GHOSTLY, STRANGE AND TERRIFYING FANTASY – AN ANTHOLOGICAL PAGE OF ROMANIAN LITERATURE (GRIGORE ALEXANDRESCU)

Marius-Valeriu GRECU
University of Piteşti

Abstract: *After going on a trip to the Olt Valley with Ion Ghica in 1842, Grigore Alexandrescu approaches the theme of the ghostly apparition, which is frequent in Shakespeare and Ossian's works, bringing around the content of evocation as a motif of heroic meditation. The motion picture of the phantom, at night, culminates with the apparition from the abyss of a countless army.The fantastical creature's identification leads to hyperbolic commentary, the poem (Mircea's Shadow. At Cozia) ending with the return to the same visual images of the nocturnal description.*

Mircea's shadow creates a terrifying and odd atmosphere, implying a veritable cosmic splendour of the ghost's apparition.

The presence of the ghostly fantasy in the poem develops the aesthetic sense for somnambulism, sepulchral and fictional visions in Romanian literature.

Key words: *fantastic, magic, death.*

The trip taken to the monasteries in Olt were materialized by the poet in prose – ***Travel Memories*** - as well as in poetry- ***Mircea's Shadow. At Cozia***. The latter, written in 1842 and published in ***Propasirea*** is considered to be the most distinctive meditation of historical inspiration, gathering all the Romantic themes and motifs in general, and Romanian in particular. The author perceives night as being the perfect place for reverie, images that make the reader think about the scene of Hamlet's ghost's apparition, which has its origin in Ossian's poems.

In Ossianic fantasy, night in Alexandrescu's poems is the time for ghosts to appear, the moment when the relics from the past and the nature itself bring a scent of mistery and provide the dimensions of grandeur.

The first stanza impresses through its euphonic nature and reveals the place where moments of charm and magic occur.

The night, which emerges "from a cave, from precipise", encircles the whole nature and creates an atmosphere favourable to meditation, the way all the Romantic poets dream of. In Alexandrescu's poem, hallucination has also an artistic function, that of including and accompanying supernatural circumstances.

The magic of the moment is given by the chimeras who move down "from the edge, from the stone", the moss on the wall is shifting, comes to life, and a slight breath of wind is creeping around in the grass" which passes like a shiver through the veins"

The nightfall moment and the images suggested by the landscape rotations are created to emphasize the mistery of the instant: the crowned ghost's apparition, as an effect of the uncovering a tomb, culminating with the apparition of a countless army from the abyss, by the order of the great ghost

The supernatural phenomenon results in natural metamorphoses: "The river subsides its waters....mountains clear their peaks", the Olt river itself is personified and it is terrified. The moments of perplexity are those which shed light on the ghostly

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character's identity and then, in a grandiose "cosmic choir", the living nature (the Olt River, the hill) calls his name, echoed by waves and told to the Danube, whose high tide spreads it to the sea.

The natural nocturnal is highlighted by Mircea's ghost's apparition, which generates an odd and petrifying ambience. The meeting ceremony itself corresponds to the solemnity of the lyrical commentary, which is nothing else but a rhetorical confession whose oratorical incantation is very impressive.

"*Honour thee, old shadow! A respectful bow admit,*
From the sons of Romania, whom you showed a great esteem,
Gratitude we come to bring thee where lies your crypt;
Centuries which devour people thy name in regard they keep"

G. Călinescu used to say that Grigore Alexandrescu's poem is generally "similar to a white sheet, lacking the colour of metaphors", and what makes it remarkable is the lyricism of the verses.

The praise given to the great medieval pesonality who endeavoured "till the end of his life" to inspirit the Romanian people, is darkened by the cruelty of the unforgiving faith, which decided not to fulfil his dream that his name become inheritance of the freedom. In spite of this inconvenience, the deeds speak for themselves and they arouse interest in knowing the facts that impose his name to the descendants as being "legendary and immaculate".

