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# Alexandru George's Critical Studies

**Tutor:**

**Prof. Dr. Nicolae MECU**

**PhD candidate:  
Florin-Mihail STAVRESCU**

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## ABSTRACT

By the doctoral research project Alexandru George's Critical Studies, we want to analyze Alexandru George's critical essays dedicated to important names of Romanian literature: Tudor Arghezi – *Marele Alpha* (1970), E. Lovinescu – *În jurul lui E. Lovinescu* (1975), Mateiu I. Caragiale – *Mateiu I. Caragiale* (1981), I.L. Caragiale – *Caragiale. Glose, dispute, analize* (1996), and other authors he talk about in the volumes *Semne și repere* (1971), *La sfârșitul lecturii* (4 vol., 1973-1993), *Întâlniri* (1997), *Reveniri, restituiri, revizuri* (1999), *Alte întâlniri* (2000), *Alte reveniri, restituiri, revizuri* (2003).

The originality of this project would result from the attempt to consider as a whole the critical studies signed by Alexandru George and – moreover – to reconsider his intuitions. Therefore, this research is based on a new perspective, from which it resulted the innovation of the project, but also the fact that such an attempt to a total analyse has not been undertaken on these critical studies.

The importance of the subject is relatively large, because Alexandru George wrote about authors that are studied in schools and that are part of school curricula. Moreover, the author was an exponent of Romanian culture who succeeded, against common direction, to raise questions and provoke reconsiderations of the subjects already classified in different hierarchies.

The great variety of writings (studies of literary criticism and literary history, essays, non-fictional stories, memoirs, writings about history) brings with it the difficulty of placing the author and a difficulty in structuring the material present in both his volumes of criticism and literary history and in publishing, especially because most often the author treats very different issues that do not support a strict categorization. Also, another difficulty came from the problematic nature of the composition of volumes of which we can not say with certainty that can be strictly limited to a certain theme (stories, essays, memoirs, writings about history and so on). Moreover, even within certain volumes are included disparate studies which can not be treated uniformly, them being put there for various reasons of publishing.

As we have seen, Alexandru George practiced in many fields of literature or related to it, from stories and novels (and a small play, continuing *O scrisoare pierdută* of I.L. Caragiale) to critical studies and publishing, critical editions, anthologies, therefore a variety of writings, which sometimes entailed various polemics. The author defines himself rather by his novels or stories published and attempts to deny the title of “critic”, but is contradicted by numerous published volumes of literary criticism or journalism, which show a greater inclination towards the facts of literary criticism and literary history.

Alexandru George's criticism is in Camil Petrescu's manner, but the situation of the epoch did not allow him to write in Camil Petrescu's manner, who was a model for the author, so it becomes one in Paul Zarifopol's manner, with a positive sense by "default", but however most often his criticism is defined rather by negation, by arguing, but with examples and arguments that are logically structured and consistent/coherent, but not always persuade spirits affected by a certain point of view, those who fell prey to prejudices and ideas taken for granted.

In the first case study, "The Reception of Postwar Critics on Mateiu I. Caragiale's Work, with Reference to Alexandru George's Exegesis", I analyzed the different points of view expressed on Mateiu I. Caragiale's work, trying to notice Alexandru George's contribution.

As we have seen, most of the critical studies which are devoted to Mateiu I. Caragiale's work relies on the method of biographism, with the avatars of the relationship between father and son or that of intertextuality, which searches in detail both the metatextual references and the paratextual references. The critics in the interwar period tried to fit Mateiu Caragiale in between "fantasies" writers (Tudor Vianu), E. Lovinescu referred to it as a "early sonneteer", but brings him about also into question in the chapter "«The Modernism» as a Principle of Dissolution of Epic Poetry" (along with D. Anghel, Tudor Arghezi, Adrian Maniu etc.) or G. Călinescu who fit him between "the Surrealists".

In the second case study, "Alexandru George and the Critic of Modernism", I wrote about how it is perceived the critic E. Lovinescu by Alexandru George. A large part of the study treated also the critical models of E. Lovinescu, but also his theories, including that of the aesthetic autonomy, the mutation of aesthetic values, the issue of revisions or the problem of the impressionism in critics. Among the French cultural models of E. Lovinescu, Alexandru George lists on Hippolyte Taine, Ferdinand Brunetière, Émile Faguet, Jules Lemaître, Anatole France, Remy de Gourmont, Sainte-Beuve or Henri Bergson.

The French cultural models of E. Lovinescu could also be those of Alexandru George, as we have seen in the last case study, "Alexandru George's French readings". I placed in relation the critical studies of Alexandru George with his French cultural models, among which I found Henry Bergson, Léon Bloy, Émile Faguet, Remy de Gourmont, Jules Lemaitre. I also saw that Alexandru George is a critic that was formed with French culture, who translated the works belonging to French authors such as Philippe Van Tieghem – *Les grandes doctrines littéraires en France* (1968), Jean Starobinski – *La relation critique* (1970), Remy de Gourmont – *Essais*, Anatole France – *La vie littéraire*, Jean-Pierre Richard – *Littérature et sensation* (1954), who probably influenced him.

He also translated the writings of authors such as Villiers de l'Isle-Adam – *Contes cruels*, Jean-Paul Sartre – *La Nausée* and regarding the art studies (or historical ones) can be mentioned Émile Zola – *Les Salons*, Edmond and Jules de Goncourt – *L'art du dix-huitième siècle*, Louis

Hauteceur – *Littérature et peinture en France du XVIIe au XXe siècle*, Voltaire – *Le Siècle de Louis XIV*, Pierre Joseph Proudhon – *Du principe de l'art et de sa destination sociale*.

Although he denies the title of “critic”, as we have seen in the study *Semne și repere* (1971), Alexandru George should be reconsidered at least in terms of its contribution to literary history, for his enlightening glosses, for his marginal comments that have developed different perspectives. Although it is considered that the analysis of authors or books in a monographic manner are more enlightening and representative, it can be said that the elements of detail are also significant in the interpretation, they “give light on perspectives,” as Alexandru Paleologu stated about the study *Marele Alpha* (1971). Therefore, the contribution of Alexandru George in the criticism and in the literary history should not be underestimated just because it was linked to aspects considered secondary, especially because an aspect considered secondary can lead to a reconsideration of works and authors from a completely different perspective. Perceived as an eccentric critic, polemic with everyone, Alexandru George remains a unique writer through his prose, a critic who questions the ready-made ideas, who do not conform to the directives and makes no compromises.