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Matrix of Spiritual Sentiments in Literature

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Abstract: Promotion of the nation's spiritual values stands continually in sight of the Romanian writers. That is, Its Majesty the word, when used with talent, with the knowledge in lyric, epic and dramatic writings, it is able to contribute significantly not just to the elucidation, but also to the widespread of our national treasure. It is not accidentally that many literary works, created by the most representative writers of the nation are dedicated to the Danube – the witness of our glorious historical events, a river that mystifies by its beauty, by the great variety of living creatures in its waters, by the message it sends to the growing generation to save and protect the nature, to take action against those who cause damage to it.

Keywords: Danube; message; lyric; literature; nature; nation; action; history

It would be symbolical, to start by making reference to some depictions of the Danube, that have been selected from the Romanian literary works.

So, the highly appreciated Romanian writer, Vasile Voiculescu, narrates the following experience in his tale "Fisherman Amin": "It is not remembered how long the Danube, swollen by rains and ice floes, hasn't flooded so vehemently as in that spring. The river was an immense succession of rolling elevations, from the ribs of which mad floods came down out of the river bed, by pushing, by stuffing into the ponds' underbellies, into the flat plain, into all rivers and backwaters plenty of

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furious water floods that couldn't be integrated in it anymore and, at the time with them, hosts of fish, of all sorts and of all sizes..."

While Alecu Russo refers to the Danube, in his famous literary writing "Ode to Romania", the following way: "Why do you moan and cry, you rich country? The old Danube, conquered by your parents, is kissing your hemline and brings you riches from the land where the sun rises and where the sun sets, the eagle in the sky contemplates you as the land of its birth, the beautiful and foamy rivers, the fast flowing and wild streams sing tirelessly your praise. Oh, glorious country as no one is, why is your face veiled?".

The writer refers as well to the Danube in his work "Folk poetry": "Amongst the diversity of nations spread on the banks of the Danube, not one of them has, as the romanian nation, a folk poetry so genuine, so diverse, so wonderful and so tightly unified with the memories of antiquity".

Another romanian writer, Mihail Sadoveanu, being endowed with the divine grace to depict sceneries with all their subtleties, has expressed the following images of the river in his literary work "On the ancient Danube": "In the afternoon heat the flooded Danube was steaming from all sides of the ponds and of the backwaters which now were spreading as one stream, within a uniform, yellow slope, up to the flooded hamlets, on the sand banks". And then the author continues: "... I walked into the backwater of the ancient Danube. All at once I started to move among flowers and water creepers, various bugs, grasshoppers, butterflies of all rainbow colours..."

On the basis of the above literary extracts we can outline the role of literature as an art: "A work of literature is an artistic creation or a creation of culture, which expresses the reality by means of artistic images arising out of the author's creating fantasy, in an original symbiosis of the content with the form" (Gavrilă & Doboş, 2010, p. 14).

In this context, we'll also point out one of the essential characteristics of a work of literature: the arousal of some emotions and sentiments in the readers' soul by means of the word.

This is it, Its Majesty the word, when being used with talent, with knowledge and awareness in lyrical, epic and dramatic writings, it can contribute substantially not only to the elucidation, but also to the promotion of the creative assumption by the young generations of the Romanian nation's traditions.

While referring to words, we'll make an attempt to illustrate their deep meaning and significance in the Romanian language. In fact, it is true that in poets' creations of all times can be found verses dedicated to the Romanian language. We'll recall in mind, in this context, the wonderful lines from the poem of Alexei Mateevici:

“Our language is a treasure
Buried in depths of the past
A necklace of rare stone
Poured out upon our ancient land...”

(Our language)

While analysing it thoughtfully, we can notice that the poem is composed of two distinct parts. The first eight lines create the impression as if they form a complex definition of the notion “language”, though by means of poetic mastery. Thus, by interpreting the following extract of the poem we'll find the arguments for this statement:

“Our language is a burning flame
Inside a nation, which all on a sudden,
Awoke from deathly sleep,
As the brave man in legends...”

Accordingly, we can see that the poet Alexei Mateevici offers his own version, that is to be said, “from his heart” for the definition of the word “language”, to the corresponding official description of it offered by explanatory dictionaries. So, in the verse, the language is: *lightning and song, fire and fireplace, bread and sweat, ancient land property and treasure, unrest and fairy tale, thrill and eternity, the sky and homeland.*

Virtue, beauty, harmony of the language are the fundamental elements that comprise the theoretic basis of the poet's definition.

The last four lines of the poem “Our language” are also of a particular interest.

“Above the horizon will rise a treasure
Buried in depths of the past,
A necklace of rare stone

Poured out upon our ancient land”.

The remarkable poet A. Mateevici calls us, by this poem, to cultivate and protect sacredly our language intact. The speakers of the Romanian language of all generations have a holy responsibility to know it and to elevate its status to new levels.

It is also important to know that the poem “Our language” was created as a response against the spoilers of our language, as well as against those those who claimed that Romanian language is too poor for expressing high ideas, elevated sentiments and thoughts, who pretended that the Romanian language would be inept for poetry, philosophy, science.

