The Religious Dimension of the Romanian Fantastic in the Works of Vasile Voiculescu and Victor Papilian

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La pensée magique se trouve à l'origine de toutes les religions, de tous les systèmes philosophiques, religieux et magiques, des sorcelleries et des superstitions populaires.
Vasile Voiculescu superpose le mythique et le magique, mélange les deux manières de pensée, de sorte que la présence totale de ces fusions donne naissance à des confusions. N'étant intéressé de la description du mythe, il offre des indices sur les mécanismes du psychique humain, comme expression de celui-ci. Le fantastique permet à Victor Papilian d'analyser les profondeurs de la conscience humaine, de construire l'atmosphère spécifique des obsessions et des expériences scientifiques des personnages. La première étape de l'écriture fantastique de Papilian est marquée par l'influence de Freud, fait que G. Călinescu définit dans ses nouvelles : « le religieux est mélangé d'érotique » [1].
Cette influence de la religion sur la littérature approche Papilian de la compréhension contemporaine de l'orthodoxie, sa création émane un spiritualisme intellectuel et Voiculescu emploie à succès les mythes autochtones du Christianisme primitif. Tous les deux des médecins, ils se sont abreuvé de la même conception intellectuelle (il y a aussi tout autre chose que de la matière dans l'univers) et ils ont donné libre cours à une vocation religieuse, dans la vie que dans la création. Victor Papilian a déployé une activité soutenue dans Frăţia Ortodoxă Română tandis que Vasile Voiculescu a été membre de Rugul Aprins et ilé a été adepte de la pratique de l'hésychasme, courant mystique du XIIIe siècle qui demandait comme but suprême de la vie spirituelle l'union de la pensée et du cœur. Dans le domaine de la littérature, la plus grande partie de leur création a été publiée dans la revue « Gândirea », tous les deux se situant comme adeptes de la droite traditionnaliste.

Mots-clés: *religion, littérature, fantastique, Voiculescu, Papilian.*

The "Fantastic" is a difficult concept, which, although addressed by many scholars over time, still does not enjoy a universally accepted definition. Numerous controversies opened around the concept and reflected the extreme fascination exerted by it, both for the transmitter (author) and for the receiver (reader, critic, literary historian).

[1] G. Călinescu, *Istoria literaturii române de la origini pînă în prezent*, Editura Minerva, Bucureşti, 1982, p. 928.

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The beginnings of fantasy literature are related to the very beginnings of literature itself: "We live in a desecrated society, but not debunk", said Mircea Eliade in his book *Myths, dreams and mysteries*[2].

Through this paper, *The (mythical) religious dimension of the Romanian fantastic in the works of Vasile Voiculescu and Victor Papilian*, we intend to study some works of the two writers rarely associated in the literary criticism, which gives us the advantage of operating on writings unaffected by irrevocable assessments. The theoretical approach is based on the capitalization of the suggestions offered by studies on the fantastic, belonging to some theorists like Roger Caillois, Tzvetan Todorov, Adrian Marino, Ion Biberi, Sergiu Pavel Dan etc. The theoretical research has opened new perspectives in identifying the typology of Voiculescu and Papilian's fantastic by comparing to patterns of Romanian and universal literature.

The literary fate of the two doctors-writers is surprisingly, both through development and through coincidences that reveal a deep connection between them, almost unnoticed by literary criticism. The seemingly paradoxical reviving of the critical reception of the work of Voiculescu by the call of the origins, throughout an intertextual reading, leads to new meanings of biographical, artistic and ontological "bridges" between the two writers.

The narrative text *Capul de zimbru* (*The Wisent Head*) is published by Vasile Voiculescu after 1945, after it was read to Cornelia and Dinu Pillat and sent, in 1947, in a competition of the magazine "Provincia" in Turnu Severin, where he earned the IIIrd prize and appeared together with the other awarded texts. President of the jury was Victor Papilian and *The Wisent Head* was a message to Victor Papilian himself, a message that contained a profession of faith and a will, which is entrusted to one of the few people who could understand and publish it.

