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Power and Seduction (Hungarians as Liviu Rebreanu Presented Them in His Novels) Self-image and the Presentation of the Other during the Development of the Relationship Between the Romanians and the Hungarians

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Abstract. The essay deals with the problem of alterity as it appears in two major novels by the modernist Romanian writer, Rebreanu Liviu. The essay focuses mainly on ethnical alterity, represented by different characters of the novels belonging to the Hungarian minority and the nature of their relationship to the (Romanian) hero.
Ethnical alterity is presented in four well-contoured forms:

1. The Other perceived as personal enemy (foe) or public enemy (eg. the representatives of the Austro-Hungarian rule).
2. The Other acting as an agent of Fate, representing hidden powers that will play a major role in both the intellectual formation and the personal tragedy of the hero.
3. The Other appearing in the double form of sexual and ethnical alterity personified by the angelic/demonic women figures.
4. Alterity mirrored by the language.

The theoretic presentation of the problem of alterity in the modern age intermingles with the analysis of images, characters and plot.

Keywords: alterity, identity, ethnicity, modern literature

The history of Europe knows several conflict zones and peoples who traditionally are enemies. Besides the "great" ones, like the French-German, Polish-Russian, Turkish-Greek and English-Irish, the antagonism between the Hungarians and the Romanians is only a rather unimportant episode in the history of the European enmities.

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Like all historical constructions, this one too was generated both by various historical facts and by the interpretation of the events stored in the collective memory and in the history books, through the intricate ways remembering and forgetting works.

The "Other" has always been present in the life of every community. The feelings towards the stranger, who may not fit into local norms, vary from total acceptance to total refusal. The more traditional the community, the more irritating the presence of the stranger, while the inhabitants of a cosmopolitan metropolis are more likely to be tolerant. "Hospitality" has a great importance in the traditional, rural cultures, still, it is only a positive way of expressing differences.

Romanians and Hungarians started to shape the commonly known image of each other in the modern age, at the end of the 18th, the beginning of the 19th centuries, when nationalism and the modern political ideas were born. Naturally, as we are speaking about ethnics living on the same geographical site (Transylvania) and being in contact on a regular basis, some stereotypes that made possible the identification of the Other had existed even earlier. However, they only became a power able to generate ideological debates and even political deeds after the modern nationalistic ideas took shape.

The way Eastern people were looking at one another, and to a certain degree even to themselves, was largely influenced by the way the western culture, in order to strengthen its political-economical position, was speaking about the East (Said 9-57). The image of Eastern Europe adopted by the western way of thinking largely influenced both the Romanian and the Hungarian self-image and the image they developed about each other. This would explain the fact that all Eastern European small nations claim to have been the bastion of western Christianity, defending it against the barbaric East (Turkish, Russian Empires) (Mitu 228-29).

The image of the Romanians developed by the Hungarians during the 19th century was hardly more than an element of the Hungarian national problem. Only after the *status quo* following World War I, and mainly in the works of the Transylvanian writers did it receive a more important role. On the other hand, the image developed by the Romanians about the Hungarians gained a much greater importance in the Romanian political culture and it changed together with the formation of the modern nation, having a more positive character at the beginning of the 19th century, and assuming the image of a rival, an oppressor and that of an enemy at the beginning of the 20th (Mitu 229-41).

In his work *History and Myth in the Romanian Common Thinking* Lucian Boia gives a detailed analysis of the particular behavior of the Romanians towards the other nations. He observes two factors that played an important role in the formation of the ideas made up about the Other: "on the one hand the reaction of

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the somewhat isolated, rural civilization,[1] on the other hand, the influence of the strong and ceaseless foreign rules and impacts. These factors were antagonistic but in the same time also completed each other and resulted in a definitely original synthesis" (Boia 191).

The Other, the Stranger is not necessarily an ethnic category, it also includes everybody who represents values that are different from the generally accepted ones. Because of the long period in which they lived divided, the problem of the Other/Stranger was present among the Romanians themselves. The differences among the Romanians living in Moldavia, Muntenia and Transylvania (Moldovean, Muntean, Ardelean) were emphasized sometimes even up to the middle of the 19th century. Later, the political discourse, urging unification and nation forming efforts, started to emphasize the idea of unity and sameness. At the beginning of the 19th century the attribute "ardelean" (from Transylvania) referred only to geographical belonging, all the inhabitants of Transylvania, regardless of their religion or ethnic origin were called like this by the people living in the two Romanian countries (Majuru). (The thought of being divided according to regions is strongly present in common thinking nowadays too, in spite of the one hundred and fifty years, when the political discourse emphasized the idea of unity.) In the period between the two World Wars, ideologists belonging to the right wing identified the Romanian spirit with the Orthodox Church. This clearly meant the intension of remaining separated from the Catholic and Protestant Western patterns, and in the same time made a distinction between the Orthodox Romanians and those belonging to the Greek Catholic Church (most of them living in Transylvania).[2]

