"I WALK THE HELLHOUND" *THE NOVEL OF TRAVELS. UNPUBLISHED DIARY III BY MARIN SORESCU*[1]

***Abstract**: Following Titu Maiorescu's steps, the proponent and the creator of a "telegraphic diary", made up of "abridged, precise and useful annotations", Marin Sorescu declares himself the adept of a "noncontemplative and nonbookish" diary, refusing to appeal to "erudition, aphorisms and metaphors".*

Interested by the diary "as a document and as authenticity", by the diary as "a covering letter", Marin Sorescu writes a diary in which the traveller communicates the impressions accumulated during travels directly, in which creative fiction gives place to direct notation.

***Keywords**: diary, travel impressions, covering letter.*

I am working at a traveling book which will be called "I Walk the Hellhound". The hound which walks me out in the world is poetry (Sorescu, 2008: 5).

This note proves once more, if necessary, that, Marin Sorescu is not interested by "the diary which becomes literature. It's one or another … I like literature separately. The diary interests me as I said, as a document and as authenticity" (Sorescu, 1999:8).

Preoccupied permanently by what a diary should or must be, Marin Sorescu confesses that he will write "a noncontemplative and nonbookish diary, in which I will not indulge to erudition, aphorisms and metaphors" (Sorescu, 1999:203).

As far back as the publication of his first volume of the travel book (1999) one can feel the poet indecision when he titles it *Diary,* he subtitles it *The Novel of Travels* and, driven by the wish to enlighten himself and to enlighten us, he adds *something like the diary and the novel.*

Marin Sorescu's indecision originates from the fact that the diary, this species in prose, situated at the confines between literary history and fiction, cautiously defined by Eugen Simion as "a contract of the author with himself, a confidentiality contract or pact which, if not destroyed in time becomes public and forces the gates of literature" (Simion, 2001: 18), is appreciated differently by those interested by subjective literature, either theoretically, defining its principles, or practically, as authors of diaries.

In the preface entitled *A Diary in the Rain: Generalities* which precedes the volume from 1999 Marin Sorescu proves that he is aware of the opinions of other authors of diaries but he does not agree with all.

If the diary of Galaction produced him *a certain disillusionment*, if the diary *indirect novel* practised by Mircea Eliade *does an enormous service to Romanian culture,* if he finds Liviu Rebreanu *also interesting in his domestic, daily, human condition,* if he shows himself interested by Tolstoi's diary which he considers *a masterpiece,* Marin Sorescu declares himself unconditionally an adept of Titu Maiorescu's diary, a telegraphic diary, which registers *temperature, telegrams, date times, the names of those he dined with, courses,* because all these "unessential things create the colossal noise of a debris-slide: a strong feeling of life, of truth and of motion" (Sorescu, 1999:8).

And there, Marin Sorescu declares himself the adept of the diary as a *covering letter,* meant to directly communicate his travel impressions but, unlike other authors of diaries, he is reserved in his confessions: "The writer cannot be exact in his diary, first of all due to his family and secondly, because of the railwaystation employees. The

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wives are curious like some railway station employees, the railwaystation employees like a wife" (Sorescu, 1999:7).

Preoccupied permanently to find an unprecedented formula of the diary, the author of the volume of parodies *Alone among Poets* deliberated with professional of the species like Max Frisch, Elias Canetti, Ionescu, Eliade, Ginsberg and as he confeses, there is only one conclusion. "The opinions are divided: each of them loves his personal modality, not excluding others theoretically, and there are as many diaries as many authors" (Sorescu, 1999:7).

It can be noted directly and without any doubt that Marin Sorescu, determined to publish his writings, is the adept of a diary full of the impressions of an anxiety-haunted traveller, driven continuously by an easy to understand curiosity, who through a special love of travels, through a alert and unpredictable spirit of observation and an original way of presenting life in its multiple-valued motions, succeded in transforming the commonplace curiosity in an ceaseless and inexhaustible experience.

A writer who favours paradox, Marin Sorescu has the conscience of his ego duality: *the ego eager* to know, to communicate with great writers and interesting people, young poets, students and other persons whose company pleases him and *the ironical ego* who *rubs up the wrong way* until negation, the affirmation of the first one. The two egos belong to *the traveller* and *to the antitraveller* and can be found in the writer's personality itself.

