SENSATION AND PERCEPTION IN THE NOVELS OF HORTENSIA PAPADAT-BENGESCU

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Abstract*: In her first writings, Hortensia Papadat Bengescu displayed heroines with an excessive sensibility, and later, in her novels, this sensibility is driven to the pathology; the lack of feminine components or the gender confusion identity leads to ruining the personality up to the inability of assuming or achieving the maternal spirit. With no vitality, They repress their erotic instincts or emotions and fall ill due to the efforts of hiding their libido. Love itself means only one person's ability to preoccupy another person's spirit. Snob, fanatic, androgynous, adulterine, narcissistic, hysterical, the model woman, the inhibited woman, the jealous, they all suffer of an erotic and social frustration. Aristocrats or just privileged, biopsychological predestined, the heroines end up in decline, their filiations do no not overrun two generations. They are shut down both to the outer world and to the inner world, either in the spirit of a modern erotic behaviour that is not matrimonially consecrated, or in the spirit of an institutionalized love, anchored in a seduction game that looks more like a war of sexes. The fine reproduction through psychoanalysis of the liminary conditions between sensations and emotions confers fiction an exaggerated erotic subjectivity, as a configuration of the feminine soul mystery.*

Keywords*: sensation, emotion, perception, degeneration, libido spirit.*

Hortensia Papadat-Bengescu is our first author descending deep down inside the subconscient, psychoanalysis, correlating the effets visible on the human soul and the hidden processes of the physiological layer, combining the imagination and observation strictness of a clinician, creating the paradox of 'objective subjectivity' in her novels.
Her psychological analyzing finesss and the discovery of mystery covering our soul and body sincronise her with the European and universal literathre, especially with Virginia Wolf, Marcel Proust and James Joyce.

In 'Arta prozatorilor români', Tudor Vianu notices the writer's dubling of clinician: 'who knows that any body pain is also a soul's disease, a concept of moral dissolution, followed pitilessnessly, objectively and precisely'. (Tudor Vianu, 1986: 141-142).

A new perception brought to the literature by reputed novels is represented by the syntagm 'spiritual bogy', an interdependence relation between the biological element and the spirit. Therefore, the characters' complex self may be touchable as material substance of bodies.

The entire prose of Hortensia represents a long confession of a 'woman in front of the mirror', a sincere testimonial beginning with the first volumes' subjectivity where she is using the 1st person, the direct confession and then passes to objectivity impregnated in the 2nd stage novels: The Hallips' Cycle.

Thus, as she stated: the need of being unrecognizable allows me to change my style, to find what is mine with no limits, the pleasure to speak freely under the mask'. (Hortensia Papadat-Bengescu, 1937: 5-7) 'But now, even when I am writing at the 3rd

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person, is like a previous operation: when I am composing introductively in order to say well what I have to say, I need to talk to someone real or fictive, to incorporate, to say I…You…'(M. Bordeianu, Gr. Botez, I. Lăzărescu, Dan Mănucă and Al. Teodorescu, 1966: 36).

Influenced by Proust, Hortensia intercepts the confession as meditative condition in the first part of her creation which focuses on subjectivity, her entrance being the novel 'Ape adanci' in 1919, an evocations series wherewith the composition procedures alternate due to the epistolary style – found letters including the testimonials of four women: Madame Ledru, Mamina, Miss Mary and the storyteller itself. Given the Proust methods, the meditation condition to 'stange' is reflected, the livresc and nocturne are encountered, underlying various themes and symbols directing the inner discourse. Physchoanalytically, the sea's symbol is underlined due to its correspondence: water, horizon, loneliness. There is a trio of feminine states, especially the ecocentrism proved even by the writer, maintaining the ideal due to Lilia, a very exacerbated sensitive character.

The confession leads to journal, using the Myth of the Flyer within her letters. As narrative technique, the author uses the dissimulation in order to be exempted from the confession's 'sin', allowing the digression on a much more freely tone, on 'adventurous' spirit for the respective age.