Being defenseless against different foreign powers almost all the time, the attitude of the Romanians towards the Others, and towards being different, was

[1] According to Adrian Majuru by that time the name "ardelean" had a positive meaning. Servants, craftsmen, traders, intellectuals coming from Transylvania were very popular regardless of their religion or nationality, because they were considered honest, clean, thoughtful, loyal, steady people, who do not steal or lie. The image of the "Hungarian from Transylvania as a monster slaughtering Romanians" was only shaped after the unification of Moldavia and Muntenia in 1879, as an ideological support of the fight for Transylvania.

The Romanian soldiers arriving in Transylvania after World War I were brought up in this ideology, most of them had never read any Romanian newspaper published in Transylvania. They did not have the faintest idea of the realities of the Transylvanian public life and knew nothing of the way the Romanians from Transylvania felt for the Hungarians. Even the officers were startled when they had to face the reality. Camil Petresu in his novel *Ultima noapte de dragoste, întâia noapte de război* [*The Last Night of Love, the First Night of War*] describes how surprised they were when they entered the beautiful, well organized villages right near the frontier, in which "the streets were wider than the avenues in Bucharest".

[2] According to Nae Ionescu, one of the most influential right wing thinkers of the age, a Catholic Romanian can only be a "loyal" Romanian, a real Romanian, regardless of all other attributes, can be nothing else but an Orthodox (Ornea 91/95).

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characterized on the one hand by images created about enemies (Turkish, Greek, Russian) on the basis of historical experiences, and on the other hand by sympathies generated by the dominant cultural patterns (attraction rooted in Neo-Latin brotherhood felt for the French, then as a counterbalance of this, and as a result of geopolitical determination, sympathy towards German culture, characterizing first of all the Romanians living in Transylvania and Bucovina.

The attitude taken towards the Others becomes much more intricate when the Other One is not a remote entity, or a conqueror, but a permanent presence, living "within the walls," like the Hungarians, the Jews, or the Gypsies. Compared to the "Outsider Other," the strangeness of the "Other living with us" loses much of its dramatic character because of the everyday experiences, but in the same time, being always present, stirs some restlessness. This can become just as good a ground for the birth of the different myths, as physical remoteness, and the lack of actual knowledge about the Other. The political conditions had a basic influence upon the image of the Hungarians taking shape among the Romanians. For example the Romanians living in Transylvania were in majority at the end of the 19th century when nationalistic ideas started to become more and more powerful. Yet they were politically ignored both within Hungary and within the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. This discrimination naturally generated and kept alive the image of the Hungarians as oppressors and enemies. The political fight for unification made a good use of this in its propaganda. (The myths presenting the Hungarians as enemies are living elements of the Romanian common thinking even today, because the "Hungarian danger" has been used by every political regime regardless of their ideological orientation.) However, the two nations were living near each other and as a result gained direct experiences, so regardless of the ideologies trying to shape a homogeneous image of the enemy (Edelman 104)[3], a more detailed and more subtle image of the Hungarians could also be formed. Because of its characteristics it may serve important data for the scientific approaches of the Hungarian identity.

In this study I will examine the different kinds of images of the Hungarians created in Romanian literature. My chosen writer is Liviu Rebreanu, an important man of literature in the period between the two World Wars. Rebreanu was Transylvanian and studied at Budapest in Hungary, so, when creating Hungarian characters, he could rely both on his own experiences and on those of the community he belonged to.

When examining the problem of differences, we must not forget that in this case it appears within the framework of fiction. This does not exclude ideological purposes, but, compared to a newspaper article or a political speech, here the inner

[3] Following Kenneth Burke, Murray Edelman states, that "when concentrating on a certain political enemy, more attention will be given to some characteristics, while others will be ignored."

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rules of text building, the plot and the characters gain much greater importance. In the same time these are classic, emblematic pieces of Romanian literature (both novels are required at the baccalaureate exams), so I think, that the fictitious construction of the Other may also get embedded in common thinking, and may survive like this through generations.