Written between 1946 and 1954 and published in 1966, three years after his disappearance, the texts of Vasile Voiculescu were wellcomed by Romanian readers and literary criticism. They appear on the general background of changes on the poietic level of the universal literature of the XXth century, but especially in the Romanian space. If the writers of the time were trying to experiment with new trends in European and American literature, as for example multiplying narrative voices or metanovel, a type of writing that could reveal hidden meanings, Voiculescu's prose texts are downright unusual for this "time of declining traditional narrative form, rising removed patterns and not finding similarity in contemporary prose"[3]. He grows the fabulous of the folk tales and builds the magical, addressing a genre practically banned in Romania for almost two decades, as long as the authoritarian promotion of the socialist realism lasted.

Using the techniques of short prose writing and the ones of story within a story, Vasile Voiculescu rediscovers and exploits the narrative in a modern manner.

[2] V. Mircea Eliade, *Mituri, vise şi mistere*, Editura Univers Enciclopedic, Bucureşti, 1998, Colecţia „Historia religionum".

[3] Nicolae Manolescu, *Povestirile lui Vasile Voiculescu*, în „Luceafărul", 9 ianuarie 1971, p. 7.

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Resurrecting old patterns, the writer creates original narrative texts through this anachronism of topics, visions, techniques, expression of both moral and artistic solitude. The author seeks the simplicity of folk music adorned with picturesque and sensational archaic forms of life, whose remains are revealed. His narrativeness is the way to see human reality on a large screen, of the eternal and fantastic. Vasile Voiculescu chooses to fascinate his readers enveloping the stories in the supernatural and mysterious vein, that fantasy literature offered, and manages to bring this literary genre to the light.

In the general enthusiasm that took hold both on readers and critics, his prose was classified differently and inconsistently. Some have argued that his stories are all fantastic, others have denied this.

The novelty of Voiculescu's texts comes from this mélange between the fantastic topos developed from the miraculously space of the folklore, converted into symbols, practices and magic rituals, superstitions and traditions in paradigmatic, archetypal aspect and his narrative art, which, as seen by Vladimir Streinu, "gave Romanian short story another literary age".

Exploring the narrative universe of Vasile Voiculescu, leads us to the idea that the writer turned even since his first prose, *Capul de zimbru*, to the side of mystery, of unexplained things, to the secret world of ancestral traditions and beliefs. At the same time, the writer gives life to his obsession of inaccessibility, which means, in fact, the passage from nature to culture, from affectivity to intellectuality. The Creator is the one that will self-create, in the first place, self-configuring and at the same time, a privileged place in an universe in which the weather signs give the man a sense of symbolic and ontological stability.

In the epic work of Vasile Voiculescu, we can identify the fantastic as a reverse of the vulnerability of human nature, as a way out of the man from his tragic situation, of the undefined determinations, of the aspiration to freedom. His work involves an individual reading, as a neccessity of the spirit, equipped with a special reception substance of the fantastic-magical thinking. It was alleged that V. Voiculescu continues the line of the interbelic fantastic (traditionalist or canon), which includes the fabulous, the enchanting, the magical, the overlay of the profane world above the mythical, the sacred, the model beeing that of Eliade, a crossing fantastic similarly to the magical realism, thanks to the ambiguity real-fiction. Voiculescu's texts, even those placed in the immediate reality, present elements drawn from everyday life. Therefore, the writer must create a mean by which to complete the paraxial space, "the area where light rays appear to unite after refraction. The object and the image seem to collide, but in fact, any object or image is not there. This is where the fantastic exists, not entirely real-object nor wholly unreal-image, but it lies somewhere between the two"[4]. This filling of the space allows not only the relationship between reality and fantasy, but it creates a mean of breaking the barrier between them, by using different fantastic tools. The

[4] Sergiu Dan Pavel, *Feţele fantasticului. Delimitări, clasificări şi analize*, Piteşti, Editura Paralela 45, 2005, p. 19.

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writer outlines a scientific explanation of unusual happenings, that he tells without conviction, more as a reflection of his storytelling nature, inclining to admit the intervention of supernatural forces in the conduct of facts, making it appear the feeling of the fantastic, as a moment of hesitation (s. Tzvetan Todorov[5]). This is not just about the competition rational/miracle, that neither works in all his stories, but about the variety of subjects, and Vasile Voiculescu makes a show from the act of storytelling itself.

Often, the writer creates a character mask (lawyer, engineer, doctor), to be more credible, and the game goes so far, that the writer contradicts the narrator, accusing him of exaggerating or of inaccurate framing an accident.

