

= Ion Agârbiceanu =

Ion Agârbiceanu (September 12 , 1882 ? May 28 , 1963) was an Austro -@- Hungarian @-@ born Romanian writer , journalist , politician , theologian and Greek @-@ Catholic priest . A native of Transylvania , he graduated from Budapest University , after which he was ordained . He was initially assigned to a parish in the Apuseni Mountains , which form the backdrop to much of his fiction . Before 1910 , Agârbiceanu had achieved literary fame in both Transylvania and the Kingdom of Romania ; his work was disputed between the rival schools of S?m?n?torul and Poporanism .

Committed to social and cultural activism in Transylvania , Agârbiceanu spent the 1910s officiating near Sibiu , with a break during World War I that eventually took him deep into Ukraine . In 1919 , he moved to Cluj , where he lived for most of the remainder of his life . After the war , he involved himself in both the political and cultural life of Greater Romania . He was voted into the Romanian Academy and assumed the office of Senate vice president under the National Renaissance Front dictatorship .

Agârbiceanu spent his last decade and a half under a communist regime that outlawed his church , an act in which he refused to cooperate . Much of his work , with its transparent Christian moralizing , proved incompatible with the new ideology , and was banned by communist censors ; however , the regime found him useful for its image , and bestowed honors upon him . Agârbiceanu 's full contribution has been made available since the 1990s , but he endures as a largely forgotten author , with the possible exception of his Apuseni @-@ based novella , Fefelega .

= = Biography = =

= = = Early life = = =

Born in Cenade village in Transylvania 's Alba County (at the time in Alsó @-@ Fehér County) , Agârbiceanu was the second of eight children ; his parents were Nicolae and Ana (née Olariu) . His father and grandfather were both woodcutters , while he believed his great @-@ grandparents were cowherds , as indicated by the surname of his grandfather , Vasile Bouaru , who originated in the Sibiu area . The name Agârbiceanu came from the family 's ancestral village , Agârbiciu . According to the novelist 's own notes , his father was literate and subscribed to a number of Romanian @-@ language publications that appeared in Transylvania . His mother , although a great lover of stories and storytelling , was illiterate .

Agârbiceanu recalled an idyllic childhood , with summers spent tending to his father 's sheep and sleeping in a stick hut . An avid reader of stories by Petre Ispirescu , he attended school in his native village and in Blaj , graduating from the Superior Gymnasium in 1900 . Literary historians describe this as the period of his literary debut , which was a collaboration with Unirea newspaper . There , Agârbiceanu published a feuilleton (signed as Alfius) , poetry , and , in 1900 , the short story În postul Pa?telui (" At Lent ") . Agârbiceanu also served as secretary of the Blaj Literary Society , at the time the city 's only Romanian @-@ speaking literary body still tolerated by the Hungarian authorities . He soon became a correspondent of R?va?ul , a Cluj @-@ based newspaper , signing his first pieces there with the pen name Alfius , then as Agarbi or Potcoav? (" Horseshoe ") .

The Blaj @-@ based F?g?ra? and Alba Iulia Archdiocese arranged for Agârbiceanu to study at the theology faculty of Budapest University between 1900 and 1904 . Publishing more works in Tribuna and Familia , he soon became a regular contributor to Luceaf?rul . Returning to Blaj after graduation , he supervised the local boys ' boarding school , working there during the 1904 ? 1905 academic year . Urged by friends and receiving a church scholarship , he returned to Budapest to study literature . He spent just one semester there , during which he also taught primary school catechism . In March 1906 , he married Maria Reli Radu , the daughter of an archpriest from Ocna Mure? .

= = = Priesthood and World War I = = =

Also in 1906 , following an ordination ceremony held on Easter Sunday , Agârbiceanu was appointed parish priest in Bucium , in the Apuseni Mountains . For four years , he observed the difficult lives of the mountain dwellers and the problems encountered in the nearby gold mines . During this time , he wrote several notices in the magazine Ramuri , later published as În întineric (" Into the Darkness " , 1910) , the novella Fefelega , and the novel Arhangeli (" The Archangels ") , all of them based on the mining experience . He also started writing frequently for literary magazines that included Luceafărul , Unirea and Lupta . His other literary works of the period include De la țară (" From the Countryside " , 1906) , În clasa cultă (" In the Cultured Class " , 1909) , Două iubiri (" Two Loves " , 1910) , Prăpastia (" The Abyss " , 1912) , and a collection of Schițe și povestiri (" Sketches and Short Stories " , 1912) .