2. Background: Romanian prose between the two World Wars

That period was the glorious time of the Romanian prose. The novel, as a literary genre, appeared rather late in Romanian literature. The first work that can be considered a novel, Nicolae Filimon's *Ciocoii vechi şi noi* [*Old and New Boyars*], was published only in 1863. This is in close connection with the fact that the development of the Romanian bourgeoisie was also late. It took time until a strong social stratum, willing to support culture and demanding good literary achievements appeared on the scene of Romanian society. However, in the thirties, the novel reached a popularity what has not been surpassed ever since. This was the time when the classic, emblematic values of the Romanian literature, written by Liviu Rebreanu, George Călinescu, Camil Petrescu, Hortensia Papadat-Bengescu, Mihail Sadoveanu, Mihail Sebastian, Mircea Eliade and others were born.

The rise of literature and the flourishing of cultural life takes place in the period when Romania left behind World War I as one of the winners, its territory grew considerably and the young nation was proud of itself. It is not accidental that, according to Rebreanu, culture had an utmost importance in the grounding of national values: "Now we are laying the foundation of the genuine Romanian culture. . . . From the point of view of our culture we are a young nation. Until now we were fighting for survival. In the future we shall prove the world that, through our culture, we are going to live for ever" (Kormos 51).

According to Nicolae Manolescu the prose of the era can be divided into three main categories as far as poetics is concerned: the objective, realistic, "Doric-type" novel, focusing on a social grounding (e.g. the works of Liviu Rebreanu, George Călinescu, Mihail Sadoveanu and others), the subjective, quasi-modernist "Ionic-type" novel concerned with the inner world of the individual (e.g. the works of Hortensia Papadat-Bengescu, Camil Petrescu, Mihail Sebastian etc.) and the allegorical-mythical "Corinthian-type" novel (some of the works of Mircea Eliade) (Manolescu 7-57). Mircea Cărtărescu draws the attention to the interesting phenomenon that in many cases, e.g. in the novel *Enigma Otiliei,* considered to be a classical realistic one, of the Balsac type of realism, so characteristic of the second half of the 19th century "Doric-type" novel, it is a subsequent construction, therefore we can speak about imitation, a meta-novel (Cărtărescu 287-88). Romanian prose was renewed by the above mentioned writers who also created

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wider horizons (mainly following the French psychological novel). Consequently, they are the ones, who gave birth to modern Romanian literature.

3. The image of the Hungarians in Rebreanu's novels

Liviu Rebreanu (1885-1944) was born in Bistrița-Năsăud county, in Transylvania. In this region the Romanians had been the majority for a long time. However he attended the Military Academy at Sopron and at Budapest, therefore he knew very well both the national-political aspirations of the Romanian rural intellectuals and the Hungarian public life in the Monarchy. At the beginning of his career he wrote in Hungarian language under the name Rebrai. His first works were not really valuable short stories, sketches, short dramas. They were published in different newspapers and magazines. He also translated Austrian dramas to Hungarian. He became a Romanian writer only after 1909, when, like many of his contemporaries, he moved to Bucharest. His first great novel was published in 1920. Its title is *Ion* and it gives a naturalistic description of the psychological distortion caused by thirst for land and social defenselessness. The same topic is elaborated again in his next novel entitled *Răscoala* [*The Uprising*] (1933), this time in epical tableaus.

Here I am going to examine Rebreanu's two early works, the novel *Ion* published in 1920 and the novel entitled *Pădurea Spânzuraților* [*Forest of the Hanged*][4] published in 1922. The action in both novels takes place in Transylvania, therefore Hungarian characters play a much more important role in these than in Rebreanu's other writings. Other works by Rebreanu will only be mentioned.

3.1 Opponent and enemy

In the novel *Ion* we are told in fact two stories: that of Ion, and that of the teacher from the same village, Pripas. We can follow Ion's desperate fight for land, not lacking violence, lies, deceiving people and this all lead him towards an unavoidable failure. The everyday life of the Herdelea family gives us a faithful image of the life of the rural Romanian intellectuals and petit bourgeoisie at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century. The village is a closed community, the peasants hardly have any contact with the world, but the rural intellectuals take part in the life of the region. Balls, elections, lawsuits, job affairs all offer possibilities to leave behind the village and meet other people. As it is a

[4] The quotations (translated into English by the author of the essay) are taken from the following editions: Rebreanu, Liviu: *Ion*. Bucharest: Állami Irodalmi és Művészeti Kiadó, 1960; Rebreanu, Liviu: *Akasztottak erdeje*. [*Forrest of the Han*ged] Bukarest: Kriterion, 1970.

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Transylvanian site and the time is the last years of the Austrian-Hungarian Monarchy, the term "others" naturally refers not only to the members of the Romanian petit bourgeois, but Jews, Hungarians, Germans as well.

