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ADAM AND EVE - PROLEGOMENA AT THE MYTH OF THE PRIMORDIAL PAIR "NEW REALISM" (LIVIU REBREANU)

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Abstract: When talking about the ritual/religious, etc. myth it is required to make the necessary distinction that Pierre Albouy (2012) made regarding French literature, between the notion of myth - reserved to the ritual and religious domain - and the myth in literature - transformed into epos. It is a distinction made by Liviu Rebreanu in the Romanian literature referring to the novel Adam și Eva [Adam and Eve]. In a novel such as Adam și Eva [Adam and Eve] transmigration, eclectic in itself remains only the theoretical scaffolding of the "ways of civilizing the soul". Another focus of the paper is the research of the connection between the Platonic model of the myth of the androgyne, the Biblical model and the freedom of creation of the writer (constructing on one idea). Liviu Rebreanu inserts into the fascination of the feverish search of "the other" in the transcendent principle. Subtle in itself, transmigration remains only the theoretical scaffolding of the "ways of civilizing the soul" on the level of major significances of the novel. The metaphysical solution is that harmony and initial purity can be recovered in a spiritual plan, being sure that the Biblical myth of the original couple to be corrected through the epic through the "Platonic myth of the androgyne." The panorama of individual achievements such as the merging of the two principles - male and female - illustrates the sacred essence of the human being.

Keywords: Liviu Rebreanu; *Adam and Eve*; *new realism.*

0. *Adam şi Eva* [Adam and Eve] General context

If in *Pădurea spânzuraților* [Forest of the Hanged] the philosophy remains the tragic testimony of man's downfall, in *Adam și Eva*, a novel by Liviu Rebreanu, speculation proves its ineffectiveness in the face of death and the individual's fear of cosmic loneliness. As it is in a relationship of coincidence with a metaphysics of the soul, speculation is resized as theosophy: true life is one and unsurpassed, beyond earthly life and death. Life is God." This, as the "rather eclectic" thesis of transmigration - in I. Tihan's opinion - remains only the theoretical scaffolding of the "ways of civilizing the soul", in a novel in which the panorama of individual achievements, seven in number, and the merging of the two principles - male and female - illustrates the divine essence of man. From a synthetic perspective the Rebrenian novel performs the move from the image of the eros, confined as a spiritual effigies in relative (through some couples of aspiration through wholeness from the novels *Ion*, *Crăișorul Horia*) to the image of androgynous wholeness, philosophically related through cosmic predestination. Thematically and from the structural point of view, *Adam și Eva* is distinguished from other works of the metaphysics of eros: From the beginning the erotic-passionate suggestions of the whole writing are visible, together with the particular tendency of other writings to spiritualize

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them, to purify them (Raicu, L. p. 158). Șerban Cioculescu studies the novel from the point of view of the Platonic model, the difference being that Liviu Rebreanu does not develop with sufficient consistency and rigor in the plan of the imaginary, the initial data, the spirit of the myth itself (Cioculescu Ș., 1936, nr. 2). The Platonic reminiscence of the androgyne is associated by Rebreanu with elements belonging to the subtle *metaphysics of the soul*, reflected both in the spirit - soul - God speculation, in the sense of *deja vù* and the symbolism of totality.

