

ABOUT INTELLIGENT STUPIDITY

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*Abstract: The subversive force of intelligent stupidity is, first of all, chameleonic, operating according to the principle of *als ob* (as if). In literature it is more difficult to prove where intelligence ends and where begins intelligent stupidity. But not impossible. As is known, there is no shortage of literary historians or essayists or researchers to connect the latest achievements of ready-made ideas. Stupid reading occurs when a default hierarchy takes before real expertise, by the false principle that a well-known author, already approved, can no longer write a simply bad book.*

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Often stupidity passes for scholarly, bold, cultured, avant-garde, pathfinder. Nor rarely, smart people debit nonsensesskillfully camouflaged in pompous language. Some platitudesmimickingostentatious thinking against the grain, platitudes wrapped in perplexing vocabularies may sabotage the intelligence of value. The subversive force of intelligent stupidityis, first of all, chameleonic, operatingaccording to the principle of *als ob* (as if). A delightful holiday book, an essay on stupid intelligence, written by Italian-born Frenchwoman Belinda Cannone can use as a guide along the path of boastful stupidity. She talks about non-conformist conformism, about the folding of novelty to the size of the known, about the *reduction* which is manifested in the search of the new.

In literature it is more difficult to prove where intelligence ends and where begins intelligent stupidity. But not impossible. As is known, there is no shortage of literary historians or essayists or researchers to connect the latest achievements of ready-made ideas. From this point of view we are perfectly synchronous with the spirit of the times. And the division of labor to be completed, current criticismselects and organizesan impressive gush of topical printings. Certainly they are not a few and they are gregarious in their critical expertise, so these enthusiastsdevelop their judgment based on the inertia of notoriety,deserved or not, of the authors of “masterpieces” more or less remarkable, and whose notoriety is created and invented by this gregarious group itself. The "human error" caused by welcoming criticism can be drawn from the convenience of thought, from conformism, or the temptation of unanimity, but also from terrestrial reasons like sympathies, antipathies, sponsorships, exchange of benefits, all these grafted on a hasty reading, ultimately a foolish reading.And things even more complicated,not even a critic, irrespective of his experience, is not avoided, in its entire existence, by the "moment of grace" of stupidity.Important is the ability of recognition, to others, but also to themselves, namely keeping in activity of what humorously calls Cannone the ECV (Exercise of Constant Vigilance)and keeping alive the faculty of review.

Stupid reading, according to Belinda Cannone, occurs when a default hierarchy takes before real expertise, by the false principle that a well-known author, already approved, can no longer write a simply bad book. Critical gregariousness, loan or judgments of taste, the lack of expertise, the eclipse of criticism, double measure, lazy thinking, capricious election and subjective selectivity are among the most corrosive means of obliteration of value. Smart stupidity, because it borrows mimetic-elevated forms, is difficult to refute, more difficult because it belongs to the category of "cultivated, informed" people, "free (you would think) to exercise their intelligence at any time and on any subject, but still under the influence exercised by the general opinion. Oh, a refined opinion, not only the opinion of the many, no way: the opinion of that relatively small group - smart people - that dominate contemporary thinking". So embarrassing texts appear like that in praise of the philosophical BMW car named Siegfried. Paradoxically, far from being peaceful and flat, critical conformism is fed with pump and noise. The more a work produces more uproar, the more tumultuously critical conformism manifests itself, causing a quasi-uniform, quasi-generalized suffrage, a self-sufficient, euphoric trend which a right judgment can hardly face, and only at the risk of being taken as scatterbrained, for not even heretical. In order that critical examination has to minimize its coefficient of error, a perpetual query of the object examined is needed, a continuous and fresh review, because, in a Cartesian spirit, "nothing resists if you have not rethought it in depth". The larger is unanimity, the more superficially the piece of art or literature is reexamined, the more suspicious it becomes and requires urgent activation of ECV. Without the filter of reviewing and rethinking, smart stupidity will only validate false consecrate values it glorifies "the general opinion today", and "«opinion» is a temporal concept, it sends to the prevailing opinion of the *moment*. After all: not to the psychological, personal and eternal stupidity, but to the contemporary stupidity".

Contemporary stupidity, for example, was translated into the *chic* trend, taking over an older hazardous hypothesis of Mihai Ralea, according to which Caragiale's world is actually idyllic and paradisiacal, foreign to any satire or stupidity raised to the rank of principle. This type of exegesis, pretty finicky, willfully ignoring with a certain grace the indications of literary history, too concrete to be seductive, as the testimonies of the folks from the "Timpul" magazine, in whose eyes, "Nenea Iancu" is considered rather cynical than endearing, and who "was presenting Nae Ipingescu, Rica Venturiano, Titirca, Madame Veta, Trahanache, Tipatescu, Zibal and all others as ordinary people, they were always so and so they have to stay forever, some stupid, some treacherous, some freak who laugh heartily when they see themselves how they truly are. If to Eminescu Caragiale seemed like cynical, Eminescu himself seemed to be a naive child, that he thinks other people just being like himself, and he does not realize that they are imbeciles who are weak of mind and they don't even realize it" (Salvici). "These are the people with whom I spend my life so are you and so you will remain, some stupid, some bad, all equally incorrigible", used Caragiale to show them the mirror. According to the "contemporary" idyllic current, although the idea is so wrongheaded, Caragiale's world must be regarded nostalgically, as a picture sweetened in sepia, and what appears so, it is but the life size image of that we call "belle époque", in which Caragiale's characters "live incomparably better than the generation that precedes them (...) spend time having fun, traveling, (...) go on trips, take advantage of the weekend..." and that's it.

