FEMININE INTERWAR PORTRAITS

Florentina Gabriela STROE (DIDIN) [*]

Abstract*: The developing of the inter-war novel has determined the enrichment and the tone of the feminine character construction as well as its frequency. In this period it becomes more and more pronounced and more conscious. It's rising the preoccupation with the feminine psychology, almost unexplored in the pre-war novels. In Hortensia Papadat-Bengescu's literary creation we meet a certain hardness of the pencraft shape. However, the idea, the intellectual attitude and the new direction of the feminine affect, outlining a category of the feminine ideal. In Hortensia Papadat-Bengescu's literature we find also an unusual association between sensitivity and common experience, the absurd is having motivation and the glimpses or even the immobility are having a direction. On the other part, in the rebrenian novel "Adam si Eva", we discover the split of the unit, of the primordial couple, animus and anima, a dissolution which determines the decadence and the breakage of the couple as well as the individuals' lives. Through the ''Ciuleandra'' dance is written once again the portative of Puiu's memories. Mădălina will become more and more mysterious through her death, having the power to control Puiu's mind. Rebreanu's phantasmal heroine will dominate Puiu's being and will mark his development, beyond the death.*

Key words*: interwar, feminine, portrait*

In the Romanian inter-war novel, a very important place is occupied by the the feminine mystery, many times the women figures being rapt in mystery. Once the realistic novel and short story appeared, the woman character recovers its individuality. Since now, we no longer meet only the idea of woman but also the idea of womanhood. In many works, the feminine character becomes a advocacy of the woman's emancipation. The social conflicts determine different psychic disorders, as well as a special psychology of the aristocracy, bourgeoisie or the psychology of the common woman. The feminine character appears, as usually either in the middle of her family or in the middle of her clan, as main contradiction agents of she is coinciding with the social conjuncture, obtaining a kind of decay of the society in which the woman lives. In Hortensia Papadat Bengescu's writings, the woman king is not a strong fighter, a lady of principia, but she is rather an instrument of gossip, a transfusion of perdition, so of human disaggregation. Through her venae flows the news of the disordered society, the vital principia are infringed and the trivial or the grotesqueness rises.

The developing of the inter-war Romanian novel also determined the enrichment of the feminine character construction but also its frequency inside of the action. This period also becomes more and more evident the preoccupation with the feminine psychology, almost unexplored in the previous novels. The woman is confronted with the Universe's nothingness, a one-aloner, her life becoming solemn and overwhelming. Bengescu launches an analytical inclination towards her own secrets, but developing the purity of the instinct

[*] University of Pitesti, Romania, stroegabriela85@yahoo.com

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from the knowledge point of view. In this writer's works, woman desires to be consciously the creator of her own destiny.

In the inter-war novel, the women's jobs remain in the area of those which were accepted as specific jobs for women, form those times mentality: teacher, nurse, doctor, writer, painter, flower girl. By comparison, in Camil Petrscu's writing, the enterprising woman exceeds the limits of the Radna's merchant and becomes the owner of a store in the novel „Patul lui Procust".

In Hortensia Papadat Bengescu's writing, women have an accomplished intuition, quite fiery, which determines the physical behaviours, a kind of already prepared attitude for degeneracy, without great expectations from her society.

The behaviour is brought near to harsh, strong animal instincts which determine a kind of rummage on the womanhood, generating an internal discharge of the disasters, bringing into sight a harsh view, a true "hospital of love", generically, the woman becomes a sick continuance, a "saint" which becomes empty inside of her soul. *Hortensia Papadat Bengescu's merit isn't only the one that she aggregated the characters' psychology to time, that she broke the linearity of the evolution, but of getting into, on Liviu Rebreanu's path, but through other areas and with other patterns, through the inner space's bedrock.*
(Lăzărescu, 1983: 204).

The novel *Rădăcini* represents a feminine figure galaxy, an original agent of the love pattern with degenerative purpose. Nory is a boy alike young lady who has a lack of emotions, a king of sheer ambassador of the author, juggling in the passion's underground and erotic alienation. The way in which she analyses from the psychological point of view all her friends, becomes a kind of promiscuous journey through the indwelling underground of the other feminine characters

This lack of feelings and the revelation of all her characters' secrets, determines me to say that Hortensia Papadat Bengescu is a kind observer of the inter-war society degeneracy, having the ability to dissolve her characters' mysteries and to let them reveal from the moral and behaviour point of view in front of the reader, outlining in dark shade a time of individual perdition, especially of womanhood, a loss of the value met in Sadoveanu's literature in which woman is viewed as a spiritual mystery.

