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La Condottiera: a literary masterpiece with prophetic accents

(Virgil Gheorghiu, *La Condottiera*, translation & introduction by Inez Fitzgerald Storck, afterword by Thierry Gillyboeuf, Bridgeport, CA: Arouca Press, 2022)

With the translation of Virgil Gheorghiu's *La Condottiera* in English language, Inez Fitzgerald Storck offers to the international literature a masterpiece of one of the most representatives' writers of the Romanian culture. Moreover, her demarche is accomplished according to all the cultural and scientific standards.

It was released with the blessing of His Grace Ioan Casian the first Romanian Orthodox bishop of Canada (because Gheorghiu was an Orthodox priest too), who also writes an endorsement of the book, accompanied by a complex introduction (p. IX-XVIII) written by the translator, a glossary (p. 173-176) meant to help the reader to understand the complex theological universe emphasized by the author there, but also by an afterword written by Thierry Gillyboeuf (p. 177-184) author's testamentary legate and also one of the scholars who investigated Gheorghiu's life and work.

In the introductory note the translator offers a brief presentation of the landmarks of his life and biography. Then, she realizes a complex characterisation of the book and its content emphasizing the fact that:

„*La Condottiera*, one of Gheorghiu's first works in French starts out as a murder mystery, with the killing of the miller Nicholas Akathist. Outside the two children who discover his body, still warm, the only person known to be in the village at the time of the crime was Father Theophorus Akathist, village priest and brother of the miller. The suspense evoked by the murder and the subsequent arrest of Father Theophorus continues until almost the last page.

Woven into the narrative are descriptions of the brutality of the Soviet invaders and their Romanian collaborators, and the principal suffering of the Romanian people. Their penury is exemplified by the childhood and youth of the two Akathist brothers. Later in the novel, Gheorghiu satirizes the American military establishment in post-World War II Germany, and the

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primacy of moneymaking for Americans, influencing even their altruistic activities". (p. XV).

Like other works written by the same author¹, *la Condottiera* is not only a book with relevance for the literary field. It contains interesting philosophical meditations about the meaning of life, anthropology and s. o., historical information (regarding the Communist regime from Romania and its forms of manifestation, autobiographical notes² and different references to the international context of the politics from the after-war period), social and sociological investigations, but also aspects that can be used in different fields. For this reason, the fact that it was translated in English in a very elegant language and accompanied not only by an introductory study and a foreword, both of them well written, come to bring an important contribution to the valorisation of the Romanian culture in the English-speaking space and on the American continent.

For this reason, but also for other ones, as the need of re-discovering the prophetic accents from Gheorghiu's work³, the demarche of Inez Fitzgerald Storck must not only be known and promoted, but also read and referred to. As Romanians, we should surely be grateful to the translator for her working of translation of this book) and to feel proud that one of the important militant voices of our culture has gained, even at three decades after his death, notoriety and raised the interest on the recent history of our country and its painful moments.

Notes

¹ See, for example: Virgil Gheorghiu, *La vingt-cinquieme heure*, (Paris: Plon, 1948); Virgil Gheorghiu, *De la vingt-cinquieme heure a l'heure eternelle*, (Paris: Librairie Plon, 1965); Virgil Gheorghiu, *Dieu ne recoit que le dimanche*, (Paris: Editions du Rocher, 1990); Virgil Gheorghiu, *Ispita libertății – memorii II (The temptation of freedom – memories)*, (Bucharest: 100+1 Gramar, 2002); Virgil Gheorghiu, *La cravache*, (Paris: Librairie Plon, 1960); Virgil Gheorghiu *La seconde chance*, (Paris: Librairie Plon, 1954); Virgil Gheorghiu, *La tunique de peau*, (Paris: Librairie Plon, 1967); Virgil Gheorghiu, *L'Espionne – roman*, (Paris: Librairie Plon, 1971).

² Because as the translator underlines: „As in all his work, Gheorghiu draws on his life experience to depict characters and events. For example, as a boy he planted climbing roses all around his family's partially constructed little house to hide the fact that it was in an unfinished state, due to his father's lack of funds. This transformation of a house to look like it was made of flowers was his first poetic creation, as he recounts in his memories, since one of the tasks of the poet is to change ugliness into beauty. In *La Condottiera* the boy Theodore will do the same thing to hide the mean appearance of his father's house. With regard to characters, Gheorghiu's father serves as a model for the physical appearance for Father Teophorus, both seeming to be primarily spiritual beings, lacking in substance, without flesh and bones". Virgil Gheorghiu, *La Condottiera*, translation & introduction by Inez Fitzgerald Storck, afterword by Thierry Gillyboeuf, (Bridgeport, CA: Arouca Press, 2022), XVII. Cf. Eugen Simion, *Genurile biograficului (The genres of the biographic)*, (Bucharest: National Foundation for Science and Art, 2008), 285; Marinela Dorobanțu, Kretz Erwin,

Kretz, "Exile and Interculturalism – The Case of Five French Writers of Romanian Origin," *Studies of Science and Culture*, 7 (2001), no. 3, 113.

³ Fact that was also approached in: Iuliu-Marius Morariu, *Virgil Gheorghiu on Communism, Capitalism and National-Socialism*, (Berlin: Peter Lang, 2022).