We may ask then if we can still meet the two persona in the diary, whose existence is mentioned by Eugen Simion: "one who steps forward, as an emblem of the author (his representative, public image) and another who hides between the lines" (Simion, 2001: vol. I, 10). We must guess the latter, or as the critic says you must catch *him at a turning point of the text.*

Marin Sorescu travels whether he is in Europe or in America, the Romanian poet turned into a *walking tree* and writing *lines on his lap* feels himself a "citizen of the world – through the sharpness of his mind and his great cognitive curiosity", impressed most by his encounter with George Emil Palade, whom he sees "so universal and so Romanian connected to his native place" (G. Sorescu, 2006: 230).

The poet-traveller or the traveller-poet continues his flight of experiences registered also in the III-rd volume, volume which makes the object of our analysis, and which bears a title coined by the poet himself, and for whose understanding we appeal to the opinion of George Sorescu, the poet's brother: "the title coined by the poet – I Walk the Hellhound – must be understood in a way, as a mythical daemon in double hypostasis: as a superior entity (Socrates and Platon – "what lies above" and interior, with different meanings: creative impulse, inner voice etc.)" (G. Sorescu, 2008: 6).

The daemon of travels does not let him alone and his tireless wish to know, to travel, to see makes him admit: "I have come to step forward, to touch with my hand, to taste, to smell", while he will be writing "a diary of the palate, of the fingertips, of the soles" (Sorescu, 1999:203)

Tirelessly, Marin Sorescu feels attracted by travels in more and more remote countries, because "the joy of knowing the planet belongs to the courageous ones. … I wish to travel next year or in the following years to South America, Japan, China, India, Australia, Canada- with these concluding, in the main. my round of the world – for my travelnotes have to be round" (Sorescu, 2008: 14).

But all these on one condition: "to learn English well (damn it!) and to have an idea of Spanish. This journey will loose my tongue- English and Spanish" (Sorescu, 2008:15. And he kept his promise. At San Francisco, at State University, in 1981, in a

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lecture room full of people, he reads 15 poems in English which makes him say: "Pleasant atmosphere! My English functioned well: I felt good" (Sorescu, 2008:79).

Walking in the street with a Romanian and as both of them speak Romanian loudly, they are asked what language they speak. Humorously, Marin Sorescu registers the event as such: "I am walking like a thinking advertisment for Romanian" (Sorescu, 2008:79).

The notes of this III-rd volume refer to invitations to poetry and visual art festivals, the visiting of museums, the discovery of different cultures and traditions at different levels of existence, the discovery of different forms of archaic and modern civilization, picturesque oceanic, mountaineous and urban places, cultural institutions and last but not least the impact of poetry over the numerous listeners.

On his road to America, a stopover at Copenhague amazes him through its large number of bikes and bikeriders, "any town in the worls give so much attention to bikeriders, but also through the district of … ugly and old whores". The existence of bikes groups and groups makes him decide on the spot to write a cycle of poems – on travelling and one about the bycicles from Copenhague" (Sorescu, 2008:12).

The notes about what he sees, about what impresses him, about the frequent changes in the timebelt are registered very attentively: "My watch from Regensburg, put back and forward hundred of times- becomes the witness of the meridian travels" (Sorescu, 2008: 11).

Together with the inherent nocturnal anxieties, his alert and surprising spirit notices the resemblance of Ciudad de Mexico "to a huge crab which tries to reach the sea and because each foot pulls more in his direction", this one "stands still" (Sorescu, 2008: 18).

He is manifestly impressed by Mexican culture, by Mexican dolls which *imitate best this race: thick eyebrows, moustaches, staring, round faces, small eyes!* and maybe for this reason he registers the legend of the foundation of Ciudad de Mexico, "which is not deprived of a mystic radiance: thou shall ground, a tribe had been told, where thou shall see a vulture sitting on a cactus, devouring a snake″ (Sorescu, 2008:18). The vision of death of the Mexican people is also interesting for this people, a lover of Fiesta, death does not represent "the natural end of life, it is part of an infinite circle. And thus, we learn that life, death and ressurection are stages of a cosmical process which repeats itself infinitely" (Sorescu, 2008:33).

Among courses and their cost, hotel rooms and their associated stars, considerations about time, about people, the Romanian poet also registers the public enthusiasm when he lectures his poems. On the stage of the Morelia theatre, Marin Sorescu meets an *enormous success,* in the wake of which "I gained hundreds of friends", the poet being applauded after each poem (Sorescu, 2008:24).

The same succes is registered at the University of Albuquerque, where in the Library Hall he reads poems for half an hour. The meeting-pleasant, the library-modest, with few Romanian books. He is very pleased as a creator when he sees that his work is appreciated. "Last evening, I had a poetry lecture at Premier Douce Theatre from Toronto. A great succes! Enthusiastic atmosphere, many autographs etc". (Sorescu, 2008: 159).