For Nory it's no secret anymore about the characters' lives, successfully accomplishing her greatest goal that the novelist gave it to her. *As a matter of fact the entire writing doesn't live through actions, but as a real womanlike novel, from dissemination. (...) The entire Hortensia Papadat Bengescu's writing is a long, fine, intelligent gossip of a woman of the world, in an impossible language, essentially spoken.* (Călinescu, 1941: 656)

The worldly success, for the H. Papadat-Bengescu's women characters is more important than the professional one, in the Hallipilor's cycle is emphasized the brightness of the aristocracy, although everything seems to be only a coarse and infamous bourgeoisie.

The characterization of the characters' body has also a kind of medical shade, the writer that we discuss about, having a clinical bent to meticulously describe flanks, a physical decay. The clinical descriptions insist upon the error of body building, a procedure which enriches the theory according which the disaggregation of the inter-war characters, is made with the purpose to create a new human pattern. This procedure is distinguished by a short fragment in which the author, with the help of Mini, a character from his novel,

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describes a model form Maison Lys *with very narrow hips, without the life basin, created not to carry babies, but to wear the newest Permet creations.*

The strange suggested state of dissolution in the work Hortensia Papadat-Bengescu with the direct help of diseases which physically and morally grind the characters like Leonora. That convicted body in this way couldn't feel neither the energies of some pains that alleviate through death nor the hope of a cure. Carnal relationship has in it in the same time something horrible, vile, degrading, sometimes traumatizing both partners. Leonora feels degraded because of the adventure with Italian mason, not getting that consumed adultery, moving him violently into memory, subsequently leading to a fundamental change in her personality. The attraction between Ada and Lica Troubadurul is dominated by pride and desire for domination, mixed in a brutal sensuality.

In fact, the call of the body for the female characters of Hortensia Papadat-Bengescu *is a descent into animalism (where the author's favourite heroines also rarely feel and obey it to the will or removes from their existence), Hortensia Papadat-Bengescu tries to dissolve it into a diffuse sphere of sensitivity.* (Radian, 1986: 140). As such, this carnal connection, which surrounds our characters, is only a way of dissolution, disintegration of individuality and individual purity of interwar Romanian novel world, known as the theory of Liviu Petrescu *spiritual body*. (Petrescu, cited. Radian Sanda, 1986: 140).

In *Fecioare despletite*, Mini attempts to theorize Leonora's feelings through a concrete reality, prompting a report matter- soul: *Mini felt this big problems generated there, of love of earth -as some heavy blocks, placed on both sides of her armchair. Their proximity displeased her, but she could not avoid them. Her thought may strike into wanting to penetrate them. Then she called perceptibility for help. It's a simple tool that serves to easily cross a weighted idea, as a transparent body. (...) This inference (...) it was for her a mathematical attempt of the existence of organized soul body*. Such discussions regarding the theory of the incarnation of the feelings are very important especially the argument upon the dissolution and disintegration of the characters in small units, to be later summed into a new typology of characters. Hortensia's true writing talent lies in correlating the form with the content in a manner in which characters' feelings seem to be torn and directed from a strong technical sketch. *Deploying a comprehensive psychological investigation, the author tends to contain in the range of observation the concrete, material space placed in the nearness of the characters, sometimes excessively detailing, as well as the interior space, the place where they carry out the lights and shadows play of the human soul, scrupulously noting every psychological detail.* (Paler, 1998: 174)

Ghostly heroine, Madeleine

Liviu Rebreanu with his genius artistic power, will translate life through a fierce and indissoluble battle of crushing forces. Starting from the vast array of Ion, highlighting the dramatized balance of the fate which is unable to evade from the tragic, advancing to the *hallucinatory tragedy of conscience* of *Pădurea Spânzuraţilor* (Constantinescu 1946: 44), travelling in the imaginary world of the novel Adam si Eva up to the memorable novel Ciuleandra, Liviu Rebreanu is always interested in deciphering the fate of individuals. In his novels *the multiplied drama of existence is played, intercepted by a centralizer spirit* (Dugneanu 1987: 135), but using different methods from a novel to another. If in *Pădurea*

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spânzuraţilor, amid the same realism of *Ion* will take the analytical process of a psychosis which will lead to dissolution, using also processes from Dostoevsky, in *Adam si Eva* Liviu Rebreanu will restore the primordial pair through the psychic rise in fantasy; in Ciuleandra the writer will penetrate the body psychosis of a soul which was in decline.