The confession from the letters is obvious in 'Lui Don Juan, in eternitate ii scria Bianca Porporata' where we are provided with more explicit details about the woman's sensuality, the erotic connections which they may have, transposed in written, retaking the Luceafarul.

Nicolae Iorga states: 'It is difficult to find a reader who may come inside the pages of 'Lui Don Juan, in eternitate ii scria Bianca Porporata'; donna Bianca, donna Frosina and Catalunia's king are not enough to explain the mystery'. (Nicolae Iorga,1934:302)

Euphoric is the erotic enigma within the work 'Pe cina a iubit, Alisia?' A complex, exultant and dangerous crisis: 'the sunrise was imbiding her, she was melting under the sun and the moon was covering her as a dead body' but 'bitten by a veninous neddle, poisoned to her bones'. The ambiguity belongs to the human being and the poetry. The illing corporality theme, the death's spectrum and the death itself are obsessing. The birdy soul of the dead Flamina floats fantasmatically (A bird). The desire is an anthem designed to the forest and the human's mystery. Adriana is living the loneliness' drama as well as the heroines of Sadoveanu, as Nora of Ibsen. Her Bovarism goes hand in hand with the art's nostalgia, the broken psychic between reality and fiction. Aida is imagined and her venerator, an instrumental lombrosian hated by her is Radamantes. The white of the sanatory where it is reading the Samain's lyrics and the love of Sergiu (doctor) lead to healing. The sportler Mary is passing in Mamina's story by effortless assays to death.

This woman's writing is extremely delicate, it has 'viril' notes, as stated by E. Lovinescu, by intellectualism, visual spirituality, (self)referentiality, noticing precision of 'femnin soul' and of 'others' soul'. In 'Femei intre ele', the author-narator is using various observations on her literary perspective, such as: 'The study of woman has always seemed much more interesting than of the man, as the for men, you are making the actions' tour and the facts are rarely too interesting while the woman has a heavy spiritual luggage, in search

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of which you may leave in and adventurous full of surprises search'. (Hortensia Papadat-Bengescu, 1972: 88).

In 'Femei', she is creating a hidden 'investigation' implying the eye's motif, the eyes-symbol of intellectual perception, inner analysis, reflection – various hypotheses of feminality: Miss Mary, a young woman with no worries, modern, occupied by the coming-out and tennis, Madame Ledru is Swiss, the widow of a Romanian man, having no children, with a sad unknown story, elder than Madame M, having gray hair, the Romanian wife of a Belgian, grandmother but with beautiful lines and delicate gesture. The woman reciting at the 1st person singular seems still young, between Miss Mary and Madame Ledru. Nicolae Manolescu compares 'Femei' and 'Femeia în fața oglinzii' to 'Marea' and 'Lui Don Juan…': 'if the heroine of Marii or Bianca Porporata tips the balance of self-soul extereriorization assay, Madame M or Manuela, the world interiorization passes on the first line'. (Nicolae Manolescu, 1981: 14).

The novel 'Femeia în fața oglinzii' has the mirror as main symbol, directing the psyschological material by the main character, Manuela, a illing sensitivity young woman, representing the feminine deep self and her sister, Alina, the pragmatic self as antithesis. Focused on Manuela's meditation, her states, her imagined lived visions, the novel is revealing the citadine, the city becomes a character swallowing up the other characters in the fight for fortune. Hortensia Papadat-Bengescu is writing a citadine literature which states the social and moral conflicts of great cities, where the Burgeoisie satisfied by the preservation of inherited fortunes and the control of social prestige at modern rendez-vous is found. The new feminism introduced by Hortensia Papadat-Bengescu starts a new true interbelic assault. The modern-synchronic critique of E. Lovinescu is firstly reserved. While the feminine writing is maturizing by seen, it shalle recognize the feminality as literary phenomenon. By the so-called 'feminism of difference' […] Eugen Ionescu is charing and Camil Petrescu is stating the true reality.[1]