Agârbiceanu visited Bucharest , the Old Kingdom capital , in 1906 , and sent enthusiastic travel notes for Unirea . He became a regular contributor to the Bucharest nationalist review Sămănătorul , which gave De la țară a sonorous welcome , and later to Sămănătorul 's leftist rival , Viața Românească . From 1909 , he was also one of the regulars at Neamul Românesc . For his literary activity , he was elected a corresponding member of Astra in 1912 , and was promoted to full membership in 1925 . From 1910 to 1919 , he was parish priest at Orlat in Sibiu County . Agârbiceanu was also a member of Austria @-@ Hungary 's Romanian National Party (PNR) , and supported PNR youth leader Octavian Goga , his colleague at Luceafărul and Tribuna . In 1910 , he followed Goga as he parted from the PNR and launched his own independent faction .

By the time World War I broke out , Agârbiceanu had three sons and a daughter , including Ion , the future physicist . During 1914 , the first year of war , he finally published Arhangeli , as well as the stories in De la sate (" From the Villages ") . These were followed , in 1916 , by a work of Christian theology , Din viața preoțească (" From Priestly Life ") .

In September 1916 , when the Romanian Army withdrew from the Orlat area during the Battle of Transylvania , he fled Austria @-@ Hungary with his family . Their first destination was Râmnicu Vâlcea in the Old Kingdom ; they then headed for Roman in Western Moldavia . Evacuated to Russia in August 1917 , they reached the vicinity of Yelisavetgrad in Ukraine . While there and alongside other refugee Transylvanians , he took part in a choir organized by Nicolae Colan , a future bishop in the Romanian Orthodox Church .

In November of that year , Agârbiceanu and his family found shelter with a Transylvanian family in Borogani village , near Leova in Bessarabia . The October Revolution soon broke out , and they made their way back to Moldavia , where he became a military chaplain for the Hârlău @-@ based Romanian Volunteer Corps in Russia . He returned to Orlat in December 1918 . In March 1919 , following the union of Transylvania with Romania , he was named director of Patria newspaper , which was edited by the province 's Directing Council .

In October 1919 , the newspaper 's headquarters moved to Cluj , and Agârbiceanu followed . Thanks to his literary activity , he was part of the leadership of the Romanian Writers ' Society , and was elected corresponding member of the Romanian Academy in 1919 . He also began contributing to the reviews Gândirea of Cluj , and Flacăra and Cuget Românesc of Bucharest . In 1922 , he accompanied other Writers ' Society members on a celebratory tour of Transylvania . Like several of his colleagues , Agârbiceanu preserved a bitter memory of the war , and his articles of the time make a point of referring to the Hungarians as a " barbarian horde " .

== = 1920s == =

While working on the Sibiu @-@ based Astra magazine Transilvania (where he sometimes used the signature AG) , Agârbiceanu remained the editor of Patria until 1927 , and also resumed his collaboration with Viața Românească . However , he was disappointed by the cultural and economic decline which came as a consequence of Transylvania 's incorporation : the local press , he noted , had largely lost its purpose and could not hope to survive competition . As noted by reviewers from Ilie Rad to Răzvan Voncu , some of Agârbiceanu 's more valuable work saw print in minor provincial reviews .

