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Essentials of Philosophical-Meditative Form Literature

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Abstract: Countless studies have been written about the role of belles-lettres in the formation of personality. We propose to approach in the following lines the literary works of a Romanian writer who is appreciated, at take due value, by the yesterday and nowadays readers – George Meniuc. As the author of poetry, prose writings, literary essays, translations, George Meniuc contributed substantially by his literary art to the promotion of our national beliefs. In this respect it is worth mentioning the variety of artistic approaches used by the writer in his pieces of literature, he being appreciated by the scientists in domain as one of the most valued authors of the short narrative genre. Namely in short-stories literary genre G. Meniuc’s aesthetic preferences are expressed alongside with clarity and analytical strength, special sensitivity and seductive power of his meditations on life and destiny in the light of Romanian traditions. As confirmation to the stated things would be the literary essay written by G. Meniuc, with a suggestive title Miorița. In this respect we’ll refer to a short passage from this literary writing with a deep philosophical-meditative character: “The Danube was glittering as a perch with scales in the sun, and, seized in a mesh of enchantment, as an ivy my being was whirling, I wanted to sing, to sip the Danube as dew, and love for life, faith in people, thirst for work, to turn all these into foliage, into flowers, into grass, into the murmur of water... As if I had crossed a border of life’s misteries”.

Keywords: short stories; essays; folklore; significance; profound

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1. Introduction

Regretfully, we'll remark from the very beginning on the fact that in bookstores, rural and city libraries the books signed by George Meniuc can be found in a small number.

And the time has come now that, on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of this remarkable personality, the book with a suggestive title *Pe rug fiecare devine liber* (*On the bonfire everyone becomes free*), the author of which is George Meniuc, is published. It contains 24 poetic creations which denote that after the Second World War, the author shared his thoughts through a pure, intact language. We'll return to this last publication of G. Meniuc's literary work some time later, for the reason that, we consider it necessary to follow first the ways of becoming of this poet, prose writer and essayist, to discover the sources he drew his inspiration from.

As a starting point, in this respect, the following views of the experts in the domain have been taken: „George Meniuc was heading towards the intuition of an archetypal world of the mythical origins, which is concealed in folklore and he wanted necessarily to achieve a carnivalesque vision in the spirit of the folk laughter.

Eminescu's creation and Creangă's one were models for George Meniuc also due to the fact that there is in their intimate structure this archetypal substratum. The soul of these creators is genealogically twinned with the one of their folk” (Cimpoi, 1989, p. 202).

2. Prior Work

Accordingly, from the literary critics' studies regarding the unique character of G. Meniuc's creation, we have drawn out the idea that namely folklore constituted the centre around which the poet's concerns gravitated. Moreover, the genesis of folklore, of folkloric motifs and images interested the poet not only as artistic phenomena, but also as a means of poetry's existence.

A confirmation for the above observations would be the short volume of poetry that appeared from under George Meniuc's feather pen, with the title *Florile dalbe* (*White flowers*).

Page by page we savour the reading of verses which are inserted in the volume: *Colind de băiat* (*Carol to a boy*), *Colind de fată mare* (*Carol of a young girl*), *Colindul cerbului* (*Carol to a deer*), etc. We come to the conclusion that the man of

culture and writer Liviu Damian is absolutely right pointing out in the preface to this book the following: „This book will primarily open to the one eager to learn something, not to the amateur of amusements or verbal gymnastics.

What would we try to learn from it? Lots of things. For instance, the way how the word can be harnessed, controlled without shackling, hindering the imagination. The way how can be given freedom to imagination, but not the freedom to turn into a savage one, to extend astray, but the opportunity to cultivate and refine itself by means of growth” (Damian, 1979, p. 5).

3. Analysis of Results

To give an illustration of the expressed ideas, there have been selected some extracts of the verses from the short poetry volume mentioned above:

“Forests! I’ll wander someday

Just like the old times in green glade

To find the cottage of the Goat with three baby goats

Which granny used to tell me about

Plains! Embellished for ever

By the sun, butterflies and soft herbs.

Heart-warming as everything is heart-warming in our homeland

Will you feel me when my eyes are at eternal peace?”

