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## Archive Documents

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### **Restitutio Dumitru Caracostea. Archives Documents<sup>1</sup>**

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#### **Abstract**

In the last years there has been a growing attention in the field of research studies on the Romanian culture, censored after 1948. The critic, linguist and aesthetician, Dumitru Caracostea (March 10, 1879, Slatina–June 2, 1964, Bucharest) brought up a scientific controversy with a large audience in the specialists' environments, so that there is plenty of contradictory information about his personality. Our study is dedicated to completing the image of his professional activity and to elucidate some prejudices that still persist, hoping for a reconsideration of this Romanian scholar. With obvious but unrecognized merits in his lifetime, his work has undergone a deepening from the perspective of studying the forms of representation of the Romanian artistic and popular language. Less researched remained his concern for studying the psychology of war, materialized in ten years of courses, held at the Superior War School in Bucharest. The motivation of his choice as a teacher for the officers who had already passed through the experience of the First World War was a solid training in the field of Romanian folklore, including the complexity of folk spirituality as the basis of the fighting forces of the combatants. The complex personality of the ante, inter and post-war period, Dumitru Caracostea left the posterity an ample scientific activity, both in the public space, especially in the literary one. Among the functions he held, we recall the most important: he was a correspondent member of the Romanian Academy since 1936 and a member from 1938; Minister of National Education (1940); General Director of the Union of Royal Cultural Institutions (1941–1944); President of the Romanian Academy Literary Section (1945–

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<sup>1</sup> The present article is part of the doctoral dissertation "From the Royal Cultural Foundation *Prince Carol* to the Royal Foundations Union", which I am currently developing under Professor's Mihaela Constantinescu supervision, within the Doctoral School of the Faculty of Letters, University of Bucharest.

1948). His scientific career came to an end in 1948, when he was definitively excluded alongside other members of the Romanian Academy, following the Presidential decree for the purification of intellectuals that no longer met the criteria of the new Academy of the Romanian People's Republic. There were years of troubled for Dumitru Caracostea's life, like other repudiates of the period after 1948, culminating in the imprisonment in Sighet where he spent five years (1950-1955) without being tried but charged with war crimes. In 1990 he was reinstated in *post mortem* as a member of the Romanian Academy. (1)

**Keywords:** *Dumitru Caracostea, 'Prince Carol' Royal Cultural Foundation, archives documents, psychology research, Superior War School*

### **Scientific Activity**

With a thorough scientific education, we remember that he was Assistant of the Professor Wilhelm Meyer-Lübke in 1912 at the University of Vienna, and lector at the Institute for the Study of Romanian Language and Literature (led by the same Meyer-Lübke and set up after Diplomatic negotiations with Titu Maiorescu), Dumitru Caracostea held his doctorate in romanian philology (26 June 1913) with the thesis "Wortgeschichtliches und Wortgeographisches aus dem Rumänischen". (2)

The results of his research were particularly appreciated by Sextil Pușcariu and remarked as an important contribution in the preface of the Romanian linguistic atlas, being the most important contribution of Dumitru Caracostea in the linguistic field. (3)

We note the work of author of textbooks starting even from the student period (for grades I-III) with I. A. Candrea and Ovid Densusianu. His attention to pedagogy was resumed in 1929 when he edited a new series of textbooks (for grades I-IV), together with Gr. Forțu and D. R. Mazilu. (4)

His scientific preoccupations were further oriented to the history of literature and folklore, being the initiator of morphological and geographic research in popular creation and premeditating the structuralist method in literary studies. Through his works he consolidated the study of folklore as a science and managed to impose a scientific method in the theoretical and practical study of the artistic act.

Among his most prominent works, we mention: "The Art of the Word at Eminescu" (1938), "Expression of Romanian Language" (1942), "Eminescu's Creativity" (1943), "Literary Criticism", and postum appeared: "Traditional Poetry" (1969), "Problems of Folklore Typology" (1971).

Called by G. Călinescu as a skeptical critic even with his own person because of the misunderstanding of the great Romanian personalities of his time, he concludes using the words of Dumitru Caracostea: "Since I was convinced that I did not have genius, I refused to have talent". (5)

A critical edition of Dumitru Caracostea's work was made in 1986 by Professor Mircea Anghelescu, when the first volume entitled "Criticism and Literary History" appeared (volume II appeared in 1988). Structured in four sections, the collection "Works of choice" also includes studies on folklore and stylistics, as well as his research on Eminescu's language (volume III: "The Art of the Word at Eminescu", 1992). (6)

Located in the interference area of literature, aesthetics and linguistics, and being part of the writers' banned category for more than twenty years, his work has long remained unstable on the modern European and global research line.

Comments on his work came after 1986 and referred strictly to scientific activity, and the dimension of his public personality with institutional responsibility and decision-making power has not yet been revealed. (7) This is the main focus of the current research and it constitutes, we believe, the decisive factor of this man's destiny.