After the hallucinating rolling undertaken into Apostol Bologa's conscience the main character of the *Pădurea spânzuraţilor novel,* and the timeless journey into the mental universe of Toma Novac of *Adam si Eva*, we sojourn now into Puiu Faranga's soul obsession of *Ciuleandra*. The *Ciuleandra* novel can easily be considered innovative in terms of intrusion in the hidden shadow of the human psyche. This small rebrenian novel can be read as proposed by Liviu Malita, *as the analysis of an infant me, so immature* (Maliţa 2000: 715), cancelling the idea of a love turned into hate. So the little Rebreanu's novel is a work that excels in the psychological analysis of some hereditary murderous impulses. This is a novel that does not differentiate in terms of the substance of his other psychological novels invoiced by Liviu Rebreanu, but it turns out the renewal of the author's concern in terms of the theme chosen for demonstrating his seriousness chosen psychologist case. *Ciuleandra* will encounter various views and literary criticism at the time of its publication.

Eugen Lovinescu, for instance, states: *The little Roman (...) has the air of a psychological experiment, artificially patched, although elegant treated, in which the powerful realistic sense of the writer overcomes only in Andrei Leahu, the guardian of the sick and in the mother of Madalina who wants to exploit his daughter's death* (Lovinescu 1928: 373), expressing his view about Liviu Rebreanu's on-coming of the human psychology area.

Perpessicius states, in his turn, the fact that the novel disputes *a case of soul obsession* (Perpessicius 1934: 71). He asserts that the novelist's art is enriched with a rare *virtuosity of measuring the mystery* (Perpessicius 1934: 73), an attribute of great literary works *in which life evolves, between shadow and light* (Perpessicius 1934: 75). The most important for Perpessicius is the enigma, represented by Madalina's assassination. This unknown character of the novel who changes in a manner descent into nothingness and amplifying the mystery.

Ciuleandra, despite more or less virulent criticism, passed very quickly outside the country, being translated into French, Italian, Portuguese and even filmed during the life of Liviu Rebreanu. The novel is comparable to the work of Zola, *La Bête humaine*, repeating somewhat Lantier's case in terms of the fact that Puiu Faranga was born with killer instinct. Also, the theme of refreshing the tired blood of a aristocratic family can be found in the novel of Mihail Sadoveanu *Venea o Moara pe Siret*, appeared in 1925, so two years before the publication of the novel *Ciuleandra*.

The hominoid surrounding object, materializes in novelist's trying to figure moral states, successive at the moment of crime. Chills of moral purpose awake in the young Faranga feelings of fear, anguish. Silence, funereal silence, enhance the reality, that of having killed a man. Puiu Faranga *hopes not too need to understand very soon the pact which twists in his soul like a dagger*. (Rebreanu, L., 1985: 171). This uncertainty puts things silently in *deep sleep* (Rebreanu, L., 1985: 174), facing Puiu with only reality.

The description is very meticulous. The light of the two bulbs in the room bring Puiu back on reality. It seems to be the same light seen in *Padurea spanzuratilor*, bit of

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lucidity meant to open the borders of the cruel horizon. Only then the young Faranga rudimentary faces the truth: *He had simultaneously all certainties: that she is living and dead in the same time, that he killed her and he didn't, that nothing happened and that everything ended* (Rebreanu, L., 1985: 173). For our hero of the novel, it is a *fear –epiphany event that he has extinguished a human life is twisted like a dagger in my heart (...) and the silence around strangled him.* (Rebreanu, L., 1985: 173). This antagonistic relationship between Puiu Faranga the killer, and Puiu Faranga the victim of his aristocratic blood degeneration, determines a mental experience of the past, which will entwine now with the objective, real plan, throughout the novel- *He suddenly found himself with a terrifying question ... question flamed a fire in his soul around which he enumerated his life thoughts* (Rebreanu, L., 1985: 182).

At the time of admission, to escape the charge of murder, it appears in Faranga the unconscious real desire to relive the moments of the sudden love for the peasant Madalina, urbanized and turned into his wife. This reactivation occurs accompanied by the obsessive melody of Ciuleandra. The vitality of dance covers and wraps the axis impossible young Faranga thinking. This overcrowding of thoughts and feelings has as result the dissolution of his ill psyche. The emphasis is on unconscious invasion of madness that it catches the hero, increasing atonement beyond endurance, revealing a disordered life, governed by an unstable consciousness.

Wide and deep painted, Puiu Faranga's psychosis remains a motivating factor by her melodramatic data. Here we note the similarity repeated psychological mechanism in the structure of Rebreanu's two of his characters; as a sign of fatality, Bologa's obsession watched the gallows (...) so the Faranga is captured by the obsession of dementia (indeed essential and more intense) dance played with Madalina (Constantinescu, P., 1977: 47).

Madalina this character placed since the beginning of the novel in ghostly incidence, this rebrenian Beatrice, whose sight is icy and yet delicate, watching from the shadows the destiny of her killer and her husband at the same time, it will be raised on the pedestal of her existential happiness leaving Puiu in the earth plane of emotions. We find here a first point determinative for Puiu, in fact the commit of the macabre murder. He could not rise to understand the joy of her existence and this contrast between the two will end with a crime.