The author does not forget to bring Mihai's name into relief, whose heroical deeds are unfolded by his wife from the grave she is resting in.

Connecting the past with the present, the poet expresses his scepticism about the descendants' capability to repeat such extraordinary achievements which took place during Mircea's time.

"*We look into your glory as we view old tools of war*
Once upon a time a giant in the fight with him he carried
And the weight is overwhelming our thoughts and thus
Doubt as to whether they were real to our minds is raised"

Alexandrescu analyses the past in correspondence with the history of philosophy and, in all honesty, he believes that the present has as characteristics different glorious acts: science and art, reasoning and peace which "find their own way to glory", as "war is a terrible scourge loved by Mr. Death/ and its bloody laurel trees people have to compensate"

Although the war was considered glorious in the past, we cannot forget the costs of lives people had to pay and this is the reason why modern people-"the laurel trees" - ceased it , discovering glory in concentating on understanding , taming of morality, unity and development of culture.

The penultimate stanza offers the image of the darkness reign, when fear and silence dominate the entire Universe, while "the shadow returns to the grave"

At the end of the meditation, Ossianic shadows and the ghost from the towers come back to the initial background, the poet succeeding in recreating the same ambience by repeating the same verses, fact which leads to the idea that fatality extends to the present and leaves its mark on the human beings' destiny in contrast with the eternity of nature. Not only the Psalmist is brought to mind by this reflection, but also the Pre-Romantics who were inspired by the Bible, as well as Young, the author of the poem entitled ***The Robbery*** or nocturnal thoughts about life, death and immortality, work known as ***Young's Nights*** (1742-1745), a meditation with melancholic tonalities, dominated by the motif of nothingness and the feeling that the fear of death gives,

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motifs which opened the way to the European Pre-Romanticism.

The inconsistent notes of meditation are: magnification and admonition, ode and satire all of them being together under the elegy of thought. The emotional state of poetry has two main ideas: one idea of actuality - the nightly natural picture, animated by the Lord's spirit appearance and that imposed an eerie and terrifying atmosphere; the second idea – secrecy, ideatic presentation, having as aim the praising of the past, and constrating the decayed present, unable to be praised.

Alexandrescu's meditation is an association of real and fantastic ideas, a romantic affection towards medieval courage and, at the same time, a sharing of the pacifistic ideas of the XVIIIth century.

Umbra lui Mircea. La Cozia, a national meditation in Alexandrescu's work, is impressive from the beginning through "the wonderful dramma technique the poet used some tricks – fictional dialogue, for instance. The enlightenment pragmatism is obvious, the poet praised the past for moralizing the present" (Mircea Scarlat)

In that epoch poetry was analyzed by Titu Maiorescu who noticed that the author used personification for "awakening the sensitive images"- fantasy; the critic had in mind the ideological content of the poetry, avoiding what he thought would be puzzeling in the content. (***O cercetare critică asupra Poeziei române de la 1867***).

In G. Calinescu's opinion, in ***Umbra lui Mircea. La Cozia*** the author reached "the work of art balance". The critic thought that the translation of Ossian's Baaur-Lormian could have been known by Gr.Alexandrescu because it was known in that period, even C Negruzzi had it, and he was the one that stimulated the poet.

Contrasting his contemporaries, G.Alexandrescu was a special case because he hadn't inspired from the national folklore and that was underlined by Ovid Densusianu himself: "he wasn't at all influenced by old national poetry or by something that belonged to our folklore and he was somehow hostile to country songs" (***Evoluția estetică a limbii române***).

He considered them as strange as „ raw inspirations": „If our literature, which had only some traditional ballads, chose raw inspirations of suffering and wilderness, it shouldn't be surprising it doesn't have a real masterpiece as a model" (in the preface of his poetry books in 1847)

The elucidation of the ghostly fantastic in ***Umbra lui Mircea. La Cozia*** initiated the fantastic, sepulchral aesthetic sense in Romanian literature.

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