Despite such setbacks , Agârbiceanu published new works in quick succession : O lacrimă fierbinte (" A Burning Tear " , 1918) , Popa Man (" Father Man " , 1920) , Zilele din urmă ale căpitanului Pârnu (" Captain Pârnu 's Latter Days " , 1921) , Luncușoara din Pârsești (" The Little Meadow of Pârsești " , 1921) , Păcatele noastre (" Our Sins " , 1921) , Trăsurica verde (" Green Gharry " , 1921) , Chipuri de ceară (" Wax Figures " , 1922) . These were followed by Stana (1924) , Visurile (" Reveries " , 1925) , Dezamăgire (" Disappointment " , 1925) , Singurătate (" Loneliness " , 1926) , Legea trupului (" The Law of the Flesh " , 1926) , Legea minții (" The Law of the Mind " , 1927) , Ceasuri de seară (" Evening Hours " , 1927) , Primăvara (" Spring " , 1928) , Robirea sufletului (" A Soul 's Bondage " , 1928) , and Biruința (" Victory " , 1931) . His other works of the period include various tracts on biblical topics , including homilies and discussions of theodicy : Ieșit @-@ a semănătorul (" A Sower Went Out to Sow His Seed " , 1930) , Rugăciunea Domnului (" Lord 's Prayer " , 1930) , Răul în lume (" Evil in the World " , 1931) , Preacurata (" The Immaculate " , 1931) , Căile fericirii (" Paths toward Happiness " , 1931) .

A member of the PNR Executive Committee in 1919 , he was elected to the Assembly of Deputies that year , in the first election following the creation of Greater Romania . Elected again in 1922 , he served until 1926 . Initially joining the National Peasants ' Party into which the PNR merged in 1926 , the following year he defected to Alexandru Averescu 's People 's Party , of which Goga was also a member .

From 1927 to 1928 , Agârbiceanu , a recipient of the National Prize for Literature , headed the Cluj chapter of Astra and edited Transilvania . It was in this magazine that he wrote a number of articles in support of eugenics , calling on priests to promote the movement in their parishes . Given the secular values of the movement 's leaders in Romania , his participation was somewhat incongruous , but Agârbiceanu did not see a conflict between his religious creed and a current centered around supposedly objective natural laws . From 1930 , he participated in Astra 's literary section and headed its cultural congress , in which capacity he lectured on the organization 's role in Romanian cultural life . Additionally , he played a prominent role during its annual congresses and committed himself to social activism . He was involved in Astra 's literacy campaigns , inspecting and fundraising for village libraries in places such as Aleșd .

= = = Maturity = = =

Also in 1930 , Agârbiceanu was elevated to the rank of archpriest for the Cluj district , and in 1931 , he became canon for the Cluj @-@ Gherla Diocese . In 1932 , following schisms in the People 's Party , he followed Goga into the new National Agrarian Party . In so doing , he lost control over Patria to Astra 's Ion Clopoșel . After 1934 , he was one of the noted contributors to the official literary magazine , Revista Fundațiilor Regale , put out in Bucharest by Paul Zarifopol .

In late 1938 , following the establishment of the National Renaissance Front (FRN) , King Carol II appointed him to the Senate , of which he also served as vice president . From 1938 to 1940 , he edited a new edition of Tribuna in Cluj , as both the FRN 's official paper and Transylvania 's only daily . Toward the end of the 1930s , he wrote in opposition to the revisionist policy of the Kingdom of Hungary , and in August 1940 , after the Second Vienna Award granted Northern Transylvania to Hungary , he fled Cluj for Sibiu . The new authorities called for his expulsion , but he received the order after he had departed Cluj .

With the downfall of the National Renaissance Front , Agârbiceanu withdrew from politics . However , in 1941 , he supported Romania 's war on the Eastern Front , including the occupation of Transnistria . In an official magazine that was itself named Transnistria , Agârbiceanu suggested that God had " even greater plans with us " . Agârbiceanu continued to write and publish literature throughout the Carol regime and much of World War II : Sectarii (" The Schismatics " , 1938) , Licean ... odinioară (" Once upon a Time ... a Pupil " , 1939) , Amintirile (" The Recollections " , 1940) , Domnișoara Ana (" Miss Ana " , 1942) , alongside more theological and moralizing essays such as Din pildele Domnului (" The Lord 's Parables " , 1939) , Meditații . Față de lumină a creștinismului (" Meditations . On the Luminous Visage of Christianity " , 1941) , Preotul și familia preoțească . Rostul lor etnic în satul românesc (" The Priest and the Priestly Family . Their Ethnic

Role within the Romanian Village " , 1942) . The novel Vâltoarea (" The Whirlpool ") was serialized by Convorbiri Literare and came out as a volume in 1944 ; another novel , Vremuri ?i oameni (" Times and People ") , being critical of Nazism , was not given imprimatur by the Ion Antonescu regime . Many more works , including Sfântul (" The Saint ") , were completed but also remained unpublished .

