

## Aspects of the Fantastic in Vasile Voiculescu 's Fiction Prose

Anastasia Dumitru, PhD in progress  
Ovidius University of Galati, Romania  
anastasia\_dumitru@yahoo.com

**Abstract:** The problem of fantasticology has always fascinated and continues to be extremely productive. This paper aims at discussing the meaning of the fantastic and tries to answer the question, is the fantastic an aesthetic concept, or is it "a literary genre". Our conclusion is that fantastic exceeds the bounds of the frontier, it is beyond the genre. The fantastic tends to translate a spiritual necessity, being our compensation desires, the dissatisfaction and the conflict of any category. The fantastic represents a way out from the daily automatism and the "terror of history." The fantastic reaches the major anthropological and aesthetic fulfillment – including the world in its indistinct global unity, by means of metaphorical speech, of the symbol and the mythical values. Even if the Romanian literature has criticized the idea of not having fantastic vocation, however, writers such as M. Eminescu, I.L. Caragiale, Mircea Eliade or V. Voiculescu, because of their short prose fiction value, the fantasy literature confirms the fantastic route of the Romanian literature. Vasile Voiculescu, the writer who was known as a talented poet, changed his literary development, making a remarkable storyteller who uses fantastic diegetic formula. Vasile Voiculescu's fantastic texts propose the contemplation of the existential meditation and important themes of the man's aspiration for the absolute still trying to reveal the unsearchable mysteries of the infinity.

**Keywords:** fantasticology; genre; mythical-magic; obsessional; imaginary

The problem of fantasticology has always fascinated. The fantastic texts propose to contemplation existential meditation and important themes of the man's aspiration for the absolute still trying to reveal the unsearchable mysteries of the infinity.

The large number of references according to the fantastic theories is an advantage and a disadvantage too: an advantage because we could continue a course of study imposed a disadvantage because of the correlation effort, systematization and ordering of concepts, according to the methodological rigors established in accordance with the peculiarity of the domain.

This paper aims to discuss the meaning of the fantastic and try to answer the question, is the fantastic an aesthetic concept, or is "a literary genre?" We systematized the theories of the most representative fantastic researchers and found difficulty in defining, classifying and delimiting the concept, as its basic feature is the fantastic variety, the multitude of aspects under which it can be manifested. We noticed that there's no single definition of this term, so we showed our dissatisfaction with some theories, that despite their ingenuity, they are only partial. Moreover, Jean Fabre (1992) wrote about the numerous unused definitions and the Romanian scientist, Gheorghe Glodeanu (1997: 7) considers that the fantastic falls under the "sign of Proteus."

A good faith reader wonders what is the point of still using an exegetical approach of V. Voiculescu's fantastic prose, in an area where - by appearances at least - all the essential things have been already told. The publication of his complete work: V. Voiculescu's literary work (Prose. Poetry. Drama. Biographical Documents. Manuscripts Seized. Manuscripts Found (Accurate edition, 2003) regains the universe of Voiculescu's fiction, bringing the reader the original quasi-unknown texts and completes the idea that "V. Voiculescu is still an open issue", as L. Grasoiu asserts. (Grasoiu, 2008, p.131.)

Our approach is theoretical and interpretive at the same time, our purpose is only to demonstrate that Voiculescu's work is consistent, expressing "the vision of the world, a thinker writer, an ardent secretly seeker", as Nicolae Florescu told (interview with Grasoiu, 2008, p. 78).

We consider that V. Voiculescu's fantasy universe of his work can't be explored with a single research method, so we try to create a hypersense and use a chart to coagulate the fragmentation, which has been written in connection with this work. We noted that the definition and the birth certification of the fantastic is the land of many controversies that arise as a result of different research methodology that pursues a study or another one. All the definitions regarding the fantastic from the identification of antithetical pairs and the crisis of the two opposed ontological order, a conflict the researchers have defined as between the various antinomic relationship: Normal/Abnormal (Fabre); natural/ supernatural (Guy de Maupassant, Roger Caillois, Tzvetan Todorov); normal/ supernormal (Serge Paul-Dan); admissible/ inadmissible (Roger Caillois) explained/ unexplained (L. Vax), possible/ impossible (Marina Cap-Bun), real/ unreal; rational/ irrational or anti-rational (Irene Bessiere), logical/ illogical etc.