In the works of Vasile Voiculescu the fantastic acts as a credible accident, whenever possible to allow the reader the possibility to accept the implausible. Scattered signs of the sacred, unorganized in a system, arise from time to time on the surface of unexpected happenings, without modifying them and they may go unnoticed by the reader. The opposition contemporary/archaic cancels itself during the events. All fantastic items are real from the outset, as in *Lostriţa*, where they are quite concrete and rational. Only when their movement in the narrative space induces a specific atmosphere that triggers ”the feeling of the fantastic” we can infer the latent capacity of these elements of the possible real to transgress into a possible fantastic. Cohabitation of the fantastic elements with the elements of reality is not new, but their mixture until dissolution is.

As the fantastic, the concept of myth knew in time many definitions and boundaries, but the only one that seems to capture the essence is that of Mircea Eliade: “The myth tells a sacred history, recounts an event that took place in a primordial time, during the fabulous time of the beginnings (...) The myth is thus always a story about a creation...”[6].

The main theme of these texts, that approached Voiculescu to Sadoveanu’s realistic vision, from the point of view of literary critics, namely the death of the magic world in the arms of rational civilization as well as the return to origins, is, in fact, the one that brings the mythical, the miraculous and suggests the existence of two levels: the mythical and the real, the sacred and the profane. His narratives illustrate how modern man can be assimilated to an originary timeless pattern from which the myth is born.

At Vasile Voiculescu the myth reflects the intrusion of the sacred in the profane, scattered signs of the sacred and the magical occur on the surface of unexpected happenings, without changes and even go unnoticed by the reader. The opposition contemporary/archaic cancels during the events. His imaginary constitutes on contradictory pairs of a substantial solidarity: modern/archaic, instinct/spirit. His imagery is done by archetypal symbols pertaining to the subconscious of the humanity, symbols with mythical meanings. The events, no matter how exciting and thrilling, disguise this central symbol that gives meaning

[5] Tzvetan Todorov, *Introducere în literatura fantastică*, Bucureşti, Editura Univers, 1973, p. 59.
[6] Mircea Eliade, *op. cit.*, p. 17.

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to each story.

All Voiculescu's stories are built around a myth essential for the collective consciousness of the represented topos: the myth of the mermaid, the myth of the totem animal (primary ancestor), the myth of the initiatic hunting that is invested with ontological meanings etc. Almost all events, initially trivial, then converted into events that change the destiny of the heroes, are happening in social and natural enviroments, frozen in times gone by, where the existence knows its own laws, embodied in a folk religion strongly influenced by archaic, pagan elements. In such spaces, the sacred extends into profane and past influences the present, as in the case of Amin. In the story *Pescarul Amin* (*Fisherman Amin*), the return of the character to his aquatic roots, to his totem-ancestor, involves many mythical meanings and is equivalent with the accession to essence. Amin is a marine archetype, maybe a human species extinct in biblical flood time, an amphibian-man.

Character's drama begins when the preserver asks Amin to dynamite the fish pond, in fact sacrilegious, to catch the codfish and expose it in Bucharest. Amin, through his mythical progeny is a defender of the ancestral peace, a protector of the magic events. To prevent disaster and to respect the primordial order, Amin succeeds to abide the ancient law, "do not touch the codfish", a guarantee for the wealth of the nation and for the healthy guardians of the aquatic world.

Many of the writings of V. Voiculescu express the eternal oscillation between myth and reality. The very essence of narrative creation is found in myths of folklore and religious origin. Voiculescu's prose was born in a pantheistic vision, in that the man is effective in nature, he submits to its rhythms, and if prevented to do it, he will struggle to retrieve it. The nostalgia of the origins urges him to seek permanent reintegration into eternity cosmos (*Ultimul Berevoi/The Last Berevoi*). The myth is converted by Voiculescu into symbol, into magic and religious reactions, into allegory or into rituals, that express the manifestations of an obscure, restless, changing life, corresponding to some spiritual areas, difficult to understand.

His mythical-religious short stories take place on the border between two worlds: the archaic, mythical par excellence, and the modern world, technicist, rationalist.

The intention is not to restore the mythical universe of forms and manifestations, but to delineate the area where the modern interferes with the archaic, places where the latter will be reawakened to life through knowledge and suitability, conditioned by the providing of the code.

The confusion between mythical and magical occurs at Voiculescu because the two ways of thinking appear in mixed forms. The writer is not concerned with providing a description of the myth that he designes, but with the way the human mind works, as an expression of it.

