

Communication and Spirituality

Danubian Subjective Mythology in Ștefan Bănulescu's Europe

Associate Professor Gheorghe Lates, PhD
Danubius University of Galati, Romania
gheorghe.lates@univ-danubius.ro

Abstract: The imagistic of Romanian Danube is part of the one of the European Union, being based on the affinities of culture, religion and race. Ștefan Bănulescu is, above all, a storyteller who thinks his texts according to the genius of the ancient rules. The paper aims at correlating the historical literature suggestion with the literature convention, boundless by definition. The result is a world with the conspicuousness of the old, unusual and multiple ethnicities, overlapping with the traditional story patterns, all in a fairy of images, partly real, partly fantastic.

Keywords: Danube; EU; historical literature

After the illustrious Faulknerian model "the land of Yoknapoatana", the Romanian writer Ștefan Bănulescu thinks and acts epically a literary major theme, located in the imaginary space of the river, seen as an axis of worlds located on either of its sides. In the good tradition of storytellers (Neculce, Sadoveanu, Creanga, Galaction) Bănulescu slides from legendary and mythical, continuing a personal vision of the greatness of the River and its role in shaping a world, placed on safe coordinates. The humanity "Diacomesia's Plain" it is thought in terms of the worlds that have passed through these places and left behind unbreakable material and spiritual signs.

Beyond the literary image of an area, partly real, partly imaginary, the interest of the work focuses on the collective imaginary, implicitly on imagology and history attitudes. A history of Danubian imaginary must be written and therefore the entire puzzle imaging that one day will find its rightful place in a major European cultural construct.

The study, applied on a Romanian text, aims at identifying the ethnic brands of the Danubian imaginary in order to subsequent, comparative, valuing, distinct values and the common starting point for a mythological synthesis, possibly placed at the basis of the European Union.

Born and educated close to the Danube (Făcăeni / Calarasi) the writer, Stefan Banulescu, builds from the start (Editorial onset: *Iarna bărbaților/Winter men* - 197) with distinct notes of the Danubian imaginary, the brands increased over the years and then focused on a subjective mythology of the River in his only novel *Cartea de la Metopolis/The Book from Metropolis*, designed as part of a quadrilogy (*Cartea milionarului/ The Book of the billionaire*) of which it would be part the *Diacomesia's Book*, *End at Metopolis* and *Epitolog in Mavrocordat town*, abandoned by the author for various reasons, or stated as epic intentions, in Tolstoy's fashion, at the way of unfeasible subjectivity at poetic level. The literary exegesis placed him in the category of storytellers and accepted the fragmentation of Romanian novelistic construction under the excuse of belonging of the text to a distinct practice in the direct branch of Baccaccio and Sadoveanu. The technique of narrative drawers applies smoothly as the most characters are narrators and protagonists of the narrated facts; entering into the stage (narrative input) is usually accompanied by the beginning of a story fragmented into several clips to make room for other storytellers with their world, partly real, partly imaginary. Although the book is full of stories of people, places and events, dating from the vicinity of the First World War, it is not a historical novel, but rather a metanovel how the real transforms into history.

No matter how great the temptation of narrative poetics as hermeneutic approach would be, what concerns us here and now is the Danubian imaginary seen through a conceptual grid of an erudite storyteller, who does not hesitate to enlist the epic structure of the text elements extremely varied: from real geography to the Byzantine history, from anecdotic to history philosophy, from the factual to legendary. This mix is purposeful as narrative articulation of a vision on the Danube, seen as world border and also as a curdle factor of a history of ethnic and European brands. The purpose of the novel, even limited to a quarter of what ought to be the quadrilogy dedicated to Danube, is the articulation of an ethnic and historical philosophy. This is the second attempt of this kind thought by Slavici in the early XXth century when he published the historical novel *Din bătrâni/ Out of Oldmen*, almost forgotten nowadays. The great challenge that had to answer to the Transylvanian writer was articulating a philosophy of a history conceived as an oscillation between plains and mountains, including the identification of a spiritual centrum (Bucegi plateau) marked by the presence of megalithic stones, worshiped by the inhabitants of the mountain. In such an area of transhumance, the plain stone houses and those improvised by branches in the mountain hals the recall of a pastoral civilization with strong Christian emphasis and hence the presence of

many priests among the characters and of human drama followed by repentance and riots.

