LOST DESTINIES IN SORIN TITEL'S PASĂREA ŞI UMBRA

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Abstract: *Sorin Titel's novel* Pasărea şi umbra *depicts aspects of reality that represent the ordinary life completed by parallel worlds. The prosaic world is not enough to configurate the characters' lives, that's why the parallel realities are invested with a sacred purpose: to recover the characters'identity or to understand their failure. There are some characters who missed their destinies: Tisu, Tili or Honorius Dorel Rațiu etc.; thus, the novel deals with the characters who lost the sense of their lives or who are in the quest of it: Tisu' life, his fancy childhood; Honorios Dorel Ratiu' s ventures to find his own way in life; Tili's escape from reality. The parallel worlds - dream, art as an illusion of life, the magic realism, the fantastic - are present in the whole novel and they have the role of giving an image of the characters'destinies. All the characters'adventures are necessary to highlight that the existence doesn't consist in reaching the sense of life, but in the way they get through life, they follow the purpose of life or even in the way they miss their destinies. Caught in a maze-like world, the characters live a bizzare reality trying to surpass their limits.*

***Keywords*:** *identity, quest, art.*

The way in which the insignificant, the prosaic or the unusual experiences from the stories told by different characters constitutes the true essence of life and becomes parts of destiny emphasize the singularity of the writer Sorin Titel. His novels *Femeie, iată fiul tău*, *Lunga călătorie a prizonierului*, *Țara îndepărtată*, *Clipa cea repede* etc. tackle memory, dream, magic realism, fantastic, the labyrinthine vision of existence that complete the reality in order to denote the fragility and the exuberance of the human being in a world in which the communication between the perishable, the profane, the touchable and the sacred, the perennial may be possible.

Sorin Titel presents in his book *Pasărea și umbra* characters who live with a unique purpose on which depends their accomplishment in life. We are reffering to the mysterious artists or the supposed artists who continuously look for the meaning of life, to find their identity in art, in this case, in painting. Along with the book's protagonists, Ion and Tisu, there are also strange characters who give a new view to the novel: Tili and Letiția, the sisters, who seem to belong to another world, old Bălu or Honorius Dorel Rațiu, the painter, and the supposed painter, Ignasia.

Painting means more than a representation of reality, of imagination, of ventures, it is a way of living or even of self-discovery. The artist's terrifying quest cannot be skipped and becomes a game of life and death; the antihero is not randomly

> a skinny and pale boy with big and blue eyes, hidden behind the glasses with large diopter. Each time he would take off his glasses, Honorius Dorel Ratiu succeed in bewildering all who saw him for the first time. The boy truly seemed to be from another world, coming from who knows where, to Viena. One could seldom encounter such a strange human being as Honorius Dorel Ratiu, the tall young man (he was almost 2 meters tall) with such a blonde hair.(Titel, 2005: 1023);

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He suffers and sobs all night because of his incapacity to make his own way in the world of painting.

The young Honorius Dorel Ratiu, „follower of violent colours" is charmed by Munch's paintings, which he tries to imitate. No matter how much he tries, he is never satisfied with the imitations he makes, because he doesn't find his own identity as an artist, he doesn't find the essence of art. Having a different temper, the other supposed artist, Ignasia, "a human being lacking culture..., intuition or artistic gift... such a strange and complex person, however, a misterious, unusual and almost amazing human being...(Titel, *op.cit.*:1023), sees in painting only a stratagem of living the moment, that doesn't mean involvement, suffering, because of the possible failure, whereas Honorius Dorel Rațiu cannot truly live, he can't find his peace until he finds his own identity in art.