About Hortensia Papadat-Bengescu, moderated by the gender differences, we may say that she is the difference itself as well as Susan Howe. Theoretically and incidentally, she has a 'feminist' plea exceeded in her literature: 'I am nothing but a humble artisan of the soul by word. The poets and the artists are not fighters by their nature (…) In any fight and not the one that the woman across the world, closer to our soul, the Romanian woman is claiming her right ti the social life, they are not militant elements. They may accompany by their fighting spirit of combative sisters as they all shall share the victory. What is the

[1] Eugen Ionescu: 'We have no young writers, But we have girls, girls only, girls schools, interiority, loving, students. Go ahead, girls! Make culture and kitchen! And this is how the kitchen became cultural parlour: Eradstia Peretz, Anișoara Odeanu, Lucia Demetrius Yvonne Rossignon, Sidonia Drăguşanu, Marta Rădulescu, Coca Farago, Elena Eftimiu etc. etc." (*Generaţia fetelor*, in *Viaţa literară*, X, nr. 2, 1935). Camil Petrescu: „That is why they are the literature support in the whole world, in the Anglo-Saxon countries they became glorious by writing arts (…) Sincerely speaking, we have to admit that these women together with Brontë sisters, George Eliot before, Virginia Woolf, Katherine, Masfield, M. Kennedy, Rosamonde Lehman, Pearl Buck, Mary Webb, Anita Loos, this American more recent understand to compete with several men specialized on police novels or sentimental parts, all giving the impression that they have something to say'(*Notă despre romanul feminin*, in *Revista Fundaţiilor Regale*, an. IV, nr. 2, 1937, p. 400.

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feminism? It is the mystery of a veil. A veil covering the woman for may ages, hiding the light of social realities. Nevertheless, the Bible left the 'first woman' uncovered to the world as well as her 'mate' (Sburătorul, 1920: no. 38) *Exempli gratia*.

A comparison of Colette and Hortensia Papadat-Bengescu is 'possible' regarding the feminity in literature. Mircea Anghelescu suggested this expertise indicating that no kinship or influence is considered but 'some features which a carefull comparative lecture (…) might reveal them, reaching to the understanding point of Hortensia Papadat-Bengescu's writing on large perspective and inner structur'. […] 'Fecioare despletite' opens the Hallips' Cycle, the second Romanian cycle following the Comanesti of Duiliu Zamfirescu. It is an experimental novel based on the theories of Sigmund Freud according to the auditory's allegations. The novel is strongly connected to the other volumes within the cycle, id est: 'Concert din muzica de Bach', 'Drumul ascuns' and 'Rădăcini'. Mini, the reflecting character, is friend of other characters, visiting gradually the house of Hallipas and studying the relations between characters and their changes.

Psychologically, the characters' analysis is deep and the exacerbated greatness of their souls is revealed only to Hortensia Papadat- Bengescu.

Mini's visit to Prundeni domain at Doru Hallipa's family makes her noticing the disputes between the spouses, Doru and Lenora because of the daughter original from another matrimony. Mika-Le, their daughter, represents the double dispute reason. Firstly, she represents Leonora's remorse reason as she cheated on her husband and secondly she is immoral and unscrupulous as she destroyed the engagement of her step-sister and prince Maxentiu. Therefore, the separation of the spouses comes forth, the relation becomes placid and finally she is hospitalized at Walter sanatory. The other daughter, Elena, shall accept the arranged matrimony with George Drăgănescu, a very wealthy man but of modest social origin. Once with all these changes in Hallips' life, the citadine appears. The rural shall be abandoned while life in Bucharest shall come forth. Mini, our reflector, shall underline the stufy of urban burgeoise families. The novels focuse on the social environment vision and the family by introducing the most intime zones of human individuality, the modern techniques are revelead by analysis of life and characters without focusing on narration, the prose evolution from subject to object through the combination of aspects on the human soul surface and the hidden processes of physiological deeptness, a paradox of objective subjectivity followed by the auther in her novels. The writing's maturity of Hortensia Papadat-Bengescu is precise and proved by Hallipa cycle and the novels are objective as compared to the first writings where the subjectivity was the main element and the characters are shaped by her eyes, revealing all good and bad parts of each one of them by soul profound analysis.