A different philosophy of *ad hoc* history invents Sadoveanu, its regression over time envisaging different eras in relation to Slavici, a whole new option of Romanian generics. The protagonists of its history, told somewhat as Decameron, are freeholders, those who were raised in rank by the trusting people of Stefan cel Mare/Stephan the Great (“people of His Highness”) and used as counterweight to the aristocracy of the time. Moldova's glory days were times where the freeholders enjoy royal privileges and the revocation coincides with the deprivation of rights under the emblematic ruler. With many elements borrowed from *Dodecameron* of Eminescu, more accurately said the Sadoveanu's histories have articulated a vision of the past, unavoidable for anyone who wants to attend the labile boundary between legend and myth and to retell then not so much the facts, but their stories. Even when you think a mythologized history (*Creanga de aur/ The Golden branch* or *Frații Jderi/Jderi Brothers*) the ideological marks are not missing, which ultimately, is not so serious, as the revival of bygone times requires an explicit reference to contemporary. From the perspective of “the horizon of expectation” of the reader such ideology addition seems natural, because without an update, what would have been the point in evoking figures and facts of the past. As Delavrancea did, in his dramatic trilogy, being in fact a processing of the remaining three dramas of Eminescu remained as a drafting study. By Sadoveanu, the Dacian and the Musatin's myth are revived for the third time, the evidence of the maturity of literature being given by such resuscitations / reinterpretations / updates.

The third model of philosophy of history and of updated epic vision, being perceptible in Bănulescu's profound structure of the text is that of the *Craii de Curtea-Veche/ Court-old Philanderers* of Mateiu I. Caragiale. If in the heroic world of Sadoveanu the dissolution of the heroic world was taking obvious lyrical forms, having as distinctive marks the nostalgia, sentimentality and agony, at Mateiu I. Caragiale the derepitude is a mood lowered directly from the livresque decadentism. His lyricism is rather a satirical one, so that the charge, irony, allusion are present in every corner of the text, which benefits from a triple layered writing, the encryption effect of the meanings being inevitable. The world of slums, with rioting monster moods and show their wallows in the mud, on the one hand, the hideous face, and on the other hand, the lyricism of decrepitude aura. The history, the frequent and scholarly reference, transforms in the storytelling, this

succedaneum of reality being the effect of subjective visions with obvious brands, tightened by language.

All these references are found fused in the deep structure of the text of Bănulescu, a storyteller that the modernity has obviously marked him, hence the fragmentation of writing, including abandoning the project after his first attempt, a successful one in fact, a monumental building. Its pillars being the “books”, a biblical allusion, but also Tibetan and Egyptian, the historical building strength is threatened and thus its abandon in the phase of primary articulation imposed to the author as a final solution. It is a different story shaped in sumptuous narrative structure, fragmented and addressed from the perspective of multiple narrators, taking the lead role the Marosin General, flanked by the Millionaire and Polider tailor, a character that calks the Demiurge. The stories told by them revolve in a double history: of Metopolis’ Castle, which is in sharp decline and Dicomisia Plain, a space located on both sides of the Danube. The author’s intention was to move the focus from a metaphysical mountain, on which was actually built the Romanian historical novel on one of the plain with endless fields of grain and corn from where small and dark people are coming out at the Polider Tailor’ call as to receive the proper pants thrown from the carts in movement by the demiurge of this unlimited space.

Bibliography

Bănulescu, Ștefan (1977). *Cartea Milionarului I. Cartea de la Metropolis/ The book of the Billionaire I. The book from Metropolis*. Bucharest: Cartea Românească.

Cărtărescu, Mircea (1999). *Postmodernismul românesc/Romanian postmodernism*. Bucharest: Humanitas.

***(2007). *Dicționar General al Literaturii Române/General Dictionary of Romanian Literature*. Vol. I. Bucharest: Univers Enciclopedic.

Spiridon, Monica (2001). *Ștefan Bănulescu*. Brașov: Aula.

Ștefănescu, Alex (2001). Ștefan Bănulescu. *România liberă/Free Romania*, no. 7.