We meet the division of the primordial pair animus and anima, division which inevitably determines a decay and destruction of the couple's life as well as individual's lives. Since the beginning of the novel, through the decline of Puiu Faranga universe, but also through the act of being the trigger of Dr. Ursu's memories, with each melodic note of the Ciuleandra song, it will be rewritten Puiu's stave of memories, Madalina will climb ever more into nothingness that has been shrouded in mystery from the beginning. Liviu Rebreanu's ghost heroine will dominate everywhere and will float in shadow Puiu's being, the world Ciuleandra novel, marking her existence beyond life.

During the lecture of the novel I wrote how appropriate Rebreanu called his heroine and I thought no other name would be able to express all that background on interracial poetry that eradiate the little rustic princess abducted from her home village and increased as a lady in the big world, incomprehensible, absent. (Dugneanu 1987: 113).

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The change of Madalina's name into a French version as Aunt Matilda wanted, seemed to bring with it character changes. *Madalina was joyful, exuberant, almost wild, while Madeleine was gentle, discreet and melancholic, a melancholy that sets mystery in her eyes, in her smile, in her voice, and, at least so people said, make her more seductive.* (Rebreanu, 1985: 242).

This rebrenian Venera, gathers in her structure, in whose shadow she dwells, the vigour and the whole mystery of the novel. *Through their tragic and vigor passion, love and death constitute the two cores which polarize the great themes of the writer's opera (...). Love, even a glimpse of the clock, it ennobles all, death, most often destroyes them or frees them from pain.* (Săndulescu 1976: 134). Thus, by dying, Madalina, the source of Faranga's family ennoblement, escapes of torment of an artificial, false life, in which she could not find herself.

Puiu Faranga is the very one who participates in the idealization of the victim by his attempt to show that he had no reason to kill his wife and that the only reason he came to this unhappy end is its genetic baggage. Thus he states that Madeleine's infidelities has overlooked. He really builds a landscape in which the dominant figure is a Mădălina angelic, *gentle, discreet and melancholic* (Rebreanu, 1985: 94) worshiped not only by Puiu, but also by Aunt Matilda or the old Policarp Faranga.

While Madalina was angelic and delicate, Puiu seemed to be broken in an array of lust, dark soul, detestable, guided by passion. *Killing Madalina, Puiu Faranga fulfills his "mission" of demonic sacrilege. (...) Madalina and Puiu are two characters who are built on an opposition of romantic type, synthesized in the antithesis "angel and demon".* (Rebreanu, 1985: 94). The incompatibility of the two is planned by Rebreanu on the idea of contrasted values. Thus, we find the contrast: black / white, goodness / badness; fidelity / infidelity; gently / violence; life / death; lovable / detestable, innocence / guilt, etc.

The question that would fit perfectly in understanding why Madalina was established by the author in the positive role, it's that Liviu Rebreanu has had when he put this feminine character in an antagonistic pair and why not her husband? First, the violence that Puiu Faranga develops in the novel can be a mean of emphasizing the condition of women in the contemporary society of Liviu Rebreanu. Another reason may be to underscore the sensitivity and innocence of the victim. Also the virulence of the relationship between the two protagonists could not be better distinguished than by this antithetic pair.

For Puiu, white snow becomes an invitation to eliminate fears for thinking, to understand nothingness beyond its excessive mediocrity of the aristocratic spirit. Puiu starts to perceive Madalina's purity as a defiance, as a mirror which excessively highlights his defects as a continuous blame. The conflict which led to the abominable crime, Madalina's silence, was in Puiu's conception a silent accusation, a silent acknowledgment of his incompetence and his moral handicap.

Thus the demonic comes to annihilate the angelic just because of the unbearable manifestation of kindness and understanding which manifests Mădălina to her husband. In the lifeless eyes of Madalina, the younger Faranga read his moral conviction to a continuous search for a point of maximum intensity of his being as the dance of Ciuleandra. This will manifest as the highest step on the scale at which Puiu's spiritual ascendancy could ever get.

Both Puiu and Madalina seem to be the embodiment of fallen angels, tousled by

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the shadow spheres of madness and loss of reason for Puiu, or scope for Madalina's death. *Ciuleandra*, seen as a form of sacrificial dance of the society excessively formalized, brings into sight the problems of Rebreanu's society. The society in which this novel was created forgot his roots and generative image hiding beyond human animal instincts were repressed. They longer found tribute in the wild dance from the village Vărzari and in the impure society any connection with the divine, disappears. So current, this work will not disappear from the consciousness of national literature because it comes to stress the macabre caused by the loss of the rural primary age.

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