In *Şarpele Aliodor* (*The Serpent Aliodor*), for example, the epic is structured according to the archetypal symbol meanings, hidden behind the events through a

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subtle game of appearance and essence. Bivalent symbol, deciphered as such in the text, the genius of good and evil, protector spirit of the home, a sign of goodluck and of badluck in the same time, the serpent will update its evil valences, through the misinterpretation of its role.

Relying on this symbol, the writer inserts them into the daily life, making the plans interfere, to emerge the perennial meaning of existence. He creates a world placed in a mythical time and space – the archetypal village, in the absence of spatial and temporal determinations. The characters are archetypal presences. Distrustful of medical science, they resort to magical protection (spells, incantations, prayers) and reiterate an original behavior, making a return to archetypes.

To define the fantastic in the stories of V. Voiculescu by identifying themes and motives of universal fantasy literature becomes a difficult task, somewhat risky, because the identity of a literary genre can not be reducible to a thematical inventory, but also because the fantastic has much interference with other genres.

In *Şarpele Aliodor*, the reality is perceived in two ways: that of the scientist who explains the phenomenon as cancer and that of the villagers who think it is a snake that entered the woman's body. Reporting to the story involves reference to those represented by oral comunication, i.e. the two types of space, time: sacred space-sacred time and profane space-profane time.

In Vasile Voiculescu's prose we notice the almost constant presence of two spatial horizons defining for the archaic world that inhabits them: the mountain and the water in different poses. The space of his short stories is one of "fantastic migrations", of unmoving grounds dedicated to muteness, silence, which acquires the value of a sacred space. Cosmic matrix and vital factor, containing in itself the principle of universal creation and destruction, of good and evil, water has inspired the world literature, fertilized writers and poets' imagination, who have dedicated to it countless works, not infrequently in a fantastic register.

The hunting, the fishing and the aquatic space appear in stories with suggestive title - *Lostriţa*, *Pescarul Amin*, *Lacul rău* (*The Evil Lake*) - treating another myth essential for the work of the great writer, the totemic animal myth. In most stories the character regresses in time and space with mythical meanings through magical practices in order to meet their ancestors and to identify themselves inextricably.

The fantastic pattern of the waters haunted by the devil often correlates in folk legends about evil waters, where dwells the devil: *Moara lui Califăr* and *Copca Rădvanului* by Gala Galaction, *Lostriţa* and *Lacul Rău* by Vasile Voiculescu, *Diavolul bălţii* by Mihail Sadoveanu. Along with the heroes who face the evil forces of water evolve – as allies or adversaries – magicians, poses of mythical and magical thinking in archaic societies. Like the serpent, the fish is one of the fundamental symbols comprising opposing meanings. If in *Pescarul Amin* the fish symbolism is related to life, birth, rebirth, fertility, with positive archetypal value positive, in *Lostriţa* it has negative value, to which the power of feminine seduction is added. Like the devil, it is alluring and destructive at the same time.

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In many of Voiculescu's stories, the hero, be he fisherman, hunter, thief or wizzard, regresses in time and space, in an antique frame, in solitude, most often with the help of magic, in order to reunite with the animal-ancestor with which he identifies. The magical connections between humans and animals are opened in three ways: social, psychological and rhythmic and goes into the common ground of ancient human sensitivity and consciousness, through which the world is understood and explained otherwise than scientific. Restoring the archaic imaginary through magical practices brings retrogression of the modern in time and space – desecrated man, "affected" by civilization – it immerses him in the archaic stage of recountering with the animal-ancestor. The lowering in myth, as Dantesque descendence into hell is not without its dangers, because sometimes the character pays with his own life this attempt.

Şarpele Aliodor provides the first clear intention of the author to organize the narrative around an archetypal symbol – the serpent, the animal totem. Spontaneous communication between snake and child, the symbolic transfer between kingdoms updates the beneficial principle valence of the symbol. The mystery of communion between the two is full and inaccessible to others. The father's permission to keep the animal in the house, the mother reaction, a mixture of rage and superstitious fear, prepares the reader for intrigue, to gradually increase conflict to the climax, predicting the outcome. The plot puts us in the middle of superstition and magic, working on a pshychic tyrannically assaulted by obsession and troubled by the destructive power of imagination. The unnatural exacerbation of the fear of the woman, who, forced by others, finally accepts the snake, mediates the transfer from the real into the fantastic level of the narrative, a fantastic like a mythical-magical miraculous and superstitious. The two narrative levels interfere in an ambiguity in which the ambivalence of the serpent persists.