= = = Under communism = = =

Following the fall of Antonescu 's regime and the campaign to recover Northern Transylvania , Agârbiceanu became a contributor to a new political weekly , Ardealul . He remained in Sibiu until 1945 and then returned to Cluj . He also contributed , in 1947 , a religious tract on Familia creștină (" The Christian Family ") .

In 1948 , when the new communist regime outlawed the Greek Catholic Church and forcibly merged it into the Orthodox Church , Agârbiceanu refused to join the latter denomination , thus setting himself up against the authorities . However , these found his reputation as a writer valuable for their own interests , and preferred to try and co-opt him . In 1953 , after a five year marginalization for his refusal to turn Orthodox , Agârbiceanu joined the editorial board of Anatol E. Baconsky 's semi-official literary magazine , Steaua . He was granted the Order of Labor the following year , and promoted to titular member of the Academy in 1955 . On the occasion of his 80th birthday in 1962 , he was also awarded the Order of the Star of the Romanian People 's Republic , first class .

Agârbiceanu 's old and new writings came out in several editions : Pagini alese (" Selected Works " , 1956) , Din munți ?i din câmpii (" From Mountains and Plains " , 1957) , Din copilărie (" Childhood Memories " , 1957) , File din cartea naturii (" Pages from the Book of Nature " , 1959) , Povestind copiilor (" Stories for Children " , 1961) and Faraonii (" The Pharaohs " , 1961) . Although formally congratulated by the regime , Agârbiceanu fell out with its censorship apparatus . According to various accounts , he allowed the censors to operate multiple changes , as long as the substance of his writing was not itself altered . Portions of his work were cut out during reediting , and a novel , Prăbușirea (" The Downfall ") , serialized in Gazeta Literară , was so crudely handled that seven of its pages were lost forever .

Expecting to die soon , Agârbiceanu worked on a definitive corpus of his writings , which began printing at the state-run Editura pentru Literatură under the care of G. Pienescu and Mihai ?ora . When he was led to believe that many of his works would not be allowed for publishing , he retook possession of all the manuscripts he had sent in , including some previously unpublished writings . The volumes were already available by that time . The writer died in Cluj in 1963 , and was buried in the city 's Hajongard Cemetery in a grave topped by a white marble cross .

= = Literary contribution = =

= = = Ideology and style = = =

Agârbiceanu entered literary life as a poet ? according to his Sămănătorul patron , Nicolae Iorga , he was great as the author of ballades . Later in his career , he focused on vignettes (often prose poems) , short stories and novels , intended to represent daily life in the Apuseni Mountains . His favorite theme was the life of a Transylvanian country priest at the turn of the 20th century , but his " gallery " of protagonists also included shepherds , foresters , rafters , thieves , teachers , village doctors , Romani metalworkers , and the rich industrialists (" Transylvanian nawabs ") . A prolific writer , possibly the most productive one in Romania before 1930 , he completed some 65 volumes , by his own account , both long and short .

Ideologically , Agârbiceanu was most closely aligned with Sămănătorul 's ethnic traditionalism , and was always a marginal among the Viața Românească Poporanists , who were rather more inspired by Marxism . However , Voncu believes , the similarities were only superficial : unlike the

S?m?n?torul school , Agârbiceanu was a professional of literary realism , who favored individual psychology over class identity , and would not condemn the city as a decomposed and decomposing environment . His stories , Voncu notes , had an " ethical , even philosophical , vision " , and " the dignity of grand literature . " His naturalness was even highlighted by Iorga , who praised Agârbiceanu as " the liveliest storyteller " of the early 20th century : " he doesn 't go looking for the folkish ingredient ; he just cannot separate himself from it , because he lives therein , heart and soul . "

According to Eugen Lovinescu , the modernist literary critic and cultural theorist , Agârbiceanu is the " essential exponent " of Transylvanian S?m?n?torists . His literature is one that " by the people and for the people " . As Lovinescu puts it , his work blends an " aggressive affirmation of nationhood " and " healthy ethics pushed to the limit of tendentiousness and didacticism " with a cultivation of dialectal speech patterns . In this immediate context , Agârbiceanu seems to have been inspired by Ion Pop Reteganul and Ioan Slavici , the founders of Transylvanian realism . He himself inspired Liviu Rebreanu .