His life changes when he travels to the Castle from Rin, belonging to the sisters Sieglinda and Gudruna, a place that finally proves to be hatchery groomed by Mr. Gunter, the sisters'father who is a dreamer, sure that his work will take him to the best results. Mr. Gunter shows Honorius Dorel Rațiu his huge bird which he keeps hidden the castle's tower. The young man is very impressed by this unique bird which causes a overwhelming admiration: "

> Honorius Dorel looked with hungry painter eyes at the living model in front of him, so real and at the same time almost fantastic… he started to paint, trying to respect de model as much as possible… he allowed himself a deviation, a totally innocent licence, so when he painted the rooster's eyes, he made one eye blue and the other yellow. Despite these little modifications, the bird painted by him was not much more different than the real one. Great and charming at the sometime ready in any moment to get down to the canvas and fly? And while working at the last corrections, Honorius Dorel felt how his soul filled with an unexpected and giddy happiness. He felt that he had accomplished this time didn't resemble anything that others had done before him.(*Ibidem*: 1063)

The artist manages to find himself as an artist, to understand the secrets of art once he manages to paint the unique rooster. Each strike of the brush is a rediscovery of himself, a projection of his original inner world. The bird he paints becomes extraordinary through in which he, the artist-creator, finalizes his painting/work/ creation, forming that invisible bond between creator and creation. He would never succeed in reproducing Munch exactly because once reproduced the work becomes kitsch. Honorius Dorel Rațiu is not its creator and cannot establish that indestructible connection between creator and creation. After managing to paint the bird everything around him changes, he now knows and accepts his new condition: that of the creator. He is aware that no one can know his true feelings, but he becomes a man who lives, who feels, because art eventually means life living, fulfilment. The tragic appears in the moment of creation. The model-bird unleashes and desperately attacks the fresh painted pictures. As a true creator, Honorius Dorel Rațiu passionately defends his work and is wounded by the bird without serious consequences. What matters is the making of the painting which had to fulfil a destiny and was a salvation for the young man who sobbed day and night because of his inner calling. Once you are chosen you cannot avoid your destiny. It is a life and death game which implies acceptance awareness and inner communication. Thus, the calling of is beneficial, is redeeming, gives life, but can also annihilate or even give birth of monsters.

The sisters Tili and Letitia seem taken from another world mysteriously disappearing without any explanation. They resemble each other quite a lot but don't have the same voice or height. Letitia is rational whereas Tili is sentimental, dreaming

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and instinctual and this will affect their relationship. Reality suffers a rupture through which echoes from another world can be heard. It is more that the diseased imagination of Tili, as other characters (the tailor and his wife) witness, the bizarre, happenings. Thus, magic realism is present: the mysterious encounter with the young man, his gigantic umbrella, the fire, the mysterious disappearing of the women:

> If we at least had seen something, says the tailor's wife. But there was nothing! Asks the tailor more a more interesting and stops from seaming the clothing. Nothing, as I tell you, says the woman. No bed where to sleep, no table where to eat, no chair to sit on! The walls and floor, that's all! (Titel, *op.cit*: 1073)

The motif of the bird is also present in the story of Tili and Letitia. The one who sees the bird is Tili. It is a massager from the other side, from another world which cannot be denied. The bird is the only being which is between sky and earth, between sacred and profane, between transcendent and reality, she is at the borders between worlds, a symbol for communication, and the door to another world. It is the first sign that the game of realities has begun.

The sister Tili sees all of a sudden the iron opened with white black or coal like teeth ironically smiling at her. She has an absurd thinking and unleashes her extravagant imagination without any hesitation: she wonders why the tailor doesn't raise a pig in his attic if he is such a good householder; she sees a pink, chubby piglet which climbs a silk ladder, hearing the sound of pigs as well; all these strange facts are essential parts of the world which means more than the material, the understandable, but ambiguity, absurd and mystery as well. A boy brings an umbrella which he opens over the whole yard. The magic umbrella which covers the yard makes the neighbours; the tailor and his wife believe that clouds are covering the sky. When the umbrella is shut, the sun comes out. This object is proof of the world that existed beyond and which can affect the actual reality.