His involvement in public life beyond the writing table and university library, led to Dumitru Caracostea's location amid the events of the 1940s with extreme negative effects for the Romanian intelligentsia. Things are seldom set, history rarely returns a sheet of the past and very quickly to the one of the present, so that, as far as Dumitru Caracostea is concerned, we can say that the accusations brought to him were unchecked, between the pages of the security files, more than six decades. (8)

The fact remains that all the plethora of intellectuals involved in the leadership of the Royal Cultural Foundations had operative prosecution files in the archives of the National Council for Studying Security Archives (hereinafter CNSAS). Thus, names like: Al. Rosetti, Dimitrie Gusti, Ovidiu Papadima (imprisoned between 1952–1955), Constantin Rădulescu-Motru (imprisoned at Sighet), Victor Rădulescu-Pogoneanu, Octavian Neamțu, Anton Golopenția (dead in Jilava prison), Mircea Vulcănescu (dead in Aiud prison), Dumitru Caracostea (imprisoned between 1950–1955, in Sighet prison), are present in the documentaries of the Security with full shelves of files.

Controversially, both as a journalist and director of the Royal Cultural Foundation and virulently assaulted in the press, Dumitru Caracostea has openly disagreed with Al. Rosetti, G. Călinescu, with critics Pompiliu Constantinescu, Șerban Cioculescu, Al. Ciorănescu, etc. (9)

He took over the leadership of the Royal Cultural Foundation in 1941 from Al. Rosetti and applied a cultural strategy condemned then by removing from the pages of the Foundation Review the critics that had been acknowledged until then, but not in line with the new trends of the time. He paid too much for this, as well as accepting, from naivety, said the relatives, the Minister of Public Education position in a militaro-fascist government. However, it finally came to public attention through the virulent attitude and campaign to stop the dissemination of G. Călinescu's "History of Romanian Literature from Origin to Present". He was retired in 1944 and the position of General Manager of the Royal Cultural Foundation was given to Alexandru Rosetti. From 1945 he was the president of the Romanian Academy Literary Section (1945–1948).

Returning to the accusations for which he paid for years of imprisonment and the silence of his work for decades, we have noticed, following the investigations in the archives of the National Council for the Study of Security Archives (CNSAS) that evidence has been gathered over several years in the form of "discreetly" informative notes of close relatives. (10)

Thus, it comes up incriminating information, some of them from the original documents, signed by Dumitru Caracostea, others voluntarily deduced from the Cultural Foundation's plans for the royal foundations which he had submitted to Ion Antonescu for approval.

The pro-german attitude, largely due to his professional formation, made it among the evidence that finally accused the investigators of being a letter (11 April 1941)

sent as Minister of Public Education in which he proposed to Ion Antonescu the compulsory study of the German language in the vocational schools, while noting the important role of the German industry in modernizing Europe.

"We believe it is a national interest to make the graduates of our craft schools as trained as those in German schools. This is all the more necessary as almost all the modern industrial terminology is of German origin". (11)

Issued by the Prosecutor of the Bucharest Court of Justice, the War Criminal Cabinet, on June 1, 1951, the arrest warrant provided for "capture and advancement" of Dumitru Caracostea accused of war crimes.

He was also held accountable for the fact that during the war he demanded that the documents and books "raised by the Romanian occupation authorities in Basarabia be gathered and brought to the Academy". All these representatives of the Romanian school, as well as the philosopher Ion Petrovici and the former president of the Romanian Academy, Alexandru Lapădatu, were considered "academics in the green livery" that had to be removed. (12)

Accepting the position of a minister in the troubled times of the 1940s, where Romania faced a dramatic turn in its history, after the abdication of King Carol II, the loss of important territories and the proclamation of the country "national-legionary state" on September 14, 1940 and entry into war (June 22, 1941) could only lead to an unfortunate end for those directly involved in political life. There followed the German pressure to impose its own rules that produced many tensions (the Romanian-German economic agreement or the "oil pact").

Among the tremendous testimonies present in the pages of the files, there is a letter from his wife, Lucia Caracostea, in which she presented as proof of her husband's innocence, an article rejected from the publication of Ion Antonescu's censorship. This article initially constituted a conference he had held at the Superior War School (the series of these communications had begun in 1919). It underlined that Antonescu's censorship also worked in the case of her husband, being forbidden to publish in April 1943 the article "Character and leadership" in the Royal Foundation Magazine, arguing thus: "(...) so that you can see the feelings guided my husband's life, which designates a thought very close to today's democratism, social justice that must guide our country's life". (13)

The article deals with various issues of war, and in particular the psychological factor, the role of the leader and the problem of soldiers' character. The censored passage was: "Tragic to our situation in the pre-war phase of the past, when we were part of a system of alliances pushing the tip of our sword toward the East, while our national instinct guided the offensive force to our West (...). Our times are characterized by a mass-raising trend and the man who dressed the uniform has, whatever the rank, a common fate with his comrades, the leadership of the war must take account of these demands and cherish the unity of fighter (...)". (14)

After studying Dumitru Caracostea's work on this subject, we noticed how to approach science and a modern perspective, accompanied by new and original methods of work, all based on the direct testimonies of the participants in the war. It is a field of lesser interest at that time, and Dumitru Caracostea has intrigued his overwhelming importance: the psychology of the war. (14)

"The lack of psychological penetration in the hands of men may be as damaging as the lack of instruction and technical training" because "the army is based on a strong

spirit of organization and order; it is the most determined denial of the unstable spirit of the mobs". (16)

The lectures held within the prestigious institution were made in order to be useful not only to soldiers but also to "any cultured person".