The feminism hypostases within the novels are diversified and that is why the discovery of each one of them to the soul is very difficult but pleasant since the mystery and sensuality covering them are waiting to be revealed.

Adriana, the character of 'Romanul Adrianei' prefigures the feminine characters of Hallipa cycle, characters such as Leonora and Elena. As theme of 'Romanul Adrianei', Adriana gets sick of meningitis and is hospitalized, falling in love with her doctor as well as in 'Fecioarele despletite'. The epic line is continued by 'Drumul ascuns'. Another motif would be the art, the music a great passion of Adriana and Elena.

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Mini's premonitions become reality when Mika-Le tries to seduce Maxentiu, her sister's finace, reason for which the relation shall be destroyed. It causes the depression, being sent to reform school where she losses the sensuality and feminity. She does not take part to her sister Elena's wedding. After deep conscious processes, Leonora reveals the secret of existence to Mika-Le, that she is a child born from an outside marriage relation. Doru and Leonora break up and she is hospitalized to doctor Walter's clinics in Wien. Subsequently, she shall marry him. Mini is the witness and reflector of events, stating the dissolution of the family previously united by the rural life. Now, Hallipas is lost in the great city's obscurity.

In Romanian literature, Hortensia Papadat-Bengescu is seen as the pioneer of extreme feminine typology creation: from lesbian or 'girl-boy' to the woman leading fiercely her own business (own property). As noticed, the writer tries to create a more authentic representation of self-identity by the careful recording of conflicts between different feminine types.

The feminty is seen mainly by means of its relation with the masculinity (conflictual relation expressing the complementarity). The conclusion is that the feminine ideal of submitted woman avoiding the open conflicts is contemporarily inopportune as it reduces drastically the woman's chances to real or symbolic independence in front of the man, family and society. The independent women are much more skilful and they know the efficiency of conflits resolution where they are part of. The psychological novel is not distinguished in the classic typology by the physiological perfectness myth but by the physiological fervour. For the modern novel's character, the fragment, the detail and the vertebra decide the general physiognomy. The psychological component of each character results from the decomposition operation which shall become a perfectly natural phenomenon in the other novels.

'Concert de muzica de Bach' published in 1927 is considered an architectural myth introducing in time the Romanian novel in the arts modern categories, representing Hortensia's prose masterpiece, having another narrative perspective as compared to 'Fecioare despletite'. The role of the reflecting character is replaced by Nory, Mini's friend. The novel has musical valences, a complex and overwhelming masterpiece of author's writing. Thus, the action takes place in musicale always postponed by various reasons. When it takes place, the concert is led by the reputed musician Victor Marcian which shall get the attention of the entire modern world of the capital city. It follows the conflicts and tragedies of three keen families: Rim, Maxentiu and Draganescu.

The matrimony of Draganescu is destroyed as Elena falls in love with Marcian, leaving together abroad, admiring him for his musical skills. Doctor Rim shall have incentuous relations with Sia, her wife Lina's daughter from an outermatrimony relation with Lica Trubadurul who shall become the riding teacher of Maxentiu's wife, Ada Razu, a wealthy burgeoise who inherited her father's fortune. She became Lica's mistress while her husband Maxentiu is dying from deadly lungs disease. He shall be sent abroad where he dies in a sanatory. Sia, suffering from mental problems, shall die because of an unsuccessful abortion and all members shall gather at her funeral not to grieve her, but to verify their prestige in society, as they were afraid not to loose it because of the poor bastard's death, as the girl had a clandestine life.