(To the forests)

Whereas the last lines of this poem sound like a prophecy:

“I’ll not die whole me, since live forces

Keep me stiff tied to the universe

And I’ll be eternally twinned with you.

With you, forests, springs and plains...”

To complete the sincere confessions of the poet, which are the result of his meditations and close observations of the native surrounding areas' specificity, we have selected facts from his biography confirming the truth that seaside, river, mountains, plains used to attract G. Meniuc as folklore generating spaces.

Generally speaking, the folklore images cover like a canvas the whole literary creation of G. Meniuc and, in this case, it is not only about poetry, but also about the prose writings, essays created by him.

To support the above incontestable truths, it would be interesting to follow some extracts which we'll reproduce from G. Meniuc's confessions, exposed in his literary work *La rădăcina doinei (At the root of doina)*: „If you wish to know clearly and more deeply our native lands, descended into valleys and ascended to the bluish skyline, my friend, if you wish to hear their history full of wisdom and to see their picturesque simplicity, the opportunity is offered to you by the moldovan folk song, which is murmured on a shepherd's pipe for centuries. It starts simply, by the eternal *frunză verde (venerating green leaf)* and by the boundless *dor* (the Romanian-only thing, *life-long nostalgia*), until it takes the form of an unthinkable crystal, in which the genius of the whole nation is reflected. Hear it or read it, catch its unquiet melody, so as it has reached our days, and the dream will take you to peasants hearths, to hermit rocks, to the bonfire of dry trees in the plain, to the restless *hora* (Romanian folk circle dances), to the plough's horns, to the middle of the green codru forest, all over our homeland, at the breast of which the generation of nowadays artisans has grown up”.

Actually, by the above inviting description G. Meniuc addresses not only to the adults but also to the little ones, which would be a real support for them for growing up being aware of our spiritual and cultural background.

Accordingly, „We can find the evidence of G. Meniuc's various concerns also in his literary writings for children. He hasn't written many literary works for the little ones, however, they constitute a significant part of his literary creation, the author defining in this sphere as well his style and manner. *Povești (Fairy tales)*, *Povestea vulpii (Fairy tale of a fox)*, *Prichindel (The little guy)*, *La balul coțofenei (At the magpie's ball)*, *Micul Icar (The little Icar)*, *Colind de viteaz (Carol of a brave man)* are some books by which his feather pen contributes to the development of our literature for children”, the renowned scholar E. Botezatu states (Botezatu, 1980, p. 220). An eloquent evidence of Botezatu Eliza's appreciations, formulated with precision on the basis of knowledge in the concerned aspects, is G. Meniuc's

miniature entitled *Ceva despre copil / (Something about a child)*, where the author expresses his opinion about the type and diversity of the literary writings which would get interested our little descendants: „Speaking about the child’s literature, we’ll think that it should transform fantasy into truth and truth into fantasy, it should create a spiritual environment and atmosphere, where the child, undisturbed by anything, could take part in the fairy tale’s life within all fullness of his heart”.

We’ll not overshadow as well the fact that many literary works by G. Meniuc represent for the readers – children, teenagers, adults – models of behaviour, lessons of moral thinking and attitude, an exhortation to love your motherland, to cherish your parents, people, relatives, friends and certainly, to take care of those you gave life to.

In this context G. Meniuc’s literary work *Suflet de copil (Soul of a child)* drew our attention: „Childhood knows no bounds in soul feelings. The child is enchanted by the night plain, where he is grazing horses beside a bonfire lighted since earlier in the evening and he sitting with other children, just like him, having a talk... The child is enchanted by the adventure which took place today, when he broke into a stranger’s vineyard and loaded as a little rascal with grapes. That he broke a window it isn’t as well a sad story, but it’s also a matter that enchants him. The child is ever ready to repeat these adventures all the time, to get into the fire if necessary. All the external phenomena represent an interest, being a real wonder. We discover in the child the joy to welcome the novelty, the curiosity to explore the unknown”.

In fact, G. Meniuc contributes by his literary creations to broadening the child’s knowledge horizon, by offering life models worthy to be followed, but also such situations that need to be avoided, they being incompatible with the name *Human* in the real significance of this notion.

