# *A NARRATIVE MAKESHIFT FOR THE IDENTITY OF THE NEWSPAPER*

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***Abstract:*** *The newspaper accounts for an important symbol of writing and creative power. In our opinion, it may convey the idea of an unconventional character offering a new shape to the story itself, becoming an essential element of the literary structure. It was provided with a sense of identity and quite a lot of traditional characters have been better reflected for the readers by memorable pages of gazettes. These artful qualities are present in literary Romanian masterworks and the newspapers are both real and fictional. This interaction is presented in Caragiale's, Rebreanu's and Marin Preda's chef d'oeuvres. The contribution highlights the fact that the pages daily read by the authors themselves or by the characters betray a particular consciousness on a fruity cultural background.*

***Keywords****: character, newspaper, geocriticism.*

It is empirically considered that the characters are mere phantasmagorias and certain elements with either fictional or reality based identity, but with a life trajectory more or less altered. The theoretical options have become more diverse and reading is enhanced by geocriticism, through countless possibilities of communicating imperceptibly not only with traditional characters, but also with certain components of the context the reader could ignore no long ago.

This paper aims to outline, by means of a revised portrait, several fictional features of the daily leaf, generically referred to as newspaper. It oscillates, in its literary pages, just like in real life, between the idyllic and sordid, between the solemn and caricatural, and between memorable and obscure. Just like any character, the publication has a distinct voice, a skillfully yet coherently orchestrated physiognomy, being complementary to the behavioral patterns of regular characters. The various modalities of expressivity, the developed narrative functions clarify the fact that it cannot always be read superficially as simple props, nor can it be narratively compromised by the unilateral and monovalent description. The publication, as a character, should be reread imaginatively. I noticed that certain writers dismounted used mechanism and subtly and innovatively recovered other forms of the newspaper, assimilating them to the character as a new pivot.

Selectively, the aim is also to comment such heterogeneous, yet complementary aspects, trying several still-frames of the literary uses of the eccentric character in the works of I. L. Caragiale, Liviu Rebreanu, Marin Preda.

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In the works of the first writer, the newspaper is a mentally ubiquitous slumdog. With the help of master Dumitrache (*O Noapte furtunoasă*) joins in to find out the cure of it when the *writing is profound*, setting the standard for stupidity, poor grammar and malign hypocrisy that dominates the universe of the writer's work. He is also an adjuvant of constraint for blackmailers such as Agamiță or Cațavencu in *O scrisoare pierdută*. *Răcnetul Carpaților* or any newspaper like element à la Caragiale reinforces, for the readers, the psychological features of the peevish, becoming an energetic core of comedy. Being touched by a serious language sclerosis, the newspaper is a synecdoche or even a twin brother of Mitică / Lache / Smotocea / Buddy X. The newspaper is a character in *fierce opposition*, because its print is infused with an illusory importance, arising straight from the lack of culture. Thus, it is a cellulosed replica of Leonida Condeescu, the hero of the sketch *O zi solemnă*. He is the only one aware and consistently able to raise Mizil, the weight center of ignorance during school, to the degree of importance sometimes hinted at in the class – that of county residence. But Mizil becomes, in a sort of coverage related to the magazine, the capital city of a carnival bucolic county where stupidity first appeared. The apotheotic Mizil is an original caption that epitomizes the comic character of a conceited moron. The imagined city is a project of geographic Aleph of Caragiale's Romania. At the same time, the newspaper is a humanized palimpsest of intellectual impotence, of time wasting, of dilettantism sharing tables with people in beer houses, transforming itself into a ticket of destiny at the Mardi Gras fair but also brutally sincerely recognizing rhetoricophobia. The same newspaper takes part insidiously to mundane events because it feels good when it manages to satisfy all the ladies beside Turturel the chronicler, imposing the solid convention of the frock or tail coat to the *ugly sex* (*High Life*). The newspaper is the vocable character that repeats himself, lisps, winces in neological squeaky platitudes, translating any other characters into a caricature and being always out of step with the famous syntagma *I'll be damned!*