1. The aspiration towards the formula of the whole man

In *Amalgam* the writer noted: The soul permanently communicates with the whole cosmos, beyond time and space, beyond matter and void. Within it the past and the future clarify their secrets over life and ephemeral death. It is the unifying character between spirit and matter, with its help we are in connection with those past and those to come, between those who stay and those who leave, between this side and beyond, and finally, between being and nothingness (Liviu Rebreanu, *Dincolo*). The dialogue between Toma Novac and Tudor Aleman revolves essentially around the same serious issue related to a pneumatic reality: The soul does not need words to understand. The soul communicates directly with the spiritual world, with the world of worlds. Walking in Kant's footsteps, Ion Tihan, Liviu Rebreanu identifies in the soul a "cosmic entity", having the value of a "Platonic prototype". The soul has an immaterial identity, becoming "*pure consciousness*" after death. The seven lives sometimes prove insufficient - in Tudor Aleman's vision - to restore all original uniqueness, to be saved from cosmic loneliness. This is why the journey of the primordial man on earth will have to be repeated in other seven-life cycles: How many earthly lives ground up a real life? ... Seven! ... Why seven? O, Lord, Lord, why seven? Because seven is a sacred number! It has always been sacred, in all souls! (Rebreanu, *Opere* 6, p. 22). The mysticism of the seven souls connected to the life of being is an announced topos in the novel *Ion* (the ladies, as if they had seven souls, did not tire at all and smiled). In *Adam și Eva* the symbolism of the number seven is linked to the perfect stance of being through moral virtue. The number seven expresses completeness and perfection everywhere - Wunenburger notes - and is replicated at all material and spiritual levels of the world (Seven planets, metals, virtues, sacraments, gifts of the Holy Spirit, levels of Paradise) (p. 70). In the novel *Ion*, Liviu Rebreanu sums this connotation of perfection of the intellectuals in the village without the intention of metaphysical speculation from *Adam și Eva*, doubled by the mythological detail of the erudite. Through the significance of the number seven - symbolic anatomy of the "blood" under the Bolgia where the dance is situated - we discover "in nuce" from the first novel the aspiration of the writer to formulate the whole man, brought to metaphysical perfection on the patters of the myth of the androgyne, only in the novel published in 1925. The soul is a "metaphysical given" (Tihan I, p. 29). Its faculty to return to unity through love is the anamnesis of the divine, with which "pure consciousness" (the cosmic entity of the soul after death) could not merge through loneliness and meditation. The sequence of the seven lives transforms the soul in a metaphysical given: the feeling of *deja vù* is not the memory of what the "divine spark" in man saw when it was flowing as "pure consciousness" in the cosmic plan, but the memory of the soul-mate whose revelation it had in an earthly life. The characters know how to take advantage of this sentiment in order to communicate directly with the divine. In *Mărturisiri* (1932), Liviu Rebreanu wrote: The pretext of the novel *Adam și Eva* is a real scene experience in September 1918 in Iași. On the

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Lăpușneanu street, in the pattering rain, I met a woman with an umbrella. From afar I was amazed by her huge, green eyes, as if she were frightened, eyes that watched me with a wonder which must have been there in my eyes, too. The woman seemed familiar, although I was aware of the fact that I have never seen her! The way she looked made it perfectly clear that she had the same impression. (Liviu Rebreanu, *Opere* 6, p. 331). The biography of the writer also registered an event based on the feeling of *deja vù.* It is the experience that places the primordial pair under the sign of cosmic predestination: in each of the seven stories the heroes remain unpervert, directly communication with the gods; the feeling of *deja vù* invades them, these feel the need to find the condition of perfect humanity. From this moment eros becomes either devotion, either religious fanaticism.

2. The myth of the androgyne and the Biblical myth

Two myths are part of the set of metaphysical connotations of soul perfection besides sacred symbols: *the myth of the androgyne* and the *biblical myth of Adam and Eve.* When talking about myth in Liviu Rebreanu's work it is required to make the necessary distinction that Pierre Albouy made regarding French literature, between the notion of *myth* - reserved to the ritual and religious domain - and the *myth in literature* - transformed into *epos* (in *recit,* based on Pierre Albouy). It is a distinction the writer himself makes in *Mărturisiri*: The official theosophical theory does not indulge the limitations that a work of art requires. Theosophy tends to become a religion [...]. The novel needs a conflict in order to channel interest. And then, little by little - Rebreanu writes - I made myself a theory that meets the requirements of the fictional novel (Rebreanu, Mărturisiri în Jurnal I, p. 320). The title of the novel maintains through the biblical symbol of the primordial pair the suggestion of paradisiac harmony the fallen man has been seeking throughout history. The metaphysical solution is that harmony and initial purity can be recovered in a spiritual plan, being sure that the Biblical myth of the original couple to be corrected through the epic through the "Platonic myth of the androgyne" (Malița, L., p. 156). In the Platonic tradition the androgyny is the symbol of totality. Liviu Rebreanu inserts into the fascination of the feverish search of "the other" in the transcendent principle. The religious nuance of the soul (fundamental in the novel *Pădurea spânzuraților*) is blurred due to a very general association between the idea of the soul and that of the spirit. The "eternal spirit", infinite "comprehending all" symbolizes essence in the context of a spiritual world with which man's soul communicates directly: And only spirit is essence, the eternal spirit, infinitely comprehending all. Even the material world can be only one side of divine essence (Liviu Rebreanu, *Opere* 6, p. 19). In the metaphysics of the novel the pure spirit is the Absolute, the divine Principle in which the pairs of souls can be found (God is considered the origin and link between the souls in Christianity), after successive reincarnations of great cosmic cycles. The conjugated sentiment of *deja vù*, the soul-spirit binomial identifies another problem: the given of "pure consciousness" is richer in content than our physical existence. In relation with the material world the spirit plays the role of the principle of unity and metamorphosis. It provides the physical and biological transformations and links the whole world in a general organism, remaining the unique principle located above the "material crust" after the regeneration caused by "identification with matter". Each novel is in subsidiary an experience of the presumption of the divine Mystery: from the exploratory stage marked anamnestically by religious symbolism (in *Ion*) to "universal love" understood as a Christian way to penetrate the mystery of the Divine (in *Pădurea spânzuraților*) and to the solution of androgyny signifying one of the paradigms through which the human being rediscovers the Absolute (in *Adam și Eva*) is not only a