In the life of the Herdelea family Hungarians mostly appear as the representatives of the power (school-inspectors, lawyers, policemen), who come to execute some external order, generally meaning something unpleasant for the Herdeleas. Therefore their attitude towards the Hungarians assumes the form of their relationship with the power. The various characters' reactions to the demands of the power differs according to their age, experiences and temperament. The father, Zaharia Herdelea once got his well paid job on the recommendation of the benevolent school-inspector, Csernátoni, but this position also made him dependant, because he is obliged to follow the orders of the school-inspectorate. The other school-inspector, Horváth, Csernátoni's successor appears only as a means of the power, hardly anything is told about his personality. He is merely the representative of the "oppressing power", a nuisance for the elderly teacher who also has financial troubles, and is criticized because the children hardly speak the Hungarian language. The school-inspector writes him a letter in which he expresses his wish: at the coming elections Herdelea should vote Béla Bech, a German-Hungarian candidate and not Grofşoru, the Romanian lawyer. Being afraid of the consequences, the teacher obeys him, what's more he convinces some other people to do so. Like this the purely Romanian region loses the opportunity to have a Romanian representative in the Hungarian Parliament and the teacher has to face the contempt of his children, ardent nationalists, although he did everything for ensuring a better life for them. He is called a coward, even a traitor.

The other representative of the power who has some role in the life of the teacher is Lendvay, the lawyer. He is a serene, benevolent man, but in fact he gives very little help to Herdelea. "I don't mind if he does not speak Romanian, as long as he is an honest man" says the teacher's wife, otherwise a devoted nationalist, when the lawyer tries to help them on the occasion of the forced sale. Lendvay's benevolence proves less than enough, finally Herdelea is helped by Grofşoru, who in the same time intends to make a bit of campaign for himself. (According to the law Herdelea is suspended for a while because of having a lawsuit, his living is ensured by Grofşoru, who uses the teacher's misery for propaganda purposes. "He started to tell the story to everyone, but in an exaggerated and adorned way, dressed into nationalism. Herdelea soon became "a martyr", "the brave defender of the Romanian peasants", "the victim of the revenge of the Hungarians" (398). The teacher is just as grateful to Grofşoru for receiving attention and getting some help, as he used to be to the former school-inspector and to Lendvay, whom in his present situation he starts to regard to be his enemies: "When I am thinking that I was fighting against this man serving the interest of the Hungarian gentlemen!" (383).

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When they are not the representatives of the power, the Hungarians mostly appear as generous gentlemen characterized by great tolerance and a "gentleman-like" behavior. Madarassy, the forest engineer, for example, is a hobby hunter, an educated, literature loving man, who also likes all kinds of parties, no matter if they are organized by Romanians, he speaks fluently and reads in Romanian language. Titu Herdelea, who in fact is the character the writer identifies with, likes to have long talks with him. Madarassy's positive behavior at the same time serves as a counterpoint for the attitude of the "renegade" Romanian district administrator, Chițu. Rebreanu describes the scene of people drinking in the inn from Jidovița. One of the teachers, half drunk and full of ardent nationalism, starts to sing Andrei Mureşanu's *Deşteaptă-te române* (the present day national anthem) and all the others join in. The district administrator gets very angry, those who are present are saved from an unpleasant scandal by the forest engineer:

> Madarassy, the forest engineer was a kind man and told Chițu softly: "Why shouldn't they sing, my friend, if they like to sing? Please, old chap, don't exaggerate . . . "
> "I will not tolerate any manifestation of nationalism" answered the district administrator in a revolted tone. "My consciousness opposes it! This is sheer nationalistic instigation!"
> "Oh, no, it isn't anything like that' said the engineer trying to sooth him. Forget about this damned instigation! Just one song will not ruin the state . . . Well, it's a pity I don't know it, because I would join in too." (181)

While the teacher chooses loyalty towards power, Titu, his son, is devoted to nationalistic ideas and opposes power. At the beginning of the novel Titu is just a young man with incomplete studies, cherishing dreams about becoming a poet. Instead of looking for a job he lives an idle life daydreaming. Later he becomes more and more committed to the nationalistic ideas, but his incurable romanticism drives him towards exaggerated, thoughtless actions. When he becomes a village notary at Gargo he starts to dream about the "Romanian paradise" and when Friedmann, the Jewish notary, who knows the living conditions in Romania quite well, depicts them in a rather somber way, accuses him of having a "Hungarian point of view". When he has to sequestrate he goes only to the houses of the Hungarians and tells to his father, who was sued and suspended for a time because of Ion, to be proud for defending a Romanian, even if that man is surely a rascal.

