The Creator vs. the Creative Man in Romanian Literature (The period between the wars vs. the communist regime)

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The myth of creation is a fundamental part of any culture and this is the reason why I consider necessarily and useful to point to the way in which this myth has been artistically expressed in Romanian literature, both in times of successful aesthetic creation and during the regime, which attempted to distort the significance of art. The enrichment of the myth with the idea of the creative man was illustrated in aesthetically valid literary works, whereas the re- and misinterpretation of the status of the creator has strayed away literary art from its essential nature, the myth being thus voided of its meaning. For an academic, such an approach could contribute to clarifying the relationship between art and extra-aesthetic influences. Also the research project could help the students notice the evolution, the involution or the dissolution of Romanian literature during the past century.

I. The current stage of research and the objectives of this project

The present project expresses a constant interest, which has its distant origins in the drafting of the university graduation paper, *Dramaturgia blagiană. Instituirea estetică a absolutului* (Blaga’s Dramaturgy. The Aesthetic Expression of the Absolute) which was published, with an introduction by professor Vasile Fanache, by Imago Publishing House from Sibiu in 2003. Further research into Lucian Blaga’s work included the participation in the last four editions of “Lucian Blaga” International Symposium from Cluj-Napoca and the consecutive publication of several papers in the symposium’s proceedings, the most recent of which is *Meșterul Manole: creatorul vs. omul creator. Valeriu Anania vs. Lucian Blaga* (Manole the Craftsman: the Creator vs. the Creative Man. Valeriu Anania vs. Lucian Blaga). The results of this research work were published in 2005, in a co-authored book – *Dicționarul personajelor din teatrul lui Lucian Blaga (The Dictionary of Characters in Lucian Blaga’s Dramaturgy)* (coordinator professor Constantin Cubleşan), Cluj-Napoca, Dacia Publishing House, 2005. My contribution covered the characters of the drama *Meșterul Manole* (Manole the Craftsman), my analysis of the main character being highly praised by the literary critics. This dictionary (as well as my doctoral research – which was finalised in 2006 with the public defence of the thesis *Valeriu Anania. Studiu monografic (Valeriu Anania. A Monographic Study)*, for which I was awarded the distinction *magna cum laude* – increased my awareness of the various ways in which the myth of creation and, in particular, the status of the human creator were expressed in Romanian literature in the period between the wars and during the communist regime. A scientific research concerning this subject is yet to be done, my own investigations and books having only managed to provide several suggestions for a comparative research. This is what I aim at with the present project, which has the following objectives:
Research objectives:
1. The critical analysis of the Romanian inter-war and post-war dramaturgy which is concerned with the re-interpretation of the myth of creation, having its starting point in the folk legend of the Argeș Monastery / Manole, the Craftsman.
2. Exemplification of prose works which have as their main subject the status of the human creator in society and illustration of the shift of perspective and vision when comparing the inter-war and the communist Romanian literature.
3. If relevant to the subject, analyses of poems from the two periods mentioned, pointing out the metamorphosis of ars poetica, varying with assertion or denial of the autothetic quality of artistic works.
4. Remarks on the pressure of the extra-aesthetic upon the change of literary expression from the focus on the status of the creative man in the inter-war period to the paradoxical representation of the creator during the communist regime when transcendence and the metaphysics of human creation were replaced by the Marxist concept of the new man.
5. A comparison between the myth of creation, as illustrated in the inter-war period and during the dictatorship. The evolution, the involution and the dissolution of the myth through its re-interpretation or its voiding of meaning.

Dissemination of the results of research:
1. A scientific research paper written according to NEC requirements.
2. Participation in scientific conferences and symposiums.
3. Using the research results in my teaching activity. Part of the information could be turned to the best account within the framework of my seminar on general aesthetics or as part of an optional course concerned with literary mythology.
4. Continuation of research, with a view to publishing a book on the subject.

II. The introduction of the problems of the research:

II. 1. In order to introduce the subject, I have to mention the objectives I had in mind in my former research:
1. To point out to a possible relationship between the creator and the creative man, after defining the two notions, as well as to the ways in which various dramas in Romanian literature have described one of the two hypostases of creation.
2. By choosing creation as the main focus of much of my earlier research, I have approached it from the perspective of folk literature (where the protagonist is the creator close mythical symbolism par excellence), from that of Lucian Blaga’s dramaturgy (where we find a novel element, the creative man tormented between human sacrifice and artistic creation), as well as from the perspective of several post-war Romanian plays, in which the hypostasis of the “mythical creator” is re-established, this time from an extra-aesthetic perspective.
3. This subject gave me the opportunity, during my PhD studies and the writing of the doctoral thesis, to indicate Mircea Eliade’s acceptation of the myth in general, and of the myth of creation in particular, and his views on the relationship between the sacred and the profane, as well as to emphasize the glaring echoes of his perspective in Valeriu Anania’s work. By focusing on the “germinal metaphor” of the myths (including the myth of creation), Valeriu Anania voided the significance of the irrationality of the mythical literature.
II. 2. The research subject covers a vast thematic area, which might demand more than ten months of research: the folk origins of the legend, the various acceptations of the notions of myth and mythical literature, aspects of the myth of creation in Romanian literature over several decades, the pressure of the external politico-social and ideological elements on art. This convergence of areas of research points out to:

1. inter-disciplinarity: literary folklore, literary theory, aesthetics, and the history of Romanian literature.
2. trans-disciplinarity: brief philosophical insertions (metaphysics and Marxism), contemporary Romanian history.