Despite Marin Sorescu's resistance to accept the diary as a literary genre, it is easy to notice that he cannot detach entirely from the figurative language in his writing. Here and there, we shall meet irony, critical observations, descriptions, anecdotes, and in the short poems which alternate with prose descriptions, the lyrical thrill creeps in like a summer breeze, like in the following lines: "among the guests of the Poetry

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Festival from Mexico, there is Transtrower, "very pleasant, with his face of a sea forester (forester of the coral islands. He is flawless, except that he speaks only English.)" (Sorescu, 2008:12).

A converstion on the phone with Mircea Eliade brings about a few observations: Mircea Eliade is *talkative, friendly*, but, as usually, *he speaks only about him and about his books*. The observation that "even now – as other times as well – he is never struck out to suggest something useful for you" makes him wonder somehow innocently: "This selfishness would be some kind of candour?" (Sorescu, 2008: 89).

Arrived in Canada at a *very civilized high level festival,* the well-known Romanian poet remembers suddenly *our Latino-Wallachianh language* with Oltenia accents and surprises us: "I've been in Canada to change the timebelt" (Sorescu, 2008: 155) And since the audience of the festival is a taster of literature, he tries to encourage himself: "I will try to be more eloquent than my vacant seat of the past years – I said" (Sorescu, 2008:156).

The visit in the United Stated lasted one month, while he saw many towns, lectured a lot, saw aggressive people in the street, *many fools!* All memories – "in a suitcase, with many poems and many impressions" (Sorescu, 2008: 88).

In Las Vegas he does not refuse the experience that all visitors of the town go through, the town being seen as a *huge mill of luck*. Being conscious that *gambling charms you*, that there is a psychology of gambling and as he loses more than he wins , he gets tired of watching and finds that each casino is "a mill of nothingness" (Sorescu, 2008: 73).

Describing himself as a *rich man in impressions and travels* Marin Sorescu draws his conclusions about the visit in America in a direct nonfictional language: "My notes about America (U.S.) should start with a collection of commercials (American). Then with a list containing the portrait and profile of the ten-fifteen people wanted by police, evildoers, murderers, burglars (and other categories): then my considerations, then the diary proper. Otherwise, it is very arid!" (Sorescu, 2008:66).

He will travel again to Copenhague, at the Congress of Young Literature, then to Berlin to Akademie der Kunste, and in Paris he learns that he had been recived in Mallarmé Academy.

In Londra he is received very warmingly and the lecture takes place in the Tower in front of young students, teachers and poets. The Romanian poet also confesses a great success after his lecture at the Arts Theatre.

Marin Sorescu proves a special attention when he shares the joy of receiving the Fernando Riello prize, awarded by the review Equivalencias and by the prestigious foundation Riello from Madrid. In his speech, reproduced in the diary, the Romanian poet expreses his joy with light ironical accents, with humour, also praising sincerely the poetry of all participants. "A literary prize is a concave lens which dilates and makes you see yourself bigger, grow up miraculously in your estimation. The esteem to myself increased and I almost feel like talking to me in the second person plural" (Sorescu, 2008:139).

And as that month, the issue of the first and only volume of poetry published during the life of Mihai Eminescu *the great last romantic* made a century, he celebrates his memory with respect, appreciating that *within the context of honoring poetry* in general, and Romanian poetry in particular; Eminescu's name is the most suitable.

Apreciating the literary review Equivalencias as a *symbol of the opening towards the world of presentday Spain*, which achieves a bond among peoples by means of poetry, Marin Sorescu admits in full lyrism that poetry addresses human soul directly

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which "is everywhere the same, understadable and not understandable, limpid and abysmal" (Sorescu, 2008:139). The whole world needs its humanistic message of peace, today more than anytime.

Travelling *with or without a tie*, followed incesantly by a *traveller's dream* Marin Sorescu travelled being amazed by the wonders of the world and amazing us with his grave and ironical impressions: "It is worth seeing many kinds of foolishness, as each country has its special kind of folishness-and all in together sum up in human foolishness" (Sorescu, 2008: 129).

"The purpose of a subjective writing is to convince not to be pleasant", because what matters here is "the volume of truth, the degree of sincerity" which implies "corectness, spontaneity, credibility" (Simion, 2001: 91). And how could Marin Sorescu communicate his travel impressions, sincerely, spontaneously and credibly but by travelling and travelling, becoming as he confesses in delight, a "stray man. I am a stray man anything near / I walked four capitals away - / I hung around my neck just like a stone / the towns that crossed my way. // So many roads drag me down / like some entangled threads on my bones, / but all my mind thinks of the perfumes / from those purified zones" (Sorescu, 2008: 129)

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