Instead, the writer and reporter Caragiale plunges into the deep waters of journalistic landscape because he identified there a source of abyssal inspiration. The newspaper is the muse! Not only was Caragiale a reporter, he built his amazing fictional comic world starting from the crumbs of events depicted in the media at the time – this is Ioana Parvulescu's worthy opinion expressed in the well-documented and inciting book *Lumea ca ziar. A patra putere: Caragiale.* "Caragiale's formula, his poetic art, is the newspaper His comic work is written on newsprint and makes up a comprehensive magazine with all the defects of the time's media, collected together. These magazines are once more artistically deformed by Caragiale" (Pârvulescu, 2011: 17).

In Liviu Rebreanu's fiction, the daily publication falls into the trap of misanthropy, creating a gloomy and dispirited background character, an introvert who perfectly opposes the voluble buffoon. The writer himself was obviously interested in income, costs, debts, as one can notice in the pages of the *Journal*. "I went to *Cartea Românească* from where I took 10 000 lei"; "I am working upstairs again to save fire wood" (Rebreanu, 1984: 212). The accurate alignment of figures makes him see his fellows from the same perspective: Eugen Lovinescu's annual income of 30 000 lei (in gold!) impresses him more than the critic's genius and he appreciates that his financial independence allows him to stay away from compromises. Even the reading of newspaper is rarely referred to in the *Journal* and,



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unlike the mood of writing and of the weather, it falls into the category of leisure activities he regrets now as they keep him away from manuscripts and domestic chores from Valea Mare, which allow him to make a living and support his family.

Thus, it is no wonder that the newspaper becomes an embodiment of the acute indigence from the families of intellectuals from Ardeal. Teacher Zaharia Herdelea's enrichment is also embodied in the newspaper received following trial subscriptions, without paying anything. Furthermore, in agreement with the auxiliary role of the daily publications in the life of the novelist, numerous characters fail to read the newspapers, as mask-characters of patriotism (priest Belciug pays for the subscription, but only "to prove he is a good Romanian"), or of vanity (the notary from Jidovița doesn't read the newspapers he receives, but uses them to light the fire).

In another report with this fiction element we can find Titu Herdelea. The character is initially the pride and hope of his family to have a successful child who can concretely defend the cause of Ardeal, even the cause of unification, through specific intellectual activities. Later on, the reader discovers, on the contrary, a self-contained couch potato, an under-achiever who leaves school and gets lost in actions-excuses for his failure: he is a notary assistant, publishes easy poetry and goes to Bucharest for a future in politics and publishing, etc.

Had it had more consistency, the Titu character could have concretized the drama of the loser, providing reception pleasures by unveiling the illusions he feeds on. Unfortunately, he remains only a link between *Ion* and *Răscoala,* a mere image of Ardeal grafted in the Kingdom. Nonetheless, the newspaper/magazine should have been a constitutive part of him, playing a metonymic function. Beside the lack of profoundness, especially in the novel *Răscoala*, we can see that the character of Titu is strictly associated with names of publications which play a narrative function of "extra-help" (Toolan, 2006: 123). Between Titu and *Foaia Bistriței, Drapelul,* beside any other journalistic name, one can notice a folding, like in the field of advertising, to help the young man from Ardeal who enthusiastically left the warmth of his home where they would sing *Deșteaptă-te, române*, to serve as a quasi-credible witness in Arges County, on the mansion of Iuga. However, unlike the advertising field, the hero in Rebreanu's fiction fails to improve his status.