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difference of epic formula, but also a fortunate metamorphosis in favour of literary art, of the religious formula. In the *Tratatul de istorie a religiilor* [Treatise on the History of Religions] Mircea Eliade made the necessary distinction between the myth of *divine androgyny* and *human androgyny*. The first one is an "archaic formula of divine bi-unity" and has a "theoretical, metaphysical value" meaning that it expresses in biological terms the coexistence of the opposites, of the cosmological principles (male and female) within the bosom of Divinity (Eliade, M., 1992, p. 384). In the myth of human androgyny the divine myth forms the "paradigm of the religious experience of man." The Rabbinic tradition makes it clear that Adam himself, the primordial man, was sometimes conceived as androgynous. Thus the "birth" of Eve would not have been definitive, only the "splitting of the primordial androgyne into two beings." Mircea Eliade mentions in this regard the following text from A.H. Krappe: "Adam and Eve were made back to back, attached at their shoulders; then God separated them with an axe." In the Greek tradition Plato identifies the significance of humanity of the first people also by the image of the androgyne, being "round, the back and the sides being circularly joined" (Plato, The Banquet, 60). The condition of the androgyne is periodically updated, in Eliade's vision, through the "circumcision operations" and through the ceremonies of the change of garments. Primitive man has done so, even and only for a moment, the unity of sexes, in order to acquire a state which facilitates the overall understanding of the cosmos. The primary totalization can be also explained by the need for the periodical "orgy" that disintegrates the forms with the aim to reach the recovery of the One-Father from before Creation. Wisdom and the techniques of "metaphysical philosophy" are other experiences inextricably linked to the myth of the androgyne.

In the Rebrenian literature androgyny is a paradigm of a state of transcendence and suppression of opposites (Sergiu Al. George 1981, p 286) achieved both by feverishly searching for the other, through the symbol of a perfect humanity (the couple, the gods, the swan, anthroponymy) or through that *orge* in which the opposites coincide, thus producing a Dionysian detachment from a history improper of man (Petre Petre-Nadina). Mahavira, Unamonu, Gungunum, Toma Novac are avatars of the divine couple, with a brand of emotional memory of previous existences like that of the gods reincarnated in human form, from Indian mythology (Schopenhauer called the phenomenon palingenesis). The differences in relation to romantic literature are imposed by themselves: avatars are reincarnations of the mortals, with limited divine powers to preserve the memory of the past (this phenomenon is called metempsychosis by Schopenhauer). The law of reincarnation at Mihai Eminescu for instance is forgetting. Dan-Dionysus has no memory of the past: you drank so many times from the tasteless and forgetting water of Lethe (Mihai Eminescu, *Proză literară*). Baltazar, the old beggar from the short-story *Avatarii faraonului Tlá* is rather a Jatismara person than an avatar of the Pharaoh - Amita Bhose considered. The topic re-establishes from a perspective other than religion the connection between the two antitheses, defining the thinking of the novelist, between CIVILIZATION and NATURE, to suggest the sentiment of divine origin of man. In *Pădurea spânzuraților* Bologa expresses his contempt for civilization, he argues in a eulogy of primitive man placed on principles of Christian morality. Experiencing the consciousness of alienation much more acutely in an improper history, the characters of *Adam și Eva* are defined within the limits of the same antithesis, beyond the paradox of any form of civilization through regression in individual history, linked by the Adamic mystery of the couple.