The literary criticism of the past epochs and of the present times gives a high appreciation to the poetic creations of Alexei Mateevici. The critic George Călinescu states that “Alexei Mateevici... would have been a great poet if he had lived a little longer. Alone Eminescu had the knowledge to extract so much fragrance from the folk rhythms...” (Călinescu, 1986, p. 94).

Furthermore, our contemporary critic, the academician Mihai Cimpoi remarks: “The movement of the national renaissance from Moldova has revived Alexei Mateevici, has put into evidence his value as a whole (it is known that the poet’s religious verses were prohibited) and has as well erected him the statue of the apostle of the nation: he has become in fact the second poet of national importance, after Eminescu, and *Our language* has established itself as a second state anthem, alongside the *Wake up, Romanian, from the deathly sleep* of Andrei Mureșanu” (Cimpoi & Mateevici, 1995, p. 128).

These are statements recorded with the total scientific rigour, by emphasising particularly the fact that the religious poetry has been prohibited for a quite long period of time.

It is worth to note that our literature is of religious origin and the very first literary texts represented translations and adapted books of the orthodox humanity’s great works. Among the preserved testimonies of the Romanian old literature are as well the literary creations written by the philosopher, writer, ruler of Wallachia Neagoe Basarab. His merit consists in the remarkable contribution to the development of culture, to the spreading of orthodox Christianity. The writer’s advice and teachings addressed to his son Teodosie, which are inserted in the literary work “Teachings of Neagoe Basarab to his son Teodosie” are meaningful and useful to an equal extent for the readers of present times. For illustrating it, there have been selected passages

from the above mentioned literary work: “If you enter the holy church, pray, do the religious service with soul songs and chants. For approaching and feeling yourself nearer to God first there is needed to be silence. Silence creates stopping, stopping creates tears, tears create fear, fear creates humility, humility creates self-awareness, self-awareness creates love, love creates souls which talk with angels”.

Whereas in our religious lyric a special place is reserved to the poetry of psalms. There are found hymn verse in the “Cazania” / “Book of sermons” by Varlaam, in the “Psalter” by Dosoftei.

Actually, the Psalm, as a distinct subdivision of the literary genre, will be in the attention of Alexandru Macedonski, Lucian Blaga, Ion Minulescu, Vasile Voiculescu, Ion Pillat, Tudor Arghezi etc.

We’ll consider, in this regard, in more detail the work of literature created by Tudor Arghezi – the poet of searches, of uncertainties, of faith and of doubt at the same time. A confirmation is the author’s creation itself in which his life is reflected. Then, we’ll present some verse from one of T. Arghezi’s psalms.

“My pray is without words
 And my song, my God, is voiceless.
 I ask You nothing. I remind You nothing.
 From Your eternity I’m not even for an hour
 Nor the pray perhaps is not a pray.
 Neither my inner man is not perhaps human.
 I’m burning slowly to You, like an ember,
 I search You silent, imagine You, reflect on You “

Lucian Blaga wrote as well poetry of religious inspiration. The distinctive feature of his creations consists in the following specificity: the poet is aware of the fact that the human has the purpose itself which doesn’t allow him to penetrate the mysteries of divinity. This idea is philosophically expressed in Blaga’s poem *I don’t crush the world’s wreath of wonders*.

“I don’t crush the world’s wreath of wonders
 and my mind
 does not kill the mysteries that I encounter

along the way
in flowers, in eyes, on lips or graves.
Other's light
stifles the magic of the impenetrable hidden
in depths of darkness,
but me
with my light I magnify the secret
of the world..."

While the expression of divinity by the poet Mihai Eminescu was highly appreciated as by literary critics so by Romanian theologians. One of his masterpieces – the poem *Luceafărul / Evening star* – has its source of inspiration in the sacredness. As a poet of orthodox Christian sensibility, Mihai Eminescu created as well some other poems with titles that suggest his deep religious concern: “Prayer”, “Resurrection”, “Pale Angel...” etc.

“Pale angel, it's a secret for you
That the waves and whispers of the world
Are pain and dark night,
Compared to the sky?
Don't you know, angel, how to fly,
To leave the earth, the sad ruin?
If you enjoy the sky, its own light,
Why don't you die?
Oh, but the earth still holds you here,
In some fetters woven in heaven.
You'd have flown in serene worlds long ago,
If you didn't love”.

And also Vasile Alecsandri created poetry woven by thread of the religious culture. “Religious hymn”, “Christ has risen”, “Legend of the holy church from Curtea de

Argeș” – these are only some titles of verse in which religious thrill finds its expression. We’ll illustrate it by some lines of the poet’s verse:

“Christ the Savior from the dead has risen
 His forehead as the sun,
 Shining above the nations
 Has spread on earth flowers of immortality,
 Christ, the god of faith, went out of the grave!
 His resurrection proves us that justness doesn’t perish
 As well the faith with the holy truth!”