The articles he states he dreams of publishing are no longer the objects in themselves he refers to, but acquire a quality, an "associated condition" that can help us "obtain something else, felt as necessary" (Vestergaard, 1985: 29). This function doesn't work for young Herdelea, the character being paralyzed from a narrative perspective. The magazine that Titu once devoured in the notary's chambers, disappears as the peasants' movement was oppressed in 1907. In the trap of realism, the meaning vanishes, leaving only the skeleton of the significant:

Marin Preda places the newspaper, in his fictional universe, on a chimerical shelf. He transforms it, with the help of Ilie Moromete's "unchanged and unknown voice" (Preda, 1975: 112) into something that stands under the sign of imagination and seems to be unaware of the impossible. It is clearly an occasion to indulge the mind and a means by which the tutelary spirit-character tries out life and the infinite benefits of meditation. It is known that a newspaper is an object of "ultra-fast consumption" (Butor, 1979: 101), drowning into forgiveness as soon as the following one is printed. Almost no one thinks of



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denying this sad aspect of journalism, just like anyone would agree that the statement according to which a piece of art was understood is as confusing as the one that claims the comprehension of a man. In our opinion, we can meditate on an example that contradicts this poncif. Rememorating the period when the novel *Morometii* was created, Marin Preda admitted that he focused on the "drama of those peasants who couldn't leave a change without questioning the very significance of the world" (Preda, 1989: 241). The translator of this significance, the one that projects the meaning on the mind screen of the inhabitants from Siliștea-Gumești is Ilie Moromete. In this famous scene from the yard of Iocan's smithery, each Romanian knows since the first grades that they can identify the "universality" of certain "Socratic spirits rendered with the poison of speculation" (Simion, 1978: 420).

An undisputed intellectual leader, Ilie Moromete, confers many times, in the pages of *Dimineața* the horizontal dimension of the pages of a narrative. The agricultural congress becomes fiction and the force of this metamorphosis is typical for a work of art. The Congress is not necessarily a concrete event, a well-established fact, but rather a component of a mental plot with such a logical humor that it becomes distressing. Moromete doesn't read, but narrates his thinking. He feels absolutely free in this type of narration he lives, being disinterested by the outer truth and meditating on the review of the king's speech, such as Borges would do on an imaginary book. Reviewed in silence, in the usual comments or in the comments of critics, is the reading paragraph regarding the civil war in Spain and the tragedy of the city of Guernica. Moromete insists, in an expressionistic style, dilating the pains of wars and of memory by scolding explanations and gives color to the scene with a romantic's sentimentalism. At the end, just like a narrator, he is challenged to continue by the reader who reaches the end of the reading fast and considers the light of the fantasy core perpetual.

Sundays would be deprived of meaning without the readings that manage to control the frustrations of the gatherings. The yard is easily identified with a place of rencontre and telling, just like Sadoveanu's tavern, the space of Hephaestus – alias Iocan, being located at an alleys crossway. There, the newspaper becomes for Moromete a dynamic form of literature, from time to time.

Our intention is not to denature or impose a dangerous and generalized reflection on the newspaper, but to outline one aspect of it in Moromete's inquiring mind. He follows parliamentary debates and is specifically interested in Iorga, who had two brains, or waits for the news impatiently. But, above all, the hero loves to see things clearly, to become aware of his life and his fellow villagers – partners of dialogue. He is not interested in material aspects (bank, land tax), commercial ones (selling the vineyard) or the governmental strategies. He doesn't want to know exactly what rain did to the land lots. He takes all that into account or applies them routinely, as going to work the field, sitting at the table or talking to the tax collector – they seem self-understood and provide no pleasure. Moromete is happy when he sits on the porch, on the small bridge, in the clearing, giftedly inventing a peculiar narrative species, a chronicle of the thought on the illusions of reality. And, all this time he just gives the impression of reading the newspaper. This creative power can be seen in the piece of clay modeled by Din Vasilescu, a portrait of the true Moromete, the one who lives alone and free with the visions of his thoughts. *Fruntea prea mare (the*



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*over-large forehead)* has a vocation for unfolding an entire world and for stimulating the progression of ideas in view of creating a supra-individual and trans-temporal literalizing fabric. Above the door of the smithery, Moromete's effigy gives literature to life and not the other way around. The iconography always refers to the "image as something that needs to be interpreted and read" (Stoichiță, 2017: 253) – for Moromete, the newspaper is an allegory that allows him to follow an imaginary story first and then perceptible facts.

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