Tili's encounter with her disappeared fiancé is another crack in reality. When his sister Letitia tries to convince herself and Tili that everything was just a dream, the ladder takes out of her pocket, the white ribbon from his hat which makes her sister burst into tears; she believes or wants to believe that Tili has gone mad. Letitia cannot avoid this would no matter how hard she tries and she, just as her sister will see the tailor's trousers burning.

The fire that both girls see which seems just figment of their imagination is another sign that something extraordinary is about to happen. The overwhelming heat is a suitable moment for the strange things that will happen, not randomly a fire takes place exactly when Tili disappears and the next day we find out that she walked with a ghost, his dead fiancé. The way in which the author places the little happenings and the characters at the border between reality, fantasy and imagination is intriguing. The world is s continuous game of realities, the borders between worlds aren't clearly marked. The women disappear as if they have never existed. Could the shadow of death be so powerful that its visible appearance in the real world as if this just imagination which controls everything?! The two women couldn't fulfil their destiny in real life and consequently resorted to a different world in which fulfilment is possible.

Tisu's childhood is also shadowed by death through its image:

> A very ugly and bad smelling old woman", that strange and evil being, half human, half ghost - repelling and indecently playful figure - before disappearing between trace (...) didn't a girl jump around with her skirt up, with her repelling legs, one of horse, the other of rooster

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around the stove? Who could have been death itself, if that could have a human face – that being was nowhere. (*Ibidem*:1055)

Some of the fantastic happenings can only be witness by The Child and The Old Man, those who truly believe in stories, in things that people cannot understand anymore.The Old Man, having reached a certain wisdom, knows that the world as we see it, is not it seems, that there is another world which cannot be seen by everyone and that one needs a careful eye to notice the signs around and to see the invisible.

Old man Bălu is the one who feeds this magic world, which Tisu is apart of, but on the contrary the mother doesn't agree with the stories that he tells the child. The Old Man is the only one who listens to hear and believes in other things seen by the child. The boy hears the ugly old woman again at night and follows her together old man Bălu. They look for her in all the places when she might be hiding: in the shed, in the stove or in the attic of the barn. The whole obscure atmosphere indicates another intrusion of the fantastic. The deserted place, the barking of the village's dogs, the image of the old and bad smiling of woman with her hair down, the full moon which emphasizes the terrifying feeling, appropriate for ghosts, vampires and for the walking dead, according to the popular beliefs.

By participating to the events planned for the other realm, Tisu is a chosen one. He continues to be haunted even after thirteen years for the death of the one who had always understand him and still remains captive in the magic world of childhood. He doesn't believe in old man Bălu's death being certain that he would return. The old presence is felt through the strange happenings: the soup in the kitchen turns sour, the apples in the garden rot, the trampling of the horses. Tisu has to live this wonderful childhood adventures once and for all, given the fact that this phase of his life ended in order not to remain in the embrace of the ugly old woman, meaning death. It is important that he live his true reality, show maturity regarding his actions and escape the shadow of death from his childhood. His uncle, the psychiatrist, influences him and brings him in his own world, even though Tisu feels that he lacks a certain something as a doctor and as a human being. Thus, he will become a failure because he lacks compassion, pity for the sufferings, love toward humans. Only when he is left alone without his daughter, he will feel the long lost falling.

The image of the ugly old woman made Tisu believe that death follows everyone, it is always close and you cannot escape it, no matters what. The character cannot escape the world of childhood, the world of all possibilities and live in the reality which needs to be lived with love and compassion for the suffering of the people around and not randomly without involvement. Tisu becomes a failure in all the aspects of life as a father, as a doctor and as a husband because he didn't see the true essence of life.

All the happenings seem pieces of a story which is, in fact, life. Sorin Titel underlines that true feelings (living) do not reside in great events in the existence, but in those nearly invisible happenings which are not given attention but which burst from the background of the world. The understandable plays a secondary role in tracing a true image of the world; what gives it new perspectives are the parallel realities which exist, regardless how much we try to ignore them. Having a multicolour vision in life, failures wouldn't exist.

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