Nobody dares to re-examine this thesis, as long as the idyllic trend pretends to be itself, in a subversive way, part and vector of the re-examination spirit. At a closer look, however, the "idyllic" image of the Romanian world breaks in pieces under the vision of Caragiale in his own letters. Here's how he saw it, in a letter addressed to Alceu Urechia: "at Bucharest and Ploiesti, etc. it is full of parasites, bleeding from scratching, but styled à la Parisienne, Bulgarian-gypsy body, the most disgusting infect part of this ignoble bastard of oriental type." Is that truly the world which is supposed to have fun, go on trips etc. etc.? Smart stupidity, being so versatile, can afford to use precisely the weapons of intelligence, adapted on the fly and appropriated, therefore mingling with intelligence itself.

Proofreading or revision, naturally meant to be suppl - if, of course, they are engaged in the service of intelligence, when seized and addressed from rigid, even extreme positions, become, by conversion and distortion, monumental manifestations of clever stupidity and diverted towards horizons as unexpected as false. By virtue of and by the inertia of "novelty" at any price, they can be, unfortunately, validated and assimilated under the brand of intelligence.

Smart stupidity works not only under the auspices of diverted revisiting and revisal, but also under those of "actualism" conceptualized by Cannone as the cultural attitude governed by "nowadays" or "today". She says: "Actualism, accompanied by its cohort of cutting-edge ideas and various mode, is the most hotly merchant of received ideas", because as they speak with trendy expressions, they think with trendy ideas". Thinking fashionable - suspicious from the outset by that it sits "actualism of nowadays" above all to the timeless value - it raised on a wave (later in our country than elsewhere) the tendency of debunk. An attitude taken in a mimetic and a coarse manner getting a funny look, even caricatured by bitterness, irritation and inflexibility. More catholic than the Pope, dogmatic debunking in the Romanian variants sometimes produces ridiculous or grotesque results. An example: "Do we or do not realize, classics obliges us to re-read daily their creed, they violate us aesthetically and compels us to swallow daily willingly and enthusiastically, as a fatality, the azyme of eternal and immutable pattern" laments, in the manner of actualist-debunk, Eugen Negrici in his book, *The Illusions of Romanian Literature*.

Keeping things in their hyperbolic size, would be no need for further comments. Bringing things at 1 to 1, if you do not laugh at the image of the rape that we obey every day from classics, it is impossible not to worry. At 1-1 scale, common sense compels you to sincerely sorry for Mr. Negrici. And for the textual abuse of classics rather be curtailed, N. Manolescu, salts promptly to help Mr. Negrici. In response to a series of articles published, in the "Cultura" magazine, by Mr. Eugen Simion, which did not agreed the point of view of E. Negrici, N. Manolescu writes in "România literară" an editorial. Entrusted *a priori* on the basis of "denigration" (really!) of Marin Preda or of G. Călinescu, convinced of the "mediocrity of Gherea's criticism" etc., therefore all these presented as postulates, unaccompanied even by the most imperceptible impulse of re-examination - a form of critical fanaticism after all; therefore entirely lacking any taste of relativity, N. M. concludes a bit pathetically, but from actualist positions: "Such things (postulates) are usually silent. It's still the main duty of the literary critic to tell them. I'm sorry that one of the chief critics of our generation abdicate this duty and indulges in an apologist position, indiscriminate and humorless, of national literature values. After the protochronism of the 70s, and its resurrected the ghost of the '90s, I fear, more than anything, the patriotism of the Romanian critic. It depresses me the idea of having nurtured illusions as blames us Eugen Negrici, but it despairs me even more our inability to accept the idea of illusions, even as a critical assumption. "

Observing, incidentally, that facing "the value of national literature", in Nicolae Manolescu's vision, you cannot situate but only as an apologist or a depreciator, for those who did not read the series of Mr. E. Simion, the impression may be that he has not really done his duty and that he has seriously polluted the ideals of literary criticism! Thus the depression and despair of Mr Manolescu, but neither he making use of too much humor, would appear as violently justified. However, they are not at all the case so far as Mr. E. Simion, as an "apologist", has not abdicated, but even he fulfilled brilliantly his "primary duty", and in full accountability. Being non-adherent to the category of those "esthetically abused" (does really actualism promote, outside the obvious "deprimism", a new textual orientation ...?!), simply approaching the object itself, he exercised his critical expertise, not on Eminescu nor upon Călinescu or Preda, without wrestle with them, or "denigrating them", but simply on the book of Mr. Negrici himself, book that is naturally at the center of his approach, otherwise not

being exonerate of any critical backup.If Mr. Simion does not share the demystifying vision is a legitimate option and perhaps a form of exercising ECV.

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