Likewise, it goes without saying that he considers the young policeman, who tries to be his friend, his personal enemy: "How could I be the friend of a Hungarian policeman? I can't imagine anything more shameful . . ." (383). The officer's name is not even mentioned in the novel, he appears just for a very short time, but his figure assumes a mythical character, he becomes the embodiment of

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oppression, the source of all misfortunes. Therefore, he does not consider him what he indeed is, his rival (unlike him, the police officer courts successfully the pretty, young Romanian teacher). In fact their conflict never becomes a real one, although Titu calls him a "hangman," the officer leaves as a victorious knight. Titu, in this fight for love remains defeated, and experiences it as a nationalistic, ideological fight, gets into a real conflict with another representative of power, a police lieutenant. As a result he is accused of being a subverter. Ovid. S. Crohmăniceanu observes that Rebreanu's novel displays a cyclical character. In the last chapter of the novel *Răscoala* [*The Uprising*], published in 1933, Titu Herdelea is accused to be a rebel who instigated the peasants. But this time the representative of the power is a Romanian officer. Titu, who plays the role of the resonator, realizes that regardless of its nationality, the nature of power is always inhuman.

3.2. The means of destiny

The *Forest of the Hanged* is an epic picture of the conflict between duty and consciousness. The main character, lieutenant Apostol Bologa is a typical representative of the young men so frequently present in the literature of that era. He is nervous, sensitive, uncertain, daydreaming, longing for ideas and finding new ideas all the time. In the first chapter, as a member of the court martial, he sentences the Czech officer, a deserter, without any remorse, but in the last chapter he finds it impossible to sentence for spying the peasants from Gyimes, he rather chooses to become a deserter himself, that is, he chooses death. The *Forest of the Hanged* is in fact a psychological novel, mainly concerned with the psychological motivations of the hero and the change of his ideas. The world he lives in is typical to the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, the army is the place where young people belonging to different nations and having different ideas meet. Among Bologa's comrades we find Cservenko, the pacifist Rhutenian teacher, Grosz, the Jewish engineer, who is a convinced leftist, the Czech officer who is ready to humiliate himself for the sake of his family, Varga, the "professional soldier," for whom army merits always come first and Karg, the rigid, almost sadistic Prussian general. People differ not only in their nationality, we find other antagonisms too: soldier—civilian, religious—atheist, rightist—leftist etc.

Apostol Bologa's tragedy is caused by Hungarians, although in most of the cases they are unconscious means of destiny. His father, a fanatical nationalist is a rigid, unkind man, his mother lives her life wrapped up in ardent mysticism. For the disillusioned young man, seeking for new ideas, the friendship and kindness of his philosophy professor at the university from Budapest ensures the possibility of advancement. The writer doesn't even mention the name of this professor, who evidently takes the place of the unkind father, who had died a long time ago, anyway.

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> The relationship between the professor and his student was that of a priest and a believer. The teacher, who knew the human soul quite well, loved Bologa and soon was able to understand his restlessness. He thought that the young man, whose personality was ruled by doubts, was a typical representative of the generation that, after losing its faith in God, tries desperately to find something instead of the human soul. They are looking for a sort of scientific divinity lacking mysteries and unknown things, for the complete truth behind which there are no other explanations containing everything, even nothingness. (31)

This way the professor gives Bologa a philosophical grounding, and becomes his "spiritual father."

The fatherless young man would not be obliged to become a soldier, still, when World War I starts, he joins the army and in this decision he is mainly influenced by a Hungarian character who appears just for a short time in the novel. The nameless "very proud, self-conceited sharpshooter lieutenant, the son of the Hungarian county judge" (39) courts Bologa's fiancée, and as the coquette young girl has a good opinion of him, Bologa feels offended and wants to become a soldier himself. Later he breaks his relationship with his fiancée seemingly for another Hungarian officer, but in reality, by that time not recognized by him either, because of his love for Ilona, a peasant girl from Gyimes. Another Hungarian man, Pál Vidor, Ilona's father plays the role of the herold of the fate, as he is the one who brings the news that changes Bologa's life completely: innocent peasants are hanged because they are accused of being spies. In the final scene the sexton will kiss the man who is going to be hanged. Pál Vidor is a sensible, simple, benevolent man, totally different from the nervous, sophisticated, uncertain Bologa. In his physical appearance Rebreanu drew a prototype: after the not really sympathetic Hungarian officers a Hungarian peasant full of hospitality. "Pál Vidor approached him smiling, offering his hand and welcoming him in his house. His skinny face was wrinkled, his brown eyes showed that he was clever, even shrewd, he wore his grey, bushy moustaches brushed upwards as the Hungarian peasant generally did" (112).

Vidor and Ilona, the pure hearted, warm, simple people, here play the role of the Romanian peasant characters in the Trasylvanist literature (e.g. the novels of Károly Kós, Miklós Bánffy, János Kemény, or Albert Wass, or Áprily's poems). They are the embodiments of the very simplified thought telling that among the simple people, on the level of everyday life there is no antagonism between the two nations. Enmity is always stirred by those who posses power or want to grasp it.