The fantastic unreal is the antithetical phenomenon that defines a liminal topos, so fantastic is characterized by the use of prepositions between and among. The delimitation of the fantastic genre has difficulty in doing it because this category is a mixed genre, presenting a variety of events. As in the definition of the fantastic, when we try to give an answer, if the fantasy is an aesthetic concept or "a literary genre", the area is quite slippery, and that is why the purity of the genre is questionable. Both concepts are of Sisyphus proofs because of their ambiguity. The literary theorists who consider fantastic an aesthetic category (Louis Vax, Marcel Brion, Marcel Schneider, Claude Roy, D. Scarborough, M. Summers, Tony Faivre, John Biber, Adrian Marino) support the manifestation of the ancient times, being „the tous temps et de tous les pays", the words of J. Palou. (Finne, 1980, p. 22).

These researchers exclude the existence of a genre, so we believe that we can speak of a trend that shows flaws since antiquity. On the contrary, Retinger, J. P. Mac Orlan, H. Matthey, P. G. Castex, E. F. Bleiler, R. Caillois, Tz. Todorov, M.-J. Lefebv, J. B. Baronian, M. Beşteliu, Eugen Simion consider that fantastic has emerged with the romantic epoch.

Our conclusion is that fantastic exceeds the bounds of the frontier, it is beyond the genre (Paul Hernadi concept (Hernadi, 1972, p. 184), therefore this is a form of imagination since ancient times, but it is only in the romantic era that fantasy will be brought into question as a way of challenging the principles of classical aesthetics, and then in the next century a true fantasticology will appear. We have not opted for a single definition because we have not found anyone perfect. We selected the most appropriate meanings to show that fantastic (Phantasticus - Visionary) can overthrow the generally accepted rules and conventions only to undermine the conventions and having a transcendental function. „A fantasy is a story based on and controlled by an overt violation of what is generally accepted as possibility; it is the narrative result of transforming the condition contrary to fact into "fact" itself", wrote William R. Irwin (1976: x.)

We accepted that this concept is a "mental attitude" (Biberi, 1982, p. 221-224) in relation to ourselves and with the world around us (Rosemary Jackson, in *Fantasy: The Literature of Subversion, Fantastic as a Mode*), a way to escape from everyday life. Charles Nodier found a line of continuity between religious and secular fantasy: the latter were developed later from the former ones had a similar cultural basis; telling stories we can escape from the daily stress or transcend the human condition. (Charles Nodier "The Fantastic in Literature", in Jean-Baptiste Baronian

anthology, *La France fantastique de Balzac à Louys*, pp. 17-31, apud R. Jackson, op. cit., p. 175.)

Also "The all - inclusive K. Hume "definition" (Kathryn Hume: 1984: xii), has a broad sphere and helps us in our analytical approach, allowing us to use as many methods as we can use only to track critical successive fantastic phases: from the mythical-magical, to the psychological and the initiatic one.

We are optimistic about the evolution of the fantastic as "essential needs", as "the gold standard of humanity", as Villiers L' Isle-Adam, *Eve future's* author has written. The fantastic tends to translate a spiritual necessity, being our compensation desires, the dissatisfaction and the conflict of any category. The fantastic represents a way out from the daily automatism and the "terror of history." The highest form of the fantastic manifestation is after J. Biberi the metaphysical significance: the transfiguration of reality through myth and symbol, spiritual attitude of man to himself and to the world. With this achievement, fantastic reaches the major anthropological and aesthetic fulfillment – including the world in its indistinct global unity, by means of metaphorical speech, of the symbol and the mythical values.

Even if the Romanian literature has been criticized the idea of having not the fantastic vocation, however, writers such as M. Eminescu, I.L. Caragiale, Mircea Eliade or V. Voiculescu, because of their short prose fiction value, fantasy literature confirms the fantastic route of the Romanian literature. Vasile Voiculescu, the writer who was known as a talented poet, changed his literary development, making a remarkable storyteller who uses fantastic diegesis formula.

Fantastic is a continuous process of the opening to the unknown, to the microcosm and macrocosm, to the absolute, so we researched the spiritual side, the initiatic side of the short story. We undertook a hermeneutic approach, seen as an exegesis to discover the fantastic hypostasis, the integrating factor being the archetype seen as a prototype, as an essence of Voiculescu' s fantastic work. We selected these concepts in order to demonstrate a re-route of metamorphosis of this concept: a) mythical-magical fantastic type, (as a traditional one, characteristic in long duration), b) interior, psychological, obsessional fantastic, (a modern type, as a result of the terror of history), c) initiatic one (perceived as sacred in the profane space recovery). V. Voiculescu is a modern writer, who, by resorting to different sides of the fantastic, finds the knowledge path of events, "from beyond the being."