3. The idea of androgyny and the literary models

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The fascination with the primordial beginnings as with the possibilities of becoming a spiritual being betrays the myth of totality that Liviu Rebreanu himself so much admired in Goethe. This fact entitled Dan Mănucă to note that the placement of the biblical image in the mythical frame, in *Adam și Eva* it is not only connected to assigning some historical roots rather vague than religious, but also to a chain of motives with deep justification in universal literature (Dan Mănucă 1995, 159). The philosophical idea of androgyny reached Rebreanu to through the metaphysical or occult studies, but rather by the influence of some literary models. Having a German cultural education the novelist could exploit this topic both through the German romanticism and through that of the writers from the 18th century such as Lessing. And the translations produced between 1918 and 1919 offered him the opportunity to get in touch with the myth of the androgyne. Goethe himself believed in reincarnation. In love with Charlotte von Stein, the creator of Faust motivates in a way this inclination in a confession made to Wieland: I cannot explain the meaning, the power this woman has on me but by transmigration. Yes, we were once man and wife! Now we recognize each other in the mist of spirits. I have nothing for us - past, future, everything. From this conviction the one act play *The brother and sister* was born, based on the idea of the erotic instinct. Building his work on an idea, ("on a thesis", Ion Tihan mentions) the novelist proceeds similar to the German writer in *Afinități elective* [Elective affinities]. In an article from 1932 he wrote, referring to Goethe's work: On *Afinități elective* the poet said himself to Eckerman that it would be the only bulkier work made after an idea where he would have sent to prove an idea (Rebreanu, Opere 15, 1992, p. 218). Not even the detail that Goethe was inspired by his own life in his famous work does not escape the novelist ("joy and pain" caused by the love for the adoptive daughter of the bookseller Frommann, called Minna Herzlieb), the autobiographic detail being relevant in the case of the novel *Adam și Eva* as well: The pretext of the novel *Adam şi Eva* is a real scene experience in September 1918 in Iași. On the Lăpușneanu street, in the pattering rain, I met a woman with an umbrella. From afar I was amazed by her huge, green eyes, as if she were frightened, eyes that watched me with a wonder which must have been there in my eyes, too. The woman seemed familiar, although I was aware of the fact that I have never seen her! The way she looked made it perfectly clear that she had the same impression (Liviu Rebreanu, *Opere* 6, p. 331). The fascination with the myth of existence, totalizing for every history of the couple, springs from other two autobiographical experiences the ones the novelist puts in correlations with the *drama of forbidden love*, literary motif with deep resonances in universal literature. It is about two failures, caused by the Hungarian actress during passage through Bistrița (where Liviu Rebreanu attended the German high-school), and by the daughter of the Saxon chimney sweep. The view that at the origin of the most valuable works there is a personal experience, is universal. The first verses of Valmiki, the singer of the *Ramayana* - opera which Rebreanu was familiar with directly, as well as *Sakuntala* are based on personal experience, that is the pain caused by the killing of a bird's pair by a hunter: Pain makes him talk incessantly about the sad fate of the two birds. He realizes that onto his lips words come that are placed in a certain way and have a beautiful musicality: they take the shape of a marvellous poem. (Ramayana, *Iubirea călăuză,* 1997, p. 12). Under the power of the bookish model, religious and mythological *Adam și Eva* transgresses the bibliographical given of *forbidden and unhappy love* through the interacting pathos of a novel of the Absolute. The motif remains in the background of the book. Recovering perfect human condition in which the attributes are annihilated and the opposites coincide, through a ring-type scheme of plans it is placed: from the metaphysics of reincarnation, regression to the divine transgresses ontologically the cultural model the