For instance, in the literary creation entitled *Prâslea* the writer condemns those dehumanized by the instinct of acquisition, those who tend to earn ill-gotten fortunes, being sooner or later severely punished.

While in the fairy tale *Chiriac* – G. Meniuc focuses the reader’s attention as well on the punishment of the unworthy, emphasizing the triumph of good over evil, pointing out the truth that in life a winner is the one who is endowed with wisdom, inventive spirit, and not just with physical strength.

After having read the above illustrated fairy tales, we can say that the author created them being inspired by our national folklore treasures, by the Romanian folk wisdom.

By the matter of fact, G. Meniuc's literary creations about animals, that are endowed by him with human traits, can be considered as well as a lesson of moral thinking and attitude, it being characteristic of short folk anecdote genre.

As for the significant role of the writer's short prose fiction, inspired by sap of folklore, Eliza Botezatu ascertains: „It could be affirmed that G. Meniuc's fairy tales, even those having elements of imaginary, are rather some sketch-tales about vices and virtues, all the lines converging to human truths and to the real human. Their characters impersonate distinct moral categories and have prototypes in real life” (Botezatu, 1980, p. 231).

As we mentioned a little earlier, G. Meniuc manifested himself in all literary genres. He makes his debut with the volume of poetry *Interior cosmic / Cosmic interior* – a short collection of poetry that was published in 1939 in Bucharest, containing just 14 poems, selected by the author with a particular responsibility to the written word.

Then, in 1940, the collection of essays *Imaginea în artă (Imagery in art)* is published. It should be emphasized that these essays are highly appreciated up to nowadays not just by the ordinary readers, but also by the author's colleagues in literary art. For example, our contemporary E. Galaicu-Păun values the fact that namely on these two coordinates – Poetry and Essay – G. Meniuc will function all his life, even though he has proved himself in the domain of literary translations, he wrote as well prose works, which are also of essayistic form.

We'll point out in particular the fact that namely in the essays G. Meniuc expressed his diverse conceptions regarding the artist and art, pleading for an art as a pure, genuine phenomenon in its true sense of the notion itself, by approaching the problem of the artistic individuality, which confers to a piece of art its unique physiognomy. Here the author emphasized several times the truth that in art it is necessarily required to have not just study, innate talent, but rather a rich life experience which would be appropriate to the artist's line in realistic creation and of course to have an individual style.

Accordingly, namely all the aspects listed above, being taken as a whole, would be able to contribute to the artistic elucidation of the contemporary human's psychology and life.

In this context, we'll make reference to some extracts selected from G. Meniuc's essays.

Reading G. Meniuc's essay *Cheile artei (The keys of art)*, we have been impressed by the author's following thoughts: „Why does art withstand? I am just wondering, which truth of life, which human restlessness do urge one to chatter by writing? It's of great value, that art never be a vain phantom, my friend, no, never be a vain phantom, but rather an urging to good deeds for your close people, a well-defined path to their heart. Without people art is a song in the desert, a wind whistle over the heathland. Since everything that has lasted for hundreds of thousands of years, in art, it has lasted for people, and for nothing else. Since beauty itself comprises truth, and truth itself comprises beauty”.

Whereas in the other essay – *Masa de scris (The writing table)* – G. Meniuc intends to point out the following fact: „The collectors of biography pearls seek to explain a writer's work through different schedules, odd habits, unusual preferences. The odd habits can't be a commitment. And neither can the schedule. And neither can the preferences...”.

In continuation of the essay the author wants to specify in particular this idea: „The writing table rather bears an imaginary character, for that real one can be reached by whoever isn't lazy... The writing table is, primarily, the most formidable imagination, out of the whirlwind of which there appear images, innumerable images from the folk. And the silence is broken by their restless voices... It is an itinerant library, a nostalgia which follows you without ever ending, it is a skylark trill at time when furrows are cut in the soil belonging to human”.

G. Meniuc also used to create his literary works at such a writing table, being firmly convinced and guiding himself by the truth that the art of writing requires not just responsibility for the word laid on paper, but also profound reflection, much civic commitment.

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