

THE TRANSYLVANIAN INTERWAR PROSE AND FOLKLORE

SUMMARY

The paper *The Transylvanian interwar prose and folklore* aims to investigate the interwar literary phenomenon, applying the new research methods determined by socio-historical changes and the expansion of the scientific area, which led to a reorganization of all fields of research. The object of the study is the relationship between literature and folklore, folkloric elements found in the artistic universe of Transylvanian prose writers (Ion Agârbiceanu, Liviu Rebreanu, Pavel Dan, Victor Papilian), but also a transdisciplinary approach to emphasize the innovative trend of twentieth century prose. The aspects we insisted on draw two essential lines around which our whole approach is built: on the one hand, the village world seen as a source of folklore, and on the other hand, the identification of the peculiarities of the fantastic in the creation of the writers concerned. A complex research that brings into question a laps of time marked by numerous important historical events for the evolution of cultural life in Transylvania, the paper proposes a retrospective vision of a fruitful stage in interwar literature. If we refer to the interval between the two world conflagrations, we deduce the peculiarity of the first decade after the war; the critique of the time placing the literature of the twentieth century on four representative pillars: Ion Agârbiceanu, Liviu Rebreanu, Pavel Dan and Victor Papilian. Before starting any approach, we had as a benchmark the creation and militant cultural-artistic activity of Ioan Slavici, who was considered a pioneer of realistic prose and a theoretician of folklore.

Tributary to the historical context, the literature of the 19th century focuses its interest on the problems of the people, a recognizable aspect in the literary direction of the next century. Whether in the first phase of its development some reminiscences of the popular element can be observed, gradually the Transylvanian literature imposes a resizing of the folklore background. There is a wide range of mutations both formally and in terms of methods of transfiguring artistic material. The interwar Transylvanian writers propose a militant literature that feeds on a matrix space, in which the soul balance is defined by identifying with the world of the village.

This paper is built on a balanced structure that aims to provide a radiography of interwar prose, being structured in six chapters: a chapter dedicated to Ioan Slavici as a starting point in establishing the other four chapters which constitute an applied approach focused on the artistic

belief of each prose writer; an introductory chapter that proposes a theoretical approach to the concepts with which we will operate in the interpretive process, highlighting the relationship between literature and other areas of interest. Each chapter imposed a special treatment, because in the field of research were inserted literary analyses that can be confused with real case studies.

In Chapter I, entitled *The Transylvanian Prose from the late 19th and early 20th centuries*, we will set up a historical and social contextualization, emphasizing the literary specifics of the time. The first subchapter, mostly theoretical, follows a long stage that has its starting point in the ideology of the revolution of 1848 which encouraged scholars to fight not only for political unity, but also for cultural unity. We will take an overview of the literature of the 19th century, our objective being the interval 1880-1890, when the Transylvanian literature is part of a renaissance stage through the direct involvement of Ioan Slavici in the process of emancipation of the people through art. This chapter will also focus on the two coordinates of the thesis related Ioan Slavici's literary work. Under the urging of Mihai Eminescu, Ioan Slavici's literary debut is under the influence of popular literature, a legacy mostly from his countrymen. We initiated an analysis of the representative short stories that will serve as a grid for interpreting the works of the chosen interwar writers. We started with the image of the village described in the short stories, belonging to the first stage of his literary creation, we paid attention to the theoretical activity in the folk realm, and at the end of the chapter we focused on highlighting the fantastic of popular origin. In this last subchapter, we started a detailed investigation of the first fairy tale written by Slavici in which we delimited the observance / violation of the folk tale canons.

Proposing a predominantly theoretical perspective, the second chapter, entitled *The Transylvanian Interwar Prose*, justifies the reason why we opted for a paradigmatic interpretation of the creation of Ion Agârbiceanu, Liviu Rebreanu, Pavel Dan and Victor Papilian with psychological and psychoanalytic elements. Organized in three subchapters, we focused in this part on a regional study of literature, following the model initiated by Nicolae Balotă. We made a general presentation of interwar literature marked by "a crisis of Romanian intellectual literature" that separates writers into two categories: those who remain dependent on tradition (the peasant issue) and those who seek to innovate by borrowing narrative techniques from the West. In this context, we also brought some appreciations to each writer, arguing the reason for the selection made. The subchapter entitled *The Fantastic* is dedicated to the theoretical aspects, the research of the concept being structured on the studies of Roger Caillois, Tzvetan Todorov, Sergiu Pavel Dan,

Matei Călinescu and others. These meanings of the fantastic require a dreamlike space in which obsessions are projected, identifying a new method of examining the abysses of the soul to facilitate the breaking of the supernatural into reality. We will also pursue the fantastic in a psychoanalytic approach, facilitating an incursion into the depths of conscious and unconscious processes that allow the exploration of the psychic dimension. This paradigm contributes to the identification in the structure of the work of fantastic literary themes and motifs (the double, the strange, the gaze, the obsessions) that are clarified in Freudian theories and in Otto Rank's study, *The Double. Don Juan*.