The research material from which Dumitru Caracostea gathered "the first experiences and then all the states and stages of defeat" was the year-end theme of the XXVI High School War (1920): "The Psychological Interpretation of the First Three Months of Campaign".

But this problem only referred to an aspect of participation on the battlefield. In the year 1921 the testimonies of the XXVII (80 officers) promotion were collected in order to follow the other aspect of the war (the effects of victory) by treating the year-end subject, "The experience of restoration and action, culminating in the fighting in Mărășești".

Analyzing both results was completed the unitary psychological picture of the combatants. "The fear and circumstances that increase its power, bringing moral imbalance, then defeating the instinct of conservation, are the essential characteristics of man's soul-states in war". (17)

Besides all this, the material that has been gathered clearly reveals the importance of faith in God and its intertwining with the will of man who throws himself into battle with the phrase: "Do Your Will!"

"The first element of the host is man, and this is not a simple tool. Beyond each rifle, each machine gun, every cannon is a human soul that you ought to know to be able to handle and lead to victory. The great generals were masters in the art of knowing souls. And often victory was not only a matter of technical but also a psychological penetration. It is a national necessity to work in such a way that the popular language does not say: «He took him to the army, but went to the army!»" (18)

Returning to his lectures at the Superior War School, in April and November 1943, Dumitru Caracostea found that the results of his research constituted then in the Romanian psychological research the first attempt of doctrine of the man in war. (19)

I have paid much attention to this less known concern of Dumitru Caracostea in order to complement his area of multidisciplinary scientific interest, together with literature, linguistics, criticism, folklore, we can now add the psychology of the war.

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- (8) The investigations of Dumitru Caracostea were concluded in 1955 when he was released from Sighet prison. Operative tracking files from CNSAS provide unprecedented information about their professional activity.
- (9) Evidence is given to us by the following articles of the known critics: Pompiliu Constantinescu: "The art of treading in the middle", from the 19th October 1941; Șerban Cioculescu: "An Academic Communication", from *Literary Current*, October 4, 1941; and other critics in *Literary Conversations*, August-October (1941); "Branches" (July-December 1941) as well as in the daily press. Al. Cioranescu, through criticism in the *Literary Universe* (March 10, 1944), insisted on the mediocrity of Dumitru Caracostea's articles: "For those who want to be amused, the reading of Mr. Caracostea's article is usually one of the most reassuring".
- (10) CNSAS, Operation Fund Dumitru Caracostea, file P 017225, vol. 1, 2.
- (11) *Ibidem*, vol. 2, f. 57: "Mr. Ion Antonescu, With regard to my letter of August 6, 1940, Rust, the minister of the Reich national education, I have the honor to inform you that, by informing him of the German language reform, we have shown, among other things, the determination to introduce German into all trades schools (...)".
- (12) *Academicians in green*, in "*The Contemporary*", 1947, 25 July. *Apud* Adina Berciu-Drăghicescu, *Faculty of Letters of the University of Bucharest: 150 Years of Romanian Philological Education: Tradition and Value: 1886-2013*, vol. 1, Bucharest, Publishing House of the University of Bucharest, 2013, p. 148.
- (13) CNSAS, Operative Fund Dumitru Caracostea, file P 017225, vol. 2, f. 7–8.
- (14) *Ibidem*, p. 14–18, The article, entitled "Character and leadership", reproduced entirely in the investigation file, was censored by the General Secretariat of the Ministry of National Propagation (No 4743/26 July 1943) Underlined passages that should have been removed if the author expressly requested to publish it. Dumitru Caracostea became aware of the censorship of the article and said he was giving up his publication.
- (15) CARACOSTEA, Dumitru. *The psychological aspect of the war*. Bucharest: Cartea Românească Publishing House, 1922, 14 p. The paper was dedicated to the XXVI and XXVII Promotions of the Superior War School. Academic lectures began in 1919 and dealt with topics related to the history of national literature, the psychology of Romanian folk life, and folklore. Until then the theme of basic philology had been exposed through Professor Găvănescu's courses in 1911–1912. Their radical change was especially imposed after the First World War when the importance of the psychological side was established in the organization of the army. The first work remarked by Dumitru Caracostea as the first attempt to "open the way" was that of Dr. Câmpeanu, which appeared in 1902 in the French edition, with the preface signed by a famous French psychologist, Th. Ribot and then translated into several international languages.
- (16) *Ibidem*, p. 6.
- (17) *Ibidem*, p. 9. Another lack pointed out by Dumitru Caracostea was the belief in victory: "As a soldier to fight he must believe that he will be victorious".
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