A fantastic universe is a complex unity formed by several fragments. We have shown that the hypostasis of the fantastic, "this separate lot" means a unit and that there is no effect without the uniting of the parties. Archetypes are the basic structure of Voiculescu's texts, they are the integrating factor which coagulates the various sides of the fantastic. The resistance structure of the fantastic hypostasis, in symbolic and initiatic way, is a methodology of becoming. Applying M. Eliade's theories, we found that the entry in the terror of the history, in the era of blackness and confusion (which means *separatio*, *devisio*, *putrefactio*, *mortificatio*, *solutio*, Jung quotes Dorneus), led the hero to reach the deepest layers of the unconscious and rediscover the archetype for going out the history labyrinth.

The hypostasis of the fantastic is the transubstantiation sides of the initiation of some debates on the essence of the world. Voiculescu's fantastic work remain incomprehensible if we apply a single method of research, they require a qualitative leap in argumentative-analytic approach. The research of several instances of the fantastic by reading the proposed new scale, showed a way to decipher and explain the initiation of the spirituality coefficient matrix of these fantastic stories. The foray into fantasy is a constant redimension, a path that leads to the re-organization and new meanings, to knowledge - with-recognition and (*connaissance*), being rooted native birth (*naissance*), and the essential purpose of the fantastic story is a second birth, the initiation type in knowledge, the regaining role of the *con-science*. In the last chapter we studied the meanings of symbols in a group of texts that are less targeted in the exegetes' view. We demonstrated that Voiculescu's heroes live by archetypal patterns and are capable of infinite variations. They go through a methodology of becoming.

Applying the mentioned methods of research, we concluded that our assumption was confirmed. Hypostasis of fantastic are identified with a new hermeneutic approach of a creative type and is scored as Hegel called 'phenomenology of spirit' "as a way of understanding the relationship between ourselves and the transcendent. The conclusion of the last chapter: The initiatic fantastic shows that Voiculescu's hero may be called not only *homo religious*, but *homo synergetic*, or *homo transcendentalis*. A fantastic steady hypostasis of the character's aspiration is to "guide to something", "becoming" to exit the space-time measurements, to be always between two worlds. "It is also one of the purposes of the transpersonal psychology, "our evolution is an auto-transcendence," says Basarab Nicolescu (1999).

Following the initiation path of Voiculescu 's heroes, we find that it starts at 1. homo religiosus, a mana personality; - (Berevoi, Luparul etc.) the hero is presented in the most archaic world; 2. a transitional being; a liminal entity, with numerous intrapsychic conflicts (homo psihologicus: the battle of the opposites between rational and irrational, with inner impulses, neurosis, etc., a mature hero, who through individuation, evidence that initiation) (Zahei, Dionysus, etc..) and finally, 3. after passing through various transformations, homo simbolicus, homo arhetipus rediscover the sense of becoming: the search for wholeness, integration, self, the superego (Itzik, Ilinca, Profira children - the archetypal symbol of the origin).

In our thesis we put the world into question, we provided a new method of investigation which demonstrates the complexity of V. Voiculescu 's short fantastic prose, resizing it and opening it to new interpretations. We hope we brought enough arguments to demonstrate the value of this fantastic literary work. Voiculescu's fantastic short fiction, through 'the power to signify the primordial reality, ideas or possible instances of the human soul, are masterpieces of the world literature that don't lack for it than a good translation into a language of heavy traffic", said V. Streinu in Preface (1966): „Povestiri” I, Capul de zimbru.

We believe that fantastic remains one of the most seductive and productive aesthetic categories, and its polysemy and longevity is due to the fact reality, is under question, opens horizon as far as possible answers the great mystery of the Creation, covering the interest of the being modern human imaginary.

Is the fantastic an aesthetic concept, or is "a literary genre?" Which is the right answer? Each researcher, writer or reader could judge and give the answer because they operate from a different theoretical and philosophical platform. We believe that the fantastic is an aesthetic concept, with a variety, the multitude of aspects under which it can be manifested. The fantastic falls under the "sign of Proteus" (Glodeanu, p. 7).

As the title of our paper suggests, we inquiry attempts to reread the theories about fantastic and to identify the unity of the fantastic short fiction: the archetype. The complexity of this problem is major and it will be discussed.

It is known that artists are the true creative forces of civilization or society. Through their work, artists anticipated events, scientific discoveries, etc. metamorphosis of human thought. That is why the fantastic interest will be more increased. In conclusion, we admit that our paper does not pretend to have exhausted the entire research theme. We wanted to come up with a new perspective

to address Voiculescu's fantastic short fiction, that reality is under question, it light and capitalize it with a creative hermeneutics type to demonstrate that reading becomes an exciting adventure of the spirit, a constant temptation to interpret the hidden significance.

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