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Rebreanu explained that he created the two characters, Vidor and Ilona for the sake of "authenticity," yet he himself admitted that "humane" in this case might not seem real.

> My hero . . . is basically weak, as every man, he is longing for love and finds it with a Hungarian girl, although this would not seem very probable for a professional man of literature, and when he is hanged, another Hungarian man, Ilona's father is crying for him. I think that this is humane, and a novel that lacks real life, but is bustling with horrors and contradictions, has no chance to survive. (Săndulescu 47)

Bologa's desertion is not a well prepared one, it is somehow done in the spur of the moment. He is captured by lieutenant Varga, a professional officer, who was the first to notice that Bologa has changed. He is a friend, a comrade, and an opponent at the same time, and being a relative of the above mentioned philosophy professor, his feelings towards the Romanian comrade are definitely benevolent. "Just a short time ago you used to like me, we understood each other very well" (98), he complains in the hospital where they are lying side by side. But the truth is that even at the beginning of the novel Bologa does not really like him, considers him "a stupid, arrogant professional" (98) and when they get together by chance in the hospital he suffers because of the sheer presence of Varga: "He found his words, even his glance malevolent" (98). Thus, in Bologa's conception the former comrade becomes an enemy, although a very honest one. For Varga there are three important things: "fatherland, faith and the past" (99), and as he knows Bologa well, he is the first to realize that the conviction rooted in Bologa by his uncle, the philosopher, began to lose its firmness and its place is taken by the nationalistic ideas. This is why he tries to make him remember his professor and his duty and warns him that his new commitment will surely cause him trouble. "My uncle, who loved you as his own son would not recognize you now, believe me, Bologa! . . . Your feelings will lead you right into the arms of our enemies. . . . Into the arms of those, who are the enemies of the country, no matter of which country! In this moment, my friend, in your thoughts and soul you have already become a deserter!" (99). Varga believes in the sanctity of the military oath and he has a very low opinion of Apostol Bologa's new ideas. For the sake of their former friendship and because he hates "spying" he does not inform his superiors about Bologa, but warns him, that if once he will face him as a deserter, he should not count on his mercy. From that moment for Bologa he ceases to be a friend or a comrade, he becomes a real enemy, his own fatal words will designate him for the duty of capturing Bologa and sending him to the court martial.

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3.3 The woman and her two faces: the virgin and the prostitute

As the mentioned Rebreanu novels are basically concerned with the life of men, the Other taking the shape of a woman belonging to the foreign nation gets an utmost importance. In this case the difference is not only in nation but also in sex, the dynamics of attraction and refusal act in this system of relations. The strangeness of the Other becomes even more evident by emphasizing sexual characters. According to Murray Edelman "when a group of people lives under oppression, it many times happens that the women belonging to that group are thought to have an exaggerated erotic character. This is common in the case of the Black or the Jewish women and it is true for women who belong to some rival ethnic groups" (Edelman 114). Erotic characteristics can be emphasized regardless of the relationship of oppression and being oppressed (although it undoubtedly contains the scheme of practicing power), because of the curiosity, attraction, or on the contrary, antipathy stirred by the Other being close, and therefore provocative. In the two, above analyzed novels of Rebreanu the woman belonging to the other nationality appears in two roles: the "prostitute," who seduces and destroys, in the novel *Ion*, and the innocent, pure virgin offering redemption, real, but never fulfilled love in the *Forest of the Hanged.*

In *Ion* Titu Herdela's first, "romantic love" is Róza Láng, the wife of the drunkard Jewish teacher from the neighbouring village. She is a pretty, but rather immoral woman, the first thing what is told about her is that "in the afternoons she remained in bed reading romantic love stories like a daydreaming bayadere" (131). She tries to behave like the femmes fatales from the novels she reads, in fact it is she, who seduces the inexperienced young man. Love is the essence of her life and she finds it with many men. Compared to the clumsy, rural young girls, the teachers or the daughters of the priests, "the geese" as Titu calls them, Mrs. Láng has erotic emanation.

> Róza Láng was a pretty woman: her face like that of a doll, with a small nose, lazy, daydreaming eyes, her body like that of a twenty year old girl. . . . She was longing for a great love that could be a reward for all her disillusionment, and as it has never come, she put up with small adventures, at least they offered some change. . . . She enjoyed seeing Titu gazing at her and she was happy to feel his trembling lips on her hands. (131)

This passionate love affair becomes life itself for Titu, he not only neglects to look for a job, but also forgets about his own nation. "Since he has been head over heels in love with Rozika, he started to love the Hungarians and the Jews, as the woman herself was Hungarian, married to a Jew. In order to make this love evident, he spoke Hungarian readily" (233).