In contrast to the religious symbolism of the serpent as the embodiment of temptation, sin and cunning, in this story the serpent is the protector totem animal. The misrepresentation of its beneficial role as God of the house, spirit protector of the home, with the autosuggestion which offers him killer attributes, turns the serpent Aliodor into the victim of the people, after the woman herself became a victim of misunderstanding the symbol.

In *În mijlocul lupilor* (*Living with the wolves*), the aquatic space is replaced by huge coombes carved in stone by water and the black holes that opened in the walls of the banks give the impression of archaism and primitivism. "Luparul" dwells in this space – the wolfman, demonic creature, bizarre and lonely.

The wolf, in Romanian mythology, holds a special weight being present in many beliefs and superstitions. The wolf was created by the devil after a model of the dog created by God and therefore is an animal spiteful to man. From here it was understood as a messenger, a representative, and even metamorphosis of the devil.

Symbolically, the role of the wolf is obsolete: in some cultures it is positively valued as a symbol of light, the hero warrior, mythical ancestor, and in others its

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symbol has a demonic component – bad wolf – common to several European cultures since pre-Christian period.

As "Luparul"", the monk in *Schimnicul* is a lycanthrop, as he is talking to animals, but also because it is a mountain man. His desire is to isolate in a cave in the mountain, to fit in the same space horizon which feels that he belongs. Even if they live in the same space, between the readers and the characters the time obstacle interposes: some are people of the present, others are *illo tempore* people.

The writer Victor Papilian illustrates a singular event in Romanian literature, that of the personality that amazes through the complexity of his scientific, cultural and artistic concerns. As Vasile Voiculescu, he belongs to the generation of writers whose full recognition takes place posthumous. But unlike him, although his artistic vocation was recognized, according to many critics, the writer remained tributary to his scientific and teaching profession.

His evolution is one of tireless discovery and rediscovery by seeking the appropriate artistic formula to match both his professional and soul structure, through literary projects that have surprised readers and literary critics. Those have found lineages with Sadoveanu, Rebreanu, Cezar Petrescu and, through the epic expansions that explore the abysmal soul, he finds correspondences in Russian literature (Dostoevsky, Tolstoy, and Turgenev). Short prose brilliantly illustrates the qualities of a writer concerned with the soul divisions, the depths of being, but also with the behavior that outlines the road to knowledge of human consciousness.

The first phase of Papilian's fantasy writings is marked by romantic lyricism, but also by Freudianism, as G. Calinescu noted, that he considered to be the fundamental feature of his short story: "Victor Papilian's dostoivskienism is freudian like all sectarian psychosis, here the religious is mixed with the eroticism. The handling of the case is freudian and therefore his explanation."[7] On the observation of Călinescu, the character in *Obsesia*, Mihai Golgot, folds perfectly, where the writer is observing his character as a patient. Modern is to describe experiences from the clinical medical perspective with a note of fantastic freudism. But this feature has not grown steadily; it differs from one writing to another. *Signorina* is an allegory about the idea of transposing the superior qualities of art and Freud's theory is here brutally rejected, praising the idea of art as fiction and its role in liberating the soul.

If at Voiculescu imitation was a magic act, at Papilian is profane, an act of obsession, explained by the fact that this idea was fixed to the character from a story told in the *Simfonia Fantastică* (*Fantastic Symphony*) by Cezar Petrescu. The fixation, of which the priestess' child is suffering, in *Minunea Sfîntului Anton* (*The Wonder of St. Anton*), has medical explanation and its source is the suffered drama: the character killed his friend, Mihai. The feeling of guilt is experienced so intensely that takes the form of clinical manifestation, the child can not be cured but by a divine miracle. Miracle in the Christian view is met also in *Aici, rîul ne*

[7] G. Călinescu, *op. cit.*

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judecă (*In here, the river judges us*) where, starting with a raft downstream the river Siret, the protagonists are forced to make a detour, because in a certain place of the river the raft remained motionless, could not move forward. The raftman explains the young intellectual: "there, in the bottom of the river, is a monastery... and the waters protect it. That is why we call the place Mînăstircea and only sinless soul people can dare to go there".

