutely tells me that there is no chance of escape for my old father. No chance, not the slightest chance? I ask with death in my heart. None she tells me, raising her voice irritatingly...." It is clear that Eugen Simion is part of the family, perhaps less numerous, of intellectuals and cultural personalities who loved their fathers, such as Marin Preda, and did not consider him a tyrannical, castrating authority, like Eugen Ionescu the famous Bucharest attorney described in a humiliating posture, of a man in tights, lowered from the pedestal of authority and intangibility through this domestic detail. He has a cult following for his "fascination with fatherhood" and looks to all writers in depth how to define the relationship with paternal authority; Sartre, Gide, Eugen Ionescu, Stendhal, William Golding, Elias Canetti. It seems that "there are no good fathers", each traumatized his child in his own way and induced narcissistic wounds on him [*Defiance of Rhetoric*, 1985: 327]. His own father does not fall, however, into the category of bad fathers, because his portrait, on the bed of agony, is a tender tribute, full of love and affection, a mournful evocation like the cry of the unicorn in *Hieroglyphic History*, when he learns that there is no chance of escape "for my old father": "he is gone, that good and just man. He disappeared as he had lived: discreetly, without panic, I would not say with resignation, but with great superior self-control. He was seven years old when our century was born. He walked through it almost entirely, and I never heard him speak bad of it. It would have been as if he had detested his own existence. And this was not done in the world from which he came and in which he lived for almost 92 years. [...] Make life unbearable. This is the law he accepted without discussing it. [...] when someone close to our being dies, the world is emptied of signs and meanings." [*Defiance of Rhetoric*, 1985: 375-376] feels affection not only towards the biological father, but also towards the "spiritual fathers", and one of these is Professor Tudor Vianu, the one who formed his mind and spirit, eulogized 20 years after his death, in Tudor Vianu or about fidelity [1985: 357], because he conveyed to him the idea that "if you have done a true (righteous) work, you have done it at least half beautiful" [*Defiance of*

Rhetoric, 1985:359], which means that “he inscribes beauty in the moral sphere and believes that talent must always go in the sense of truth. To be faithful to the ideal of justice in order to remain faithful to himself...” Here is an ideal of truth, justice and fidelity to one’s own self, which Eugen Simion took over in full knowledge from his university Master in the 60s. The evocation of Tudor Vianu ends with an anecdote that reveals the Romanian aesthete as a man of spirit words (at a time when they could cost him freedom): “the following story is told about him. Met on the street in the 50s, near the University, he was asked by a young man:” – How are you, Professor? – I wait for injustice to get tired.” [*Defiance of Rhetoric*, 1985: 360]

There would be enough to say and add, however, we cannot end this motion portrait, without mentioning the cult of friendship and respect that Eugen Simion always had, towards writers from different generations: Marin Preda, Fanus Neagu, Nichita Stănescu, Marin Sorescu, Valeriu Cristea, Lucian Raicu and others, defending them, whenever needed in hard times, and even immortalizing them in memorable portraits. Moreover, he also respected his opponents with whom he held polemics of ideas, but also those who tried to discredit his writings, if theirs had aesthetic and literary value. His criticism has always been unbiased. His friendship was formed “through the literature” they wrote, he did not form literary churches and coteries. In a portrait sketch of Fanus Neagu, it is visible the pictoriality of the expression and the relief of the physiognomic and behavioral features through cultural references, doubled by penetrating psychological observations: “Fănuș Neagu is a man of the plain, this is easily seen from what he writes, It is also seen from his way of being. Built of abundant material, with hard bones – as we know a prose writer must have -, of a vitality that awakens a vague feeling of admiration and fear, stepping rarely and so pressed that you think the Earth vibrates at its passage, the writer has a massive and a Helladic poignancy. Seeing him on the street and not knowing his pursuits, you can believe that he smashes stones in his huge fist and is hired by the legendary Geryon to guard his wild herds.

What an error! The arms of this Heracles out of the plain of Braila perform difficult labors. Instead of The Lion of Nemea his powerful fist twists the neck of phrases, fingers, made to cut off heads of hydras, draw graceful style flowers on paper. He’s a prose writer, and his struggles begin, I imagine, every morning in front of the white sheet. He writes relatively little and in a way that is immediately known. Blooming style, pleasing to the eye for its extraordinary color, also pleasing to the ear that feels the harmonious pairing of barbarian syllables.

Fănuș Neagu is not, however, a calligrapher like so many in literature, his prose conceals a great impatience and a great inner violence. The writer sees deep and feels monstrous. [...] He is a veritable artist of the word in that noisy, irascible case, capable of great tenderness, but also of great violence. [...] I noticed him, a few years ago, holding his little girl’s hand in the park from Mogoșoaia. The angry Heracles seemed utterly subjugated to his paternal mission, the gait was now smooth and coy,

the face displayed Christian understanding and kindness.”[*Defiance of Rhetoric*, 1985: 361-362]

Complex and attached, the personality of the critic E. Simion reveals human depths that make us exclaim, at the end: happy the eyes that saw him and happy the hearts that approached him and knew him “under the light of a clear summer day”!

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SKETCH ABOUT THE INTIMACY OF THE SELF IN AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL FICTIONS

Abstract: We undertake a short research of how it is possible to penetrate into the intimacy of the self of a cultural man, how to reveal, if it can be revealed, the existential man, using some writings belonging to the biographical genre, namely diaries. In the case of the critic Eugen Simion, we primarily use an endoscopy of the Parisian journal, *Time of Living, Time of Confession* (1977), and the German journal, *The Defiance of Rhetoric* (1985), and sometimes we also use involuntary confessions sprinkled in other writings, such as *Conversations with Petru Dumitriu* (1994). We try to answer the question in what measure the subject matter of these journals is based, in Michel de Montaigne’s saying, on the revelation of the singularity or the authenticity of the self, because the quoted philosopher says “the matter of these essays is myself”. And, in the case of Eugen Simion, the man who built for himself a cultural destiny, can we still detect the material of the self on which the cultural man was built?

Keywords: *biographical genre, confessional writings, the critic Eugen Simion, the philosopher M. de Montaigne, cultural man.*