Traditionally , reviewers have been put off by Agârbiceanu 's plot devices and epic mannerisms , and in particular by his explanatory comments and notes , which they deem superfluous and distracting . As Lovinescu notes , Agârbiceanu and other Transylvanian realists will " accumulate in details " , but will remain " incapable of narrating on more than one level " : " for all their dynamism , his sketches are not exciting in the dramatic sense . " The moralizing aspect of Agârbiceanu 's fiction makes it hard to separate between it and his purely theological productions : as Lovinescu notes , whenever Agârbiceanu depicts village drunks , it is as if " for an anti @-@ saloon exhibition . " Dragomirescu argues that Agârbiceanu 's work amounts to a set of humanitarian " directives " , although , he concludes , its depiction of " the bleak and mystical recess of life " is a fine literary contribution , " rising above " his generation 's . He states : " Agârbiceanu is a socializing Poporanist or S?m?n?torist only when he is at his weakest " .

According to exegetes such as Iorga , Constantin ??ineanu and Voncu , the moral lesson of Agârbiceanu 's lay works is only hinted at , with much subtlety . Voncu sees in Luncu?oara din P?resemi the " refinement and objectivity " of novels by Georges Bernanos . On the other hand , Voncu observes that the writer uses his artistic talents in theological works such as Despre minuni (" About Miracles ") and Din pildele Domnului , ably narrating simple texts that can appeal either to their intended audience of rural believers or to a more cultivated set of readers . As Z. Ornea notes , Agârbiceanu 's least known works are particularly moralizing . This category includes two stories of moral redemption , the novel Sfântul and the short novella Pustnicul Pafnutie ?i ucenicul s?u Ilarion (" Pafnutie the Hermit and Ilarion His Apprentice ") , which are " entirely tactless " .

= = = Major works = = =

In Arhanghelii , the implicit Christian lesson is about the love of money and its devastation of an Apuseni get @-@ rich mining community . At the heart of the novel is a former notary , Rodean , whose gold claim appears to be endlessly productive and corrupting . As ??ineanu writes : " with emotion and mounting interest , we witness here the ephemeral joys and disasters that this modern @-@ day Moloch pours over this once @-@ peaceful village . " The novel , Lovinescu argues , is overall " awkward " , but still interesting as a social fresco , called a " frightening human torment " by Iorga . ??ineanu deplores its " prolixity " and arcane mining terminology . As argued by Dragomirescu , the climax , where Rodean runs from the card table to see his mine collapsing , " has remarkable qualities of literary vividness and vigor . " Nicolae Manolescu offers praise to the work , a " solidly realistic novel " that , although widely seen as a pastiche from Slavici , should still be taken into account for its " originality and newness " . He sees Agârbiceanu as an " unlucky " novelist , whose work was eclipsed by that of Rebreanu , Mihail Sadoveanu , and Gala Galaction , which it only resembles coincidentally .

In Legea trupului , a psychological novel about a young man torn between the love for a mature woman and her daughter , Agârbiceanu turned his attention to the sins of the flesh . The erotic dilemma is one of several narrative threads : Legea trupului is also a story of inter @-@ ethnic

conflict (Romanians versus Hungarians) , and a probe into the regional politics in Transylvania (a theme that also preoccupied him when writing *În clasa cult?*) . Lovinescu sees *Legea trupului* as a " solid social and psychological study , for all its tendentiousness " , but still harmed by Agârbiceanu 's " lack of stylistic expressiveness and verbal insufficiency . "

The narrative structure is alluded to in *Legea minții* , which is about discovering one 's true calling . The plot follows its protagonist , a scholarly priest by the name of Andrei Pascu , as he finds himself in his work as a missionary of religion and cultural nationalism , despite being set back by poverty and revisited by his worldly past . Similar themes are developed elsewhere . In *Popa Man* , a lapsed priest and smuggler is suddenly confronted with the consequences of his actions , and destroys himself with drink . In *Stana* , named after its female protagonist , a war invalid is a passive witness to his wife 's moral decay . When he dies , his wooden leg serves as a haunting reminder of his virtues , driving Stana to despair .

