CONTEMPLATION AND REFLECTION IN RODICA OJOG-BRAȘOVEANU'S NOVELS

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Abstract*: My study, called Contemplation and reflection in Rodica Ojog-Brașoveanu's novels, is focusing on a thematic analysis of the writer's short stories, all gathered up in the volume called "Fat and stupid". I will insist on the dominant theme, love, be it domestic love resulted from a happy turn of destiny in the novel called "Gratitude", adultery and the existence of a marital triangle in the novel called "The Disc" or betrayal in love, in the novel "A simple man". My study includes not only the three mentioned novels but, besides the reflection of life in novels, also the meditation on the relentless fate, on life, filled with surprises and turning points; in other words,contemplation and reflection.*

Keywords*: contemplation, reflection, novels.*

Introduction

In the volume "Fat and stupid" (2000), composed of 16 novels which were firstly published in the "Unica" magazine, my study insists on the dominant theme, *love*. Rodica Ojog-Brașoveanu has besides her 27 crime novels, 9 historical novels from which 5 are found in the "*Logofătul Andronic*" collection and two short stories volumes, *Fat and stupid*and *Men are pigs,* published in 2000 by Nemira. The two books form a tandem, reflecting the principles of male and female with everything they have vile and abject.

Her work falls within paraliterature, a genre considered of bad taste, a consumer literature, a marginal literature. Like her historical and crime novels, her short stories also fall within paraliterature. In the historical novel, Rodica Ojog-Brașoveanu wanted to gain the love of the readers, thus reviving the character Andronic, dead in the first novel from the series; crime novels drew readers with images of role-model policemen and punishment of the vile in the ending of the novel; short stories fall into an easy literature who follows a commercial purpose, a consumer literature depreciated by critics, called in one word *paraliterature*.

Fat and stupid *(2000)*

Novels from the volume *Fat and stupid* can be analyzed following two essential components, *reflection of reality* and *reflection of life*, understood as a meditation about life. Reality reflection and life reflection are an argument in favor of placing these short stories into paraliterature. When we are admitting this idea we are referring to the fact that inspiration from reality and the reader's following meditation after finishing a short story belong to a philosophy of life, being two necessary components in a literature, meant to please and train, because beyond new ideas, the romanian appreciatesin art the moralizing meaning.

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Reality reflection and life reflection could be abstractly represented through a diagram with two axis uniting, similar to a trinket knot which has two strings, one red and one white, twisted together. Life and reality reflection are strongly bond together, they intertwine and the second reflection is the resulted effect of the first one. According to the diagram, each event on the reality axis, usually a common one inspired from real life, corresponds to a philosophical or moral significance on the life reflection axis.

In the first novel, *Gratitude*, an unfortunate event – failing an exam – gives the heroine a happy turn of events, meant to change her destiny: instead of being a worthless teacher in Romania she will be happy besides a wealthy husband in France. The idea of this lecture is that life is unpredictable. An unfortunate event could be the event which changes the course of a tragical history into an enviable destiny. Reflection imposes the idea that life must be accepted with *gratitude* for the events that occur, good or bad.

In the short story "Disc", the character Coca loves a man, but, ironically, she will marry another.

The novel "A simple man" contains a life lesson about treacherous love. Maricica wrongfully leaves George for another man, but his sincere love will determine him to forgive her and accept her for a second time as his wife, even though she carries a child that doesn't belong to him.

In "The second will", the theme is heritage. The love for wealth determine the Manta brothers to forge a second will in which the inheritors to be them, not the woman who took care of the old man. Obsessed with wealth, they have no remorse, they resort to lies, accusations, small talk to obtain profit. The treasure lovers act paltry and clownish with the others. They consider the others to be inferior and believe that the forgery of the second will, will never be discovered. The love for the money can transform a man – *this is the reflection from this story*.