There is a "gandirist" approach of religion in literature, but it brings Papilian closer to the contemporary vision of Orthodoxy, his creation beeing marked by a sort of intellectual spiritualism, while Vasile Voiculescu addresses to indigenous myths of primitive Christianity. In Papilian's prose, the religious feeling is intellectualized, so the volume is a concatenation of biblical parables and Christian legends that bring an infusion of pagan and heretical elements that question the Christian dogma, on a level of atypical generality.

Poveste (*Story*) subscribes to the parable species, in which the author, as in his novels, addresses vanity but he gives it an ironic touch suggested by the biblical frame of a test of a dialogue between man and divinity resulted with the defeat of the latter. God descends to earth as in Romanian folk tales. Rather than give in the *thought* exchange for *happiness* and *wisdom*, the human continues to explore the universe, driven by doubt. The Christian miracle is seen as a burden and a limitation of their own possibilities for the two Jews that started looking for Christ, who question the divine helplessness in *Poveste de Paşti* (*The Easter Story*). Doubt is the cause which determines their revenge on the crucified one. Thus, this book also discusses the same limits of Christian doctrine put in a Platonic dialogue or Socratic maieutics in the short story *Dialog*, where the wiseman Timagoras proffers: "Nailed on the cross, mocked by people, condemned by fate, with tormented death on his face. He may believe the son of God? No, Zadok! This man is a fool or a conceited one!"

The virtues of the poem *Cîntarea Cîntărilor* (*Song of the Songs*) are more orchestrated, and the lyrism is very pronounced. The volume is full of biblical parables, Christian legends, a kind of literaturized mysticism, a result of avoiding programmatic spiritualism and of replacing it by livresque allegory and parable. *Cîntarea cântărilor* is full of formal calligraphic arabesques which give an artificial feeling. Variations in the tone of the bride's monologue, from passionate love song to the pain of separation, to the news of the death in war of the lover and the happiness of finding him in memory, are accompanied by the choir backstage note like a lucid alter ego of the singer.

The principles of good and evil clash again in *Din minunile mai presus de fire* (*The wonders above the nature*), in which the moral remains Manichaean. Going on reverse logic, the writer gives favour to evil, who is sacrificing for the idea of good to remain triumphant, the transfer of substance being one of the essential features of Papilian's fantastic. *Cuviosul Atanasie* (*Venerable Athanasius*), the abbot of Vatopedi monastery, lives at one time an extraordinary experience: letting to be painted on one wall of the room the face of the Holly Vergin and on the other

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one that of the devil, he finds one day that the ornaments from the first wall were displaced on the other wall. Taking deliberate degradation by the devil to prevent looting and destruction of the heathen is a new thing, but searching the unusual, the atypical phenomena, is specific to this initial period.

Noteworthy in this volume is especially the one that gives title, *Sufletul lui Faust* (*Faust's soul*), which returns to the theme of Goethe's dilemma. For well-known character, faced with the choice, at the end of life, between hell, heaven or not-being, the appropriate option for his adneturous soul seems to be the alternative of hell, where one can always hope for more, while heaven is the ultimate place, beyond that there is nothing. The writer presents an original image of hell, not falling within any of the visions of the great religions of the world. Mephistopheles is the one that gives Doctor Faustus freedom of choice, proves him loyalty by demonstrating clearly the differences between them, and as for Father Athanasius, the Faustian pattern is associated with a reversal of values.

The two writers studied in this work had common concerns and created in the same spirit. Doctors by profession, they shared the conception of those intellectuals of the twentieth century and all previous centuries that in the universe there is something else besides material and consequently acted on their religious vocation, transmitted by parents and ancestors, primarily in personal life, secondly in literary works. Thus, Victor Papilian worked in the Romanian Orthodox Brotherhood and Vasile Voiculescu was a member of the group Burning Bush and a practitioner of Hesychasm. In literature, the most substantial part of their works appeared in the pages of the magazine *Gîndirea*, both writers being on the same traditionalist position, that in the terminology of Lucian Blaga, was "the right-wing" of *Gîndirea* magazine.

The manner of approaching the fantastic is, of course, specific to the personality and vocation of each of the two. The writer Victor Papilian scans, trying to understand and to order, the mystery that lies beyond matter. The divine manifestations that can not be touched, weighed, classified and included in formulas, exert on the one who wrote *Sufletul lui Faust* a boundless fascination, prompting him to meditate on the reality beyond the tangible substance.

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