According to Manolescu , these stories were largely outdated by the time of their publishing , when more experimental work was being put out by Hortensia Papadat Bengescu and Camil Petrescu ; Agârbiceanu " could only strike the figure of a naive moralist , reeking of a parson 's mindset , in all ways incompatible with the emancipated Romanian society of the interwar . " The novella *Fefelega* , however , is largely seen as Agârbiceanu 's true masterpiece ? either his best story or one of two , alongside the short story *Luminiș* . At the center of the story is a woman who makes a meager living quarrying stones for gold panning , with her many children killed off by a respiratory disease . She was based on a real life model , Sofia Danciu , with only some details changed . In the defining moment of the narrative , seen by Dragomirescu as symbolic for the plight of Romanian Transylvanians , *Fefelega* sells off her emaciated draft horse and only friend , to prepare for her daughter 's funeral . However , as Iorga notes , this is not a pessimistic outcome : " kindness is present , but hidden , in this world , but will reveal itself in the hours of pity and those of justice " . *Luminiș* shows the final moments in a woman 's life , and her inability to grant herself one last wish , and , according to Dragomirescu , is a " universal " work , worthy of a Count Tolstoy .

= = Legacy = =

Under communism , Agârbiceanu 's lay work began to be fully recovered in the late 1960s . An important effort in this process was undertaken by literary historian Mircea Zăciu , who had begun a critical re-evaluation as early as 1955 , with a short monograph that took up George Călinescu 's observation whereby Agârbiceanu was not a moralizer but an artistic narrator of moral situations . Zăciu went further , seeking to detach the Symbolist label and place him within the framework of ethical Transylvanian prose . His work , re-edited and amplified in 1964 and 1972 , revived interest in the writer by precisely cataloguing his corpus and opening new directions for its critical analysis . The recovery was limited : according to Vălcușă , the arrival of national communism left critics unsure about whether to reintroduce Agârbiceanu 's " uncompromising vision of rural life " into the literary canon .

Not long thereafter , the film directing team of Dan Pița and Mircea Veroiu found that Agârbiceanu 's short stories supplied ideal material for their interest in formal experimentation , leading to two films , each based on a pair of his stories : *Nunta de piatră* (1972) and *Duhul aurului* (1974) . In 1988 , Nicolae Mărgineanu and Ion Brad also filmed their version of *Arhanghelii* , as *Flames over Treasures* .

It was not until 2004 , fifteen years after the fall of the regime , that the theological writings started being reprinted . These events also signified that the full corpus of his literature could see print : work on his complete writings was taken up by Mariana and Victor Iova . Preliminary and other manuscripts only saw print in and after 1997 . The project ended in 2002 and , Vălcușă notes , Agârbiceanu returned to a " discouraging anonymity " until 2014 , when Ilie Rad began work on a revised critical edition . This also included material never published in the Pănescu edition ? adding as much as 75 % new content . As suggested by Manolescu in 2013 , Agârbiceanu once seemed " the most promising Transylvanian writer of the dawn of a new century , after Coșbuc and before Rebreanu . " However , and despite *Fefelega* being a constant feature of literature textbooks ,

Agârbiceanu became " two @-@ thirds forgotten " . According to Ornea , and to various others , Agârbiceanu mostly endures in cultural memory as a " second @-@ shelf writer " .

Ion I. Agârbiceanu (1907 ? 1971) was the author of pioneering work in spectroscopy , famed for his invention of a gas laser . Another one of the writers ' sons was a surveyor . He and his family remained in possession of Agârbiceanu 's large villa in Cluj , which was later declared a historic monument . The writer 's grave was awarded the same status by Romania 's Culture Ministry in 2012 . Among the localities associated with Agârbiceanu 's work , Bucium is home to a Fefelega Memorial House , a modern reconstruction which used Romanian folk houses as a blueprint ; Sofia Danciu 's actual home burned down in summer 2014 .