Chapter III, entitled *Ion Agârbiceanu, between realism and mythic-magic fabulous*, includes three subchapters (3.1. *The typology of the Transylvanian village*, 3.2. *Beliefs, myths and fantasy in short prose*, 3.3. *The undead - "a monograph of the Transylvanian village"*) with an applicative character, aiming to offer an analytical grid focused on the real-fantastic dichotomy. In Agârbiceanu's conception, the fantastic must be researched "in the mystical-fabulous tradition of folk culture, also based on a somewhat older religious foundation." The two concepts are in a relationship of interdependence, because the fantastic literature, starting from the real data, projects imaginary worlds that distance themselves from the normal, forming the so-called magical realism. This dichotomous structure allowed the tracing of an archaic direction, constituted by appealing to superstition, folk beliefs and heresies, the specifics of the agricultural and mining village and of an overview of the fantastic phenomenon transfigured in short prose. In addition to the image of the agrarian village, we considered necessary an analysis of the novel *Strigoii* (The Undead), a true monograph of the rural environment. Built on a polyphonic structure, the novel becomes a mirror of rural reality by capturing the capital events in human life (death, wedding, baptism) but also in the life of the community: Christmas, the get-together, the harvesting, the chasing of bad spirits traditions, Resurrection and the folk costume.

In the research of Liviu Rebreanu's artistic universe, in addition to the dichotomous direction mentioned above, we made an inventory of the obsessions, of the recurring images that underlie a varied thematic arsenal. Entitled *Liviu Rebreanu, a follower of harsh realism and "doctrinarian fantastic"*, chapter IV radiographs a creation marked by autobiographical signs, defining a universe captured in harsh images that circumscribe the psychology of the simple man, and even more. A follower of realism, Rebreanu does not exclude the ethnographic aspect, his literary work being a synthesis of rituals, capturing the diversity of rural community manifestations:

the Sunday hora (Romanian round dance), calendar customs, the wedding ceremony, the birth, the wedding and the rites of passage.

The fantastic manifests itself as a metaphysical speculation, materialized at the level of an inner world, by triggering a "psychotic conflict from the depths of the subconscious." A novel of "eternal illusions", *Adam and Eve* is a meditation on the theory of reincarnation, the metempsychosis being a repetitive process that aims the achievement of the couple, a projection of fulfillment in the last circle of Toma Novac.

Chapter V, entitled *Pavel Dan and the enchanting imaginary*, expands the sphere of research of realism and fantasy, managing to enter the laboratory of his creation where we discovered a predilection for the rituals of passage, the image of the village, the road and the family. Pavel Dan proposes to the reader an incursion into the mythical space, the logos being the one that reconfigures the world of the village, his writings being defined by a "literature of remorse". Pavel Dan's village is discovered in the watershed of human life, proposing a reinterpretation of the old burial customs, which highlight an isolated, conservative space. On the other hand, the fantastic discourse appears as an extension of realism, the prose writer managing to insert the fantastic element as a form of comprehension of reality. Significant for the fantastic setting is the short story *Copil schimbat* (A Changed Child), in which the boundaries of the real are overcome and, gradually, the mysterious journey of the character leads us into a maze space- the forest. Another form of manifestation of the fantastic is the metaphysical one, which arises from the country man's desire to delude his own existence from the need to understand and explain signs, superstitions, myths.

The last chapter, entitled *Victor Papilian - the last representative of Transylvanian interwar realism*, concludes the analytical journey dedicated to the literature influenced by the poetics of folklore, Papilian being a continuator of Slavici's short stories and of Agârbiceanu and Rebreanu's novels. Like his predecessors, the prose writer impresses with the variety of his styles. An observer of society, Victor Papilian manages to create a mosaic frame, a literary work in which myths and religious legends are contaminated to bring into question the mythical-magical side. The religious component becomes a pretext with the explicit purpose of emphasizing the psychological component of the characters and the fantastic discourse of a folkloric origin. At the same time, we made an analytical foray into the corpus of his literary work, to identify Papilian's intention to discover untapped worlds, dissecting the "mystery of a diurnal reality." The fantastic prose

capitalizes on a variety of forms: starting with the intellectual, anatomical fantastic, to that of obsessions. In the subchapter dedicated to the fantastic category, we have extended the field of our research comprising several hypostases: the Freudian fantastic, the experimentalist fantastic and the mystical fantastic.

Another direction of the chapter captures the dual image of the village. Being a Transylvanian writer by adoption, Victor Papilian proposes to the reader a world of the Oltenian and Transylvanian village. Placed in the vicinity of science, Victor Papilian's creation materializes in the form of a "literary geography", making real dissections to reveal extreme feelings, at the limit of the pathological.

Therefore, the present research, far from reaching all the coordinates offered by the interwar literature, allowed us to identify the similarities and the differences in the way each studied prose writer understood to enliven the folk side and to offer diversity to the fantastic element.