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By this novel, we may see that the accent is put on more omniscient perspective and role changing technique, taken by Carl Gustav Jung and other ideologists of modern psychoanalysis. The creator is using the organisation of an ambitious concert as motif, in a vanitous society in order to defigure the pretiosity, dismantling stept by step the human structures and discovering the social and psychological authentic structures. It had an apparent reality structure once with the two characters which want to be 'high class ladies' but are only parvenues: Elena of Hallipas got married to Draganescu, an industrial man to get his fortune and the other one, a previous flour maker, got married to Prince Maxentiu only for his title. Elena organises the concert 'Bach concert' in order to bring the modern world to her house and Ada does not get out of home without a husband as her status was null without him. Moreover, the ladies supporting the 'modern' attitude of extraconjugal life: Elena is always looking for Marcian and Ada brings Lica as lover in his own house. Therefore, we can see the feminine structure of desolant environment between the physicial and psychological structure.

Hortensia Papadat-Bengescu is using the narration technique and the analysis but also the commentary and the external omniscient description, impersonal perspective. The procedures of Doric roman interfere with those of the Ionic roman, thus the psychological analysis and facts exposure is made by the external opinion of omniscient narrator. Nicolae Manolescu considers that the mixture of old and new practices reflects an unsecure conscience bu it is also an expressing means of a particular psychological and social mechanism. In this novel, the author has not ignored an old impressionist practice – the music. The concert makes us think to structure.

The novel is by excellency a novel of inner side: 'close cercle which you cannot excape from'. It ends by the funerary choire sounds. The parlour, territory of unforeseen revelations, has an immediate complement – the sanatory – where the novel moves finally in 'Drum ascuns'.

'Drum ascuns' knows the 1932 pattern and presents the characters of the previous novel. Leonora breaks up with Doru Hallipa to marry doctor Walter, Ada forces to shape a decent image of Lica in the Capital's world. Doctor Walter and Leonora's daughter, Coca-Aimee become the main characters. A soul's psychology delicately described in the novel's pages is revealed – empty characters for quick fortune and social rise. Walter, exceptional but poor student, accepted to become the lover of an old millionaire Jew, Salema Efraim whose fortune and Borodin Palace he shall inherit, transformed by Water in a luxurious hospital for mental illness of rich.

Accepting this compromise for money, Walter shall be digusted physically by any woman and he shall evolute to frigidity. Leonora who lives a separate life from her husband, gets ill of cancer and before her death, she convinces Walter to marry her daughter, Coca-Aimee, a rebel, cold and stocking child, raised at an abroad pension. Her dream is to have a wonderful marriage which might bring her the quick wealty life and entry in the high society. Feeling isolated, she invites her friend Hilda at her home, but she shall leave quickly as Coca-Aimee saw Water falling in love with her, unbore the thought and kicked her out.

She shall marry immediately Water after her mother's death. The bastard Mika-Le, living at Draganescu, annoys her sister since she is the bone of contention, revealing the

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relationship of her sister and Marcian to Draganescu. Consequently, he suffers a heart stroke and is moved to Water's sanatory where he shall die after the stroke. His death forces Elena to return inland for furnerals.

The techniques used by the auther are: inner voices, introspection lacking power in front of perspectives, becomes objective, the inner experiences are externalized. We may talk about a conjugal trio Leonora-Walter-Coca-Aimee. Leonora and Walter are living in the Sanatory together with Coca-Aimee. Leonora becomes shy, lifeless, practically an imaginary ill person. Similarly, the place where they are living, the sanatory is designed to imaginary ill people. The illness is no longer presented from the illed woman's vision, but by exteriority. Therefore, the Proust motif of the novel consist in shaping the snobbish climate with all its elements: artificiality, perversion, illness. 'Drumul ascuns' is a psychological novel, the novel of discourse by memories.

In 'Rădăcini', Elena returns from abroad, marries Marcian, a couple separating because of misunderstandings. Elena tries to reintegrate herself to the ranch, property abandoned by her which now seems a spiritual oasis. She is accompanied by her child of the first marriage, Ghinghi, a fragive and nervouse child, at Prundeni in order to offer his education.

A mental disorder is generated when the child suicide and Elena loses her powerful woman charm, pillar of modern society. On the other hand, Aneta Pascu is analysed, a teenager running to the Capital city for academic studies who was not attending the classes but suffering and submitting to the worst prevations of absurd desire to leave in Bucharest. Her mental condition worsens once with the increase of difficulties. She gets wounded and cared by doctor Caro, a friend of Nory who shall help her return home.