The most important novel, which gives this volume it's title, "Fat and stupid", illustrates the idea that the atmosphere of a relationship is important. A good ambience triggers Felicia Dragoman the adulterer, the fat and stupid and Nelu, Lili's husband. Felicia solves Nelu's lack of affection from his wife, through adultery. The writer Rodica Ojog-Brașoveanu was obsessed with weight and despised stupidity, this short story being a reflection of the author's conception about despicable women, *fat and stupid*. Felicia Dragoman is part of the ugly women typology:

> She was a mignon woman, round, surpassing the limit between sexy and overweight. A wave of lasciviousness emanating from her whole being, along with the heat of her cheeks, gave the impression, at any hour, that she just left her bed. Her makeup was ugly, her sense of fashion was ridiculous – in all, ridiculous -, but, incontestably, she was vomitingfemininity. (Ojog-Brașoveanu, Rodica, 2000:69)

Felicia as the name suggests, is a happy person, but take note, happy in the company of men, an easy woman, ugly, hideous, crybaby, mentally unbalanced and comically presented by an all-knowing narrator:

> The bravest thing about Felicia seemed to be her insatiable appetite. She desperately ate everything, the stove was always working, in the house there

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was a permanent smell of food smell, the trash had to be taken out three times a day. (ibidem: 76)

Felicia the *fat and stupid*has no remorse for destroying a marriage if she feels happy after adulterating.

Love who you lay with is the next story in the *Fat and stupid* volume. This time we have a story about traitorous friends (Andreea) and never-fading love, despite of time and distance. (The love of Cătălin and Măriuca).

The seventh story is called *Party at the castle*. The motto "Nothing is sadder than the suffering in the eyes of the children, the tears in the eyes of the elders" (Anonymous) anticipates the sadness of Ghiocel, the bastard son, the ragged and dirty child his mom wanted to get rid of, the child who stays in the way of a new relationship.

The motto has a connection with the compassion for Ghiocel, transformed into the insignificant kid called Puricel. The anniversary of Ana Maria, classmate of Ghiocel is being held in a story-like environment in which she becomes the princess, the anniversary becomes for Puricel, a *party at the castle*. The fairytale-like atmosphere impresses Ghicoel who never had happy events in his life, with the "cake as big as grandmother's sewing wheel" (Ojog-Brașoveanu, Rodica, 2000:118). Ghiocel, born from his mother's imprudence, couldn't understand her mistake: "Puricel understood a single thing. Mom did something once, something bad, shameful, but he is guilty and they both were upset with him." (Ojog-Brașoveanu, Rodica, 2000:108). The nine years old boy, thin as a straw, fearful when his grandmother yelled, couldn't understand why his mom kept saying he is her nephew, not son. Poor Ghiocel is the child capable of sacrifice, quality that not many have, the child capable of supporting the punishment because he did a good deed, because he was being generous. He gave up on buying clothes to buy Ana Maria a doll. His soul is innocent, and his love is true, authentic.

A cruel reality in the communist period is camouflaged in the love story called *Romance*.

The novel *The Balcony* illustrates the lust for nightlife of the Negulescu family, which is actually a good projection of the couple Rodica and Cosma Brașoveanu. The character Gelu, like the writer's husband, Cosma, as he stated in his autobiographical interviews, detested the TV, because it was impeding the family communication:

> I will never understand how could she live her life in front of that awful TV! Most awesome mass-fooling instrument invented by man along the centuries. (Ojog-Brașoveanu, Rodica, 2000 : 146).

An original hag from the novel with the same title, has the aptitudes of the amateur detective Melania Lupu from the six crime novel volume series of the author. Amalia Pavelescu, woman over 30 years old, deals forged situations, complicated situations. She is a kind of Melania Lupu, or she looks like her twin sister. The method she uses to unmask the thieves is *intuition*, Melania Lupu's main method. The original thinking, the humor with which she treats grave situations like the situation in which the sympathetic *ruffians*framed her own death ordering her a casket and a crown, disarms: I will rent the casket, I have an

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idea, you will send the crown back to the flower shop and make good money out of it. It only changes the ribbon. (ibidem: 161).

The thieves cannot understand how *the hag* doesn't lose her wits even when the newspapers announced her demise, her being some sort of Melania Lupu, adventure-lover:

> She was in a good mood affable, you could say she liked adventures. Sile, left standing, gazed upon her, decentralized. Anyone else, even younger, would be deeply troubled when she was in the mood to party. (Ojog-Brașoveanu, Rodica, 2000 : 146).

Death, a macabre event like in the black humor novels from the Melania Lupu series, own death was even more sinister when it was framed by others, is seen as being humorous by *the hag*, which has no fears, which sees through the farce:

- You put together the framing. You've preached my death and silly me, went to see my own funeral. (ibidem)

Amalia Pavelescu harshly spoke to the thieves, she ordered them to cut the act because they weren't made for it and asks for the money without threatening to call the police: "- Come on, jackasses, put the money back rapidly and I'll forget it ever happened." (ibidem: 164)

Intuition helps her discover that one of the burglars is George, the orphan of the house. *Deduction* is the logical operation which helps her demonstrate the fact that the second thief is Sile, and both acted in a team. Same as in an investigation, to verify her *reasoning*, she tests the two thieves: Sile dials the right number while she dictated it wrong, so that the safe remained locked.