II. 3. The relevance of research:

The literature in the field available to me indicates that this subject has been approached rather inconclusively. A reference work on the subject could be considered Motivul creaţiei în literatura română (The Motif of Creation in Romanian Literature) by Gheorghe Ciompec (Bucureşti, Minerva Publishing House, 1979), its major achievement being the proposal of a paradigm (much attention being paid to the folk origins of the myth). Yet its major drawback is its inability to discuss thoroughly – or at least fairly – the nuances of the problems. I believe that my project is able to propose a coherent and unbiased perspective on the aesthetic changes in Romanian literature during the communist regime, which misrepresented the autonomy of the artistic work. The phenomenon is all the more obvious when the focus of interest is the motif / the myth of the artistic creation and the status of the creative man as an artist.

III. The methodology of research

I would like to emphasize the fact that this approach, like the one concerned with the analyses of Lucian Blaga’s and Valeriu Anania’s works, attempts to be an unbiased and well-informed critical approach which proposes hermeneutic analyses of the text, as well as a dialogue with previous critical contributions in the field. I also hope to be able to provide a synthesis of the relevant issues, which could be useful to other researches. Many of the titles in our bibliographical list – which is selective and open to further significant additions – have also been used in our PhD thesis and in the research dedicated to the analyses of Lucian Blaga’s work.

IV. The structure of the project

At the current stage of the project I intend to focus on the following issues. Subsequently, the research will be expanded in a similar manner to other literary works:

1. In Nicolae Davidescu’s drama, Mănăstirea Curtea de Argeș (The Monastery Curtea de Argeș) (1921), the creation is a demiurgeous deed, for it illustrates the everlasting daring gesture of the human being who brings upon himself the anger of the demiurge for his rebellious gesture. For Manole, the creation is a primordial deed (through creation, mankind becomes similar to the gods) and his artistic work comes to be part of the everlasting harmony of the universe. The demiurgeous dimension of the artist is convincing. Manole is a symbol of the human being’s sacrifice for “the deed of a higher call”
and the artist becomes a new Prometheus or Lucifer. The artist is equal to the demiurge for as long as he is under the spell of creative passion.

2. In the first act of Adrian Maniu’s dramatic poem *Meșterul (The Craftsman)* (1922) the human original creation is supposed to be, in the eyes of the “fantastic creatures”, a creation which is characteristically human, and thus opposite to the tellurium that is depicted vigorously – though somehow untidily – as a strong irrational power. The craftsman is depicted as a “new man”, acting in the name of a “God sacrificed on the cross”, and the emphasis is not on the replacing of one civilization by another, but on the original creative deed of a civilizing and aesthetic age, as opposed to the uncontrollable outburst of Nature. In the following acts, one can notice the monumentality of the creator, constantly opposed to the ordinary world. Literary criticism has seen in the protagonist a titan or a Renaissance man, but the most important aspect seems to me to be the perspective upon creation as an essential human deed, a new order that a man has established into the universe.

3. In Horia Lovinescu’s drama *Moartea unui artist (Death of an Artist)* (1965) Manole Crudu regards art as being, more than anything, the sign of humankind’s triumph over chaos and death. Thus, the artist carves works that assert the human dignity, the triumph of reason in a hostile universe. His gesture to destroy the statue – which is of a great artistic impact, yet useless to humans – is the artist’s testament, in which he embraces again the humanistic values, however liable to excessive ethics. The main emphasis is put on the artist’s responsibility to humankind.

4. In Marin Sorescu’s *Paracliserul (The Verger)* (1974), the protagonist rediscovers a significant spiritual itinerary, a temerary experience: he longs for an ideal. The smoke that blackens the walls of the abandoned church is a symbolic outcome of the consuming flame, the human being remaining exhausted by his creation. This means that any deed – not only the exceptional ones – is a parricide, it requires the transfer of life from the artist to the inert material, so that artistic life could be secured.

V. Conclusions

The myth of creation is a fundamental part of any culture and this is the reason why I consider necessarily and useful to point to the way in which this myth has been artistically expressed in Romanian literature, both in times of successful aesthetic creation and during the regime, which attempted to distort the significance of art. The enrichment of the myth with the idea of the *creative man* was illustrated in aesthetically valid literary works, whereas the re- and misinterpretation of the status of the *creator* has strayed away literary art from its essential nature, the myth being thus voided of its meaning. For an academic, such an approach could contribute to clarifying the relationship between art and extra-aesthetic influences. Also the research project could help the students notice the evolution, the involution or the dissolution of Romanian literature during the past century.
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