The last novel concluding Hallipa cycle is 'Străina' which got lost before publishing. Its action continues the other previous novels where Hallipa's character such as Coca-Aimee, wife of the step-father, may be vaguely recreated based on a few fragments found in various literary magazines of the age. The destinies of many characters shall end now: doctor Walter suicides by trying a poison whose antidote was not identified, Marcian dies as well while some new characters make entrance, Ina (the stranger), Lucian, etc.

All characters do not excel at types creation, even if there is the objectiveness tendency, they are autonomous: Lenora, Elena Drăgănescu, Mika-Le, Coca-Aimee, Lina, Ada Razu, teacher Rim, doctor Walter, Lica the Troubadour, Doru Hallipa, etc. The author is interested in the inner states, the moral processes, the feelings and the sensatiobs, the nevroses rather than the typology. Each character becomes interesting and complex due to a shameful secrete eating and breaking it inside (the paternity secrete of Mika-Le belonging to Lenora, Sia's birth to Lina). The hidden secretes disturb and destroy the relations between parents and children: both character, Lenora and Lina abandon their daughters 'the past's shameful shadow' in critical moments of their lives, contributing to the moral degradation and death.

The inner 'morbus' is accompanied by disease in case of most characters. They are suffering from illness: Lenora is mentally disordered and her death is preceeded by cervix cancer, Drăgănescu suffers from heart disease and ends in Walter's sanatory, Prince Maxentiu dies after phtisia, Hallipa twins are retarded and Sia is not mentally normal. Ana ends after ulcerus and Aneta Pascu seems schizophreniac. Similarly, our auther does not

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deal with the disease description or clinical file of each patient, as a doctor might say, but she focuses on the spiritual soul effects generated by them to most characters. Morbidity dominates the characters, causes remorses, guilty complexes.

The action is extremely complicated as the characters' life is unorganised, the individuals have no future plans, not a current thought, are and shall stay in the past's shadow. All their actions, even successful, are covered by nothingness and are destroyed by their thoughts or fear to take the right decision, to face life itself. Thus, out author's characters are led to their existence distress. The heroes' plans shall not materialize, their fighting being useless.

The writing art of our proser is not revealed by action, conflict or intrigue, but by focusing on situations and ordinary states, we may say. By the outside marriage passions described on the novels pages, by jealousy and soul emptiness of some characters, Hortensia Papadat-Bengescu shapes the evolution depending the tempers and characters of her heroes.

In all four novels, the characters' actions lead to a 'feeling' study forming the book's nucleus. We are talking about love in all forms, all efforts to find the right social pair, a large variety of couples in 'Concert de muzica de Bach', the freeing feeling of erotically started complexes, harmony achievement and inner balance resulting into social adaptation. We may see this in 'Drumul ascuns'. The jealousy is monographycally seens, in 'Rădăcini' the hidden maternity is seen, resulting into shame and guilty of Lenora and Lina within the novel 'Fecioare despletite'. Thus, the novelist focuses each novel on a prevailing feeling, with a sensations series and then follows carefully the actions and reactions generated to different individuals both socially and behaviourly.

Hortensia Papadat-Bengescu has a synchronisation between sensations and wealth, the phase dillatiation. The procedure reminds us of the ingenious and complicated analysis of Proust laying on various paragraphs, sometimes of full pages. Tudor Vianu quotes the page expressing Mini's opinion of Rims, an aridity sensation as well as the strange compensatory need and comments it as proof of Bengescian phrasing: 'From one impression, some large developments are revealed, with variation on the same sensations, descending in the subconscious shadow, increasing to the general reflection by continuous musical styling where each phrase returns to initial state, so that the whole does not leave impression of horizontal advance but a deptness and potentiation. The successive wheels of spindle return to the same place but lower so that the entire stylistic process resembles to a deptness racking'.

Our author is remembered as an opening of new road to new literature and new perception on feminism, typology and psychology of pure soul.

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