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Róza Láng is the temptation and the impediment in Titu's life, he has to overcome them in order to be able to devote himself to the idea of nationalism. His love for the woman works like a drug or like a brainwashing, Titu loses himself. "The boy literally lived only for Róza Láng. He was caught by the cobweb of love. After he had met her for some times, the woman ruled all her thoughts and feelings. He was thinking of her day and night, he was disturbed and tortured, but he was also happy. . . . He didn't care for anything else but Róza" (260). Titu Herdelea regains himself only when he goes to work to a far-away village, Gargó, and soon finds out that his love got somebody else instead of him. Titu's love for Mrs. Láng is evidently interwoven by the ethnical interpretation of the Other. At the beginning of his love, to please Róza, he is ready to speak Hungarian, but later, when he escapes from this enchantment he is ashamed that "his first passionate love was a Hungarian woman" (260), and he tries to make peace with his nationalistic ideas by telling that "hatred can never be extended to the women of the oppressors" (260). Titu's love for Róza is a "sinful love," not only because in fact it is adultery, but also because only by getting rid of it can he become a real patriot.

Ilona, the peasant girl from Gyimes in the *Forest of the Hanged,* on the other hand, brings the promise of a redeeming love. Apostol Bologa arrives at Gyimesközéplok, into Ilona's house, as a tired, disillusioned and sick man. His Romanian fiancée, Marta chased him by her vanity into the life of a soldier, which by this time causes him unbearable problems of consciousness. Ilona does everything to cure the sick soldier. She is the symbol of faithfulness, of unconditioned commitment, of the woman who never asks, only gives: attention, care, food, herself. Although she does not know when Bologa will come back from his leave, he goes to the station every day never asking why he does what he does, just helping him.

The prejudice towards the women of the rival nation is present at their first meeting. In the physical description of the girl, through the symbolic colors, exaggerated erotic characteristics are to be found: "She wore a bright red kerchief on her head, her big, black eyes were almost laughing, her lips were like cherries" (109), and she looked at the lieutenant with "unusual courage" (109). Not accidentally, Bologa first supposes that she is a woman of loose morals: "She surely made happy all the soldiers, who like me, were given this room" (111).

His leave brings nothing else to him just disillusionment and a final break with his fiancée, and when he returns, in Bologa's soul springs up the love for the simple peasant girl. By this time Ilona appears in a poetic light, the girl is waiting faithfully for her lover under a cherry tree in blossom, like a Solveig from Gyimes, in the scene of kisses the ray of the sun penetrating in the room, surrounds her head as a glory, the mystical moment of their first kiss is enveloped in light.

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> Through the window facing the railway shone into the room the last lines of the setting son. A golden stripe was vibrating on the table, crossed the yellowish floor almost until the door separating them as a magic bridge. Apostol's heart was full of painful happiness . . . Ilona kept talking, her eyes were glowing in a strange brightness. The light between them was laughing and this laugh was reflected by the girl's face. Now Apostol forgot why he had got up and was wondering how he could pass through that light without disturbing it. And while wondering he realized, that he had already stepped into the flood of the golden light, and stopped a bit confused, because the girl was also coming closer, as if she had been lured by a who knows what kind of mysterious power. (168)

Ilona's purity and simplicity is a kind of an answer to the emotional process that unfolded in Apostol's soul. When returning to his native village, the disillusioned atheist lieutenant finds again the idea of Christian love. But according to the Christian mythological elements their love is ill-omened: they make love after the mass of Good Friday, then Apostol proposes to her and on the next day, on Saturday they have their engagement in the presence of the priest. But Easter Sunday brings about the death of the peasants accused of spying, the order that calls Bologa to be the member of the court martial, his hasty deserting, being captured and executed.

While in the relationship of Titu Herdelea and Róza Láng ethnic belonging is an impediment, the love of Bologa and of the peasant girl, who belongs to an inferior social class, tries to get fulfillment within the framework of the Christian scale of values, superior to ethnic ones. Ethnic peculiarities here are only decorations, like Ilona's festive dress, her red waistcoat and green kerchief. The love between the lovers belonging to different ethnic groups does not become a reality, Róza Láng is morally inferior to Titu and is the wife of another man anyway, Ilona, in spite of her fairy-likeness, can not bring about redemption, just peace, the last chance of happiness for a man, who is ready to sacrifice himself.