There has been reserved particular attention to the Christian poetry with the view to emphasize that it has the unique role to approach a human being to God.

In this respect, while reading the poetic creations by Octavian Goga one discovers the inherent presence of the orthodox spirit in the Romanian landscape itself. Moreover, the literary critic and historian Ion Dodu Bălan states in the foreword to the collection “Ne cheamă pământul” / “Land calls on us”: “The biblical nuance, being often used as a symbol in the poet’s verse, is being first of all the artistic expression of some concrete social-historical realities” (Bălan, 1992, p. 3). The critic also mentions, by illustrating his suggestions with lines of the transylvanian poet’s verse, that in O. Goga’s poetry the nature itself takes on religious appearances: “Like a serene evening service / the sound in the grove dies down” (in the poem “Apostle”); the woods’ rustling is perceived by the poet as he expresses it: “...some soft rustle of epitrachelions / that peacefully descend on me / their heart-warming ordination” (in the poem “Reîntors” / “Returned”); also the sunrise (in the poem “Morning”) contains in itself the solemnity of the great church holy days of the resurrection mornings:

“Open the gates widely, you, white-haired fir trees,
 For the Emperor of Glory to come,
 To soothe the grief of continuing longing,
 To ease the nature’s pains...”.

As for the Romanian poet George Coșbuc, he also rendered in his lyrical creation the traditions of the native village and the customs related to the Christian celebrations

– Easter and Christmas. The literary critic Constantin Trandafir states: “George Coșbuc is a living poet, who responds to the sensibility of the modern human” (Trandafir, 1992, p. 12).

Most commonly the characters of his poetic works are simple people, with faith in God. They address Almighty God in moments of joy and of hopelessness. In this context, the following lines from George Coșbuc’s poem “Three, mighty God, all three!” are particularly impressive:

“Past him men, women walked care-free,
Cabs on the highroad rumbled by,
Past marched the soldiers with steps high,
And then, the moment he could see,
He pressed his temples with his fists:
- “Three, mighty God, all three!”

Another gifted promoter of the Romanian spiritual values is the novelist, and short story writer Mihail Sadoveanu. Possessing a rare capability to decipher the marks of antiquity, the storyteller focused on the three more important phases from Moldova’s history: “The phase of the great flourishing during the reign of Stephen the Great, depicted in *Frații Jderi* / “The Jderi Brothers”, the period of struggles for the ascendancy to the throne fought by the stepbrothers of John III the Terrible, Alexandru and Nicoară Potcoavă, reflected in the novels *Șoimii* / “Falcons” and *Nicoară Potcoavă*, while the other famous novels as *Neamul Șoimăreștilor* / “The Șoimărești Family”, *Zodia Cancerului* / “Under the Sign of the Crab” and *Nunta domniței Ruxandra* / “Princess Ruxandra’s Wedding” evoke happenings related to the history of Moldova in the XVII century” (Magheru, 1994, p. 184).

It is notable that the historical novels by Sadoveanu approach diverse themes. The struggle for salvation of the national personality and for the assertion of the national consciousness is rendered with high mastery in the literary works “The Jderi Brothers” and “Nicoară Potcoavă”. M. Sadoveanu proves great talent for entering the essence of the glorious past of the nation by the works of literature “Under the Sign of the Crab”, “Princess Ruxandra’s Wedding”. It is certain that the great writer Sadoveanu formed for himself a personal and individual realm of creation, within which he: “... was moving with artistry and unbounded love for the Romanian nation, by forging meanwhile an arsenal of artistic resources, similarly special. Even

though there was felt too keenly the necessity of the radical modernisation of the national literature, as Alexandru Macedonski, Camil Petrescu or Hortensia Papadat-Bengescu, Mihail Sadoveanu has his unique and absolutely special place among the classics and the contemporaries” (Ciocanu, 2003, p. 242).

At present all the aspects of Sadoveanu’s works of literature constitute issues of the Romanian literary criticism. A rather brief investigation of the most representative contributions concerning the exegesis of Sadoveanu permits the detachment of some important coordinates: Sadoveanu – the national and universal writer, the Romanian village, the milieu of small towns, the evocation of history, the song of nature, the language and style, the originality of Sadoveanu’s art. Whatever aspect of the literary creation of this giant of the Romanian literature would be investigated, alongside with the merits which were dedicated to him, lead to the general conclusion that Sadoveanu expresses the most faithful expression of the Romanian spirit in all its hypostases. The writer represents the national specificity which has a universal reverberation. By way of conclusion we can state: the works of literature created by the greatest Romanian writers of all times, approach issues and themes which emphasise the spirit of the national matrix they descend from. It being a Christian nation which glorifies its historical past, its legendary heroes.

Promotion of the spiritual values and traditions of the Romanian literature should be continually in the view of nowadays writers, since, quite often, some of our contemporaries are concerned excessively by the material sides of life, delaying the aspects that cultivate the personality’s dignity, enrich our native language and raise the level of our cultural education.

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