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expression of which we can find in the eternal ideal of the *wise person.* The wisest of the wise, the monk (*Adeodatus*), the literate (Gungunum), the philosopher (Axius, Toman Novac), the atheist (Gaston) are projections in the mirror of the wise person who tends to suppress from his existence and consciousness any type of "extremes". Through wisdom it strives to acquire what Mircea Eliade called "the state of perfect indifference", the avatars coveting to become immune to pleasure and pain. It is the *sine qua non* condition of the perfect heavenly meeting and of spiritual maturity, nevertheless insufficient for the Soul. The protagonists are subject to a systematic intellectual, religious, philosophical, etc. accumulation that favours the deepening of *devotion* as a sentiment similar to the sacred. They are passionate about sacred stories, tied through their symbolism and texture to eros and the mysticism of the soul. Only the stories about gods or civilizing heroes provide access, raise awareness and penetration into the fabric of the soul of the avatar, through the fact that it refers to the divine origin of human sentiments and to the immortality of being, through the sacerdotalism of love. In every chapter curiosity leads to the exploration of archetypal situations. The fact explains the existing analogies between the primordial man (Amon, Osiris, Isis, etc.) and their human avatars. These do not look through any of the morphological components of culture, the power over things, but a way of communication with the gods, born of unspoken awareness: the cultural accumulation, the public or religious tribulations ontologically fix the avatar in the patterns of an *unfit history.* Mahavira expects for a "heavenly virgin to arise"; Unamonu undertands that "carnal pleasure does not slake the fire of the heart." With learning Gungunum forgets about Hamma, except that she appers at night "in all his dreams, in his heart, calling him, rebuking him." "The more he tried to be enlightened", the more the void in Axius's soul grew. Not only through the sacred text is the sacerdotalism of love claimed, but also through the preliminary signs of predestination of the *charismatic type* (numinous properties, for example). From the thematical point of view Liviu Rebreanu's literature is not one-dimensional. In *Adam și Eva*, the novelist is not content to understand the mystery of existence only through the sublime perspective of eros. He is eager to enter the inner, esoteric labyrinths of existence and through the religious felling, through the attitude of man to himself and to God. In *Cursul de filozofie a religiei* [Course on the Philosophy of Religion], Lucian Blaga (Blaga, 1994, 223) distinguishes the religious feeling which sums up the *mysterium tremendum* of Rudolf Otto, and the collateral feelings such as faith in salvation, trust and love, a dichotomy sustained by his contemporary as well. Using Blaga's classification this sentiment is manifested at Liviu Rebreanu under the most varied aspects. It can spread in the soul as a "peaceful wave" (Servillia) or can define the state of tranquillity and deepest silence of the soul (Ms. Bologa). It transforms into a "fluid state of the soul", as a resonance that extends, but which ends up turned off, the soul re-entering its profane state again (Ms. Herdelea). It is a feeling that can arise thundering in the soul [Bologa]. In its negative side the sacred sentiment takes demonic forms, it is degraded until being confused with thrill (Maria). There are some qualitative aspects in the forms of religious manifestation which Lucian Blaga classifies as "inferior, barbaric grades" and "purified, sublimated grades." The sentiment of divine mystery cannot be produced by nothing created, not even the most frightening or the strongest one - Lancrăm, the philosopher writes. An illustrative example can be found in *Pădurea spânzuraților.* In *Adam și Eva* the sentiment of the sacred is doubled by the religious tradition of Antiquity to sacralize the elements of nature, the objects of the surrounding world. The text abounds with terms that express *the search for the sacred* (sacred glade, Saint Ganga, heavenly virgins, etc.) not only for Divinity.

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4. Individual existence

The repudiation of history into which has a cultural and social aspect, in relation to the divine mystery, is an ubiquitous topos, which led to the birth of some typically Rebrenian motifs, religious, ethical, ascetic, philosophical: the search for the divine in the personified elements of the natural environment (*Adam și Eva*) in ascetism or in the sacred text, the refusal of earthly glory, equivalent to abandoning the relative and turning back the being towards the divine (*Servilia*), the topos of humility, charity, Christian faith, love, understood as modalities of redemption. Not even anthropology is foreign to the Christian or pre-Christian vein. The atheist existentialists have formulated the idea of the one-dimensional man: Heidegger considered that the authenticity of the individual was determined through existential anguish and is dominated by the consciousness of Absolute death. Reporting man to the divine Absolute, in his *Treatise on Christian Anthropology* Petre Țuțea considered that this is non-existing. It thus becomes the play between eternity and time... (Țuțea, P. 1993, p. 19). The existence of the Rebrenian character does not happen only between life and death. The writer acutely experiences the consciousness that the "whole", primordial man has decomposed historically, driven by the effigy of progress and the thirst for self-perfection. The characters from *Adam și Eva* understand - paradoxically - that they perfect themselves through knowledge, philosophy, etc. Apostol Bologa harbours the same conviction. This man, whether belonging to an ancient Egyptian, Chaldean, Roman or Babylonian civilization or to the modern world, is permanently confronted with the religious man (Apostol Bologa), with the hope of eternity, through the divine-human and mystic communion of the eros. Sooner or later he understands that his intrinsic situation keeps him captive, interdicting him to exceed his predestination or ideal, which is the limitation of his spirit, while transcendence facilitates his access to the divine Absolute. Philosophy keeps Apostol Bologa and Axius within the limits of profane history - captives of their own self. Liberation from the terror of history, from the fear of cosmic loneliness is stimulated only through the effort of seeking God or the divine pair, not through philosophy or other forms of secular culture.

Two are the conclusions that arise from our study: from a general perspective the panorama of individual achievements such as the merging of the two principles - male and female - illustrates the sacred essence of the human being. Secondly the biblical symbol of the primordial pair, the suggestion of the paradisiacal harmony - which man has been looking for since its falling - are, finally, illustrative for the concept of "new realism" theoreticized in several interventions of the writer, but little exploited in the critical studies of the Romanian culture.

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