3.4. The other language

When perceiving the Other, the language spoken by him or her plays an important role. In the linguistic environment present in Rebreanu's novels, the foreign (Hungarian) language is the most evident sign of being different, therefore the characters generally are suspicious towards it. When they consider the foreign language a potential source of danger, they in fact react to the system of power behind it. According to Reinhart Kosseleck "A language becomes the criterium of enmity if a political will is involved, totally independent of languages. It may have

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an economic, religious or social character but it is always politically motivated" (Kosseleck 8).

The Hungarian language in *Ion* appears mostly as the means of political oppression. The fact that Herdelea's pupils cannot tell the Lord's prayer in Hungarian brings about trouble and Titu becomes mad when he hears that the teacher from Gargó forces the Romanian pupils to speak in Hungarian. The fact that the women in the family of the teacher who is paid by the state, do not speak Hungarian stirs surprise and indignation. In the case of Mrs. Herdelea not speaking the Hungarian language is a question of principle, but it is true, that she never had the possibility to learn this language and she doesn't need it in her everyday life, still she says that she doesn't use it, because she "hates Hungarians and their language" (96).

For Apostol Bologa foreign languages mean the army, the language of his home is Romanian, while the language generally used in the army is German. The Hungarian language in this novel becomes the language of uncontrolled, irrational feelings, that of swearing, of anger and of love. In *Ion* Titu Herdelea gets annoyed when he hears that the teacher, although she is the adept of nationalism, talks to the Hungarian officer in Hungarian, and Apostol Bologa becomes indignant when, getting home he finds his fiancée chatting in Hungarian with a Hungarian lieutenant. But the anger stirred by the use of the Hungarian language is in both cases only a pretext, Titu Herdelea is upset because the other one is more successful in courting, while Apostol Bologa is led by his new, unconscious love for Ilona. According to the public opinion of the small town he leaves his fiancée because she was speaking Hungarian, and thus here the use of language becomes the euphemistic description of unfaithfulness. Yet Bologa confesses to himself the truth: "He does not love her any more, not because of jealousy but because he loves the other girl. His becoming upset because of the Hungarian language and the Hungarian man was a mere comedy" (150).

In Rebreanu's novels Hungarian is not only the language of the power and of the rivals, but also that of love. The interpretation of the foreign language depends on whether it can be connected to the love for the "prostitute" bringing about destruction and the loss of identity, or to the one felt for the "virgin" who ensures purification. The love felt for Róza Láng estranges Titu from his nationalistic ideas and this is symbolized by his use of the Hungarian language. Earlier he used this foreign language only functionally (that is, when it was necessary), influenced by his love, "in order to express his love he spoke readily in Hungarian" (233). After he escapes from the cobweb of this love and as a journalist becomes the ardent adept of nationalistic ideas, he is ashamed for his love confessions told in Hungarian, this language becomes again the language of the oppressors for him.

The erotic emanation of the girl belonging to the foreign nation materializes through the foreign language, thus the language becomes the substitute of love.

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Titu goes to work into a Hungarian village and at the beginning he hopes that "the continuous Hungarian speech will make the impression that he is still close to Róza and this will quench his desire" (233).

When Ilona and Apostol Bologa meet for the first time, it is the girl's speech that charms the lieutenant. He asks Ilona to speak about the everyday life in the community in which Hungarians and Romanians equally live, and while listening to her, he becomes more and more interested: "In fact not her words, but her strong, yet sweat voice that was caressing as a silk ribbon and sometimes was like the song of a mischievous child. From that moment he didn't want anything else just to hear her voice and he was wondering what to ask to make her go on talking" (111). The way the foreign girl talks here too has erotic emanation, it prepares the scene in which Bologa, coming back from his leave, conscious of his love for Ilona, kisses her for the first time: "the flood of the warm sounds filled his soul soothing his nerves" (167).

So the language of the Other almost never appears in a neutral context, it can have either the role of spanning, or the role of estranging depending on the feelings of the individual. It is not a simple means of communication, but the best means of showing differences.

The image of the Hungarians in Liviu Rebreanu's novels, the way of presenting the Hungarians, was naturally influenced by ideological point of views too, which are very far from literature. Both novels were published at the beginning of the twenties, that is in the years following the Treaty of Trianon. By that time the author had been living in Bucharest for a long time and he was also influenced by the political ideology of the era. Consequently the image of the Other is generally the image of the enemy. The power that makes it difficult for the individual to achieve his aims and desires, or sometimes just to live a better life, cannot be anything else but an enemy. The Hungarians who represent power appear in Rebreanu's novels both as foes and as the enemies of the community (Schwab 39-41), but they very rarely have really important roles. The writer always focuses on the description of the acts and motivations of the Romanian characters.

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