Sile, the character with the *calling of a crook* appreciate the *original hag* who had no fear, not even of death, the sympathy being likewise: "- Others would have died. The hag is badass" (ibidem: 151). In the end, the burglars manage to get into Amalia's grave through a love declaration which reveals the uniqueness of the character: "- You are gorgeous, miss Amalia, a countess! I haven't met anyone like you! I love you… What could we do to be forgiven? Order!" (ibidem). Like her predecessor, Melania Lupu, Mrs. Amalia Pavelescu empathizes with the thieves and gives them a life lesson laughing.

The novel "The Christmas gift" is the story of the marital triangle husband-wife-mistress. The triangle is formed by Cristian, Ramona and Carmen and it produces some plot twists right in the Christmas Eve. Cristian is the *evangelist* type who claims to adore his wife natural, without finery. Ramona is the subjected wife type, capable of sacrifice. Giving up on expensive jewelry which she pawns to buy her husband a gift is proof of her unconditioned love. Her husband offers her *infidelity* as gift, buying his mistress the jewelry his wife just pawned.

Love story is the story in which the story reveals an incontestable truth, enounced by AntoanetaMacarie, who cannot understand how an ugly, *fat and stupid* woman is successful with men, managing to destroy a family with ease:

> It's natural that a beautiful, young and smart woman to have luck in love and record progress, while, another, old, fat and stupid cannot have the same demands, being totally uncompetitive. (*ibidem*: 190)

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In *Love story* the narrator is getting mixed up with the author. *The story* has the aspect of a process realistically recorded, and the narrator is presenting itself as a crime novel writer, the obvious relationship between the biography, creation of the writer Rodica Ojog Brașoveanu and her novels genre, which lacks literature, expressivity, being inspired from reality and being categorized as paraliterature.

> As a crime-novel author, the friendly behavior of the dog towards the person, betraying *ipso facto* the intimacy level with his master, is long worn and I wouldn't have used it in a story or a crime novel. Here I'm only stating an authentic case, respecting its original data. (Ojog-Brașoveanu, Rodica, 2000: 193).

If in *Love story* the writer declares that in her work she used the technique of suspense, in the *Somewhere, in a station…* story which holds the idea of reincarnation, the author proves to be a mystery lover. Albert Mohl is a bizarre character, who finds his picture and name on a crypt, which attests his predeceasing existence. Daniela, the character from the first story, *Gratitude*, finds out of her disappearance, but finds out the empty casket. The mystery also exists in the end where all seems a fantastic, surreal happening, but what if it's the fruit of a delusional mind, the writer's?

In the story which calls herself tragical, *Fatality*, ironically, we can identify more comical sources. The colonel has a comical name: *Mărcuș-Scare-People.* The love between Mugurel and Dana is stormy, everything happens too fast, *burning through stages*, but their love won't resist. *The reflection of life* makes us understand that love is like a Procust's bed meaning that, if the partners won't adapt their demands after each other, the love will turn into ash, the love relationship will become ash and definitely the relationship will go from romance to a fatality.

A comical plot twist we also have in *Doppelganger*, an example of bad luck in love. The volume *Fat and stupid* ends in a mysterious way with the last story, *Mystery*, in which Lili cannot comprehend the reason why her lover from Zürich, with whom she perfectly reasoned, whom she met through a dating agency *Ecce homo!* left her without any explanation, enveloping everything in a shroud of mystery.

Conclusion

Rodica Ojog-Brașoveanu's stories inspired from the real life, are surprising. Each story has a lesson, a special signification. In the case of the short stories from the *Fat and stupid* volume, every novel indicates a pact between the author and lector, being a paraliterature story. This means that the author is writing a story which produces a reading hedonism, but it also means the story is about life, a story with lessons. The endorsed reader has to ponder over life in regards to the life-inspired lectures in which original women have the main role, even in the special hypostasis of *fat and stupid.* Women described in this volume are overweight, with an over-the-limit weight which gives them inferiority complexes, complex which the author had during the time she was writing the novels. The short story *Fat and stupid* is a demonstration of the fact that in literature, the author projected herself.

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