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DOCTORAL THESIS

Victor Papilian – Retrieving the writer

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SUMMARY

Key words: Victor Papilian, monography, interwar literature, the modern novel, realism, naturalism

The thesis, *Victor Papilian – Retrieving the writer*, intends to research Victor Papilian's work through the perspective of "recovery" and in the same time aims to identify valences with literary-artistic value. The recovery and bringing up to date action of the writer and scientist Victor Papilian responds to an ethical and aesthetic need considering the outstanding personality of the cultural, literary, medical and academic world, to whom we refer to.

Practicing various "reading" techniques, we will mainly focus on Victor Papilian's literary work, with the intention of revealing his literary potential, developing the amalgamation of perspectives and, above all, revealing the author's "masks" and their "play" in both short stories, novels and dramaturgy, relating critical, whenever the situation will impose it, on the critical reception of his literary formula.

A first hypothesis starts from the ascertainment that the writer Victor Papilian walks cautiously in the field of literature, although he was no stranger to innovations, experiments, techniques, and methods existing at national and European level. Therefore, his work will "open" gradually, with the clumsiness of the beginnings and the Cartesian doubt of the scientist. The writer gradually refines his style, initially in "short prose", finally succeeding in "emancipating" the genre, as stated by Vintilă Horia:

"A fusion of real and fantastic from which the very artistic type of Mr. V. Papilian emerges. His short story is a combination of plans to support the outbreak of the conflict that is always resolved to the detriment of reality. One could speak of the pessimism of this scientist who remains puzzled at the end of each experiment and who suspects beyond the conglomeration of human cells the existence of a mystery that escapes, under the control of the

scalpel and the microscope. Convinced atheists, Mr. Papilian's heroes are always struck by the unpredictable, by the living seal of a power about which their science had taught them nothing."

Another hypothesis takes into account the fact that the profile of the writer Victor Papilian and scientist is permanently split between doubt and faith without pretense, a paradox that is felt, in the subsidiary, at the level of his work, especially in the literary sectors where the "gândirist" phenomenon is predominant. The most important and valuable part of his work remains the short story, which I insisted on, followed by the novel and, finally, seconded by dramaturgy, confirmed only in sporadic and schematic attempts.

This thesis falls within the scope of the literary monography, without intending to create an exhaustive approach and analysis of the work and cultural-literary and scientific activities of Victor Papilian. Thus, our doctoral approach is concerned with identifying the invariance of the writer's narrative formula, in order to place it into the dynamics of literary experiments and within the range of the modernist canon.

The twentieth century begins with a bloody change in the European and world map through which territorial autonomy, border drawing and national security were notions (re) interpreted and (re) enhanced on a belligerent background. The interwar era, a period of transition marked by profound changes, represents a moment of reference in human, artistic, cultural, industrial, social, etc. The mutations produced sum up evolution, avant-garde and decadence alike. Despite the fact that the models taken over in various fields come to bring new impulses, innovative ideas, they continue to maintain the uncertainty. Victor Papilian will start his literary activity on this fertile but unstable field. The great scientist, the exceptional doctor, a prominent personality of the time, will start his literary career shyly, under the pseudonym Sylvius Rolando. He publishes most of his works in specialized magazines, as well as in small publishing houses, in small editions, being somehow convinced that he will not carve out a meritorious place among the leading writers of the time. Although he was convinced that he had an important cultural, literary and artistic word to say, Victor Papilian will remain in a penumbra, voluntarily assumed in his writings.

¹ Vintilă Horia, Victor Papilian and the short story art, Gândirea Magazine, Year XVII, no. 8 / 1938, p. 430.

Our approach aims to (re) analyze his writings (selected from his own option), considering that the writer Victor Papilian deserves extra attention from both literary critics and readers, who may find unique values in his work, including interdisciplinary, if, of course, they are willing to accept the "clumsiness" of a scientific writer.

The thesis is based on the model of the monographic study being structured in four chapters: *Victor Papilian - promoter of culture*, short stories, novels and dramaturgy of Victor Papilian. Our argument, which we intend to validate in the following, consists in the (re) application of a research methodology specific to the field, on some representative works from our point of view, to illustrate the main purpose, that of (re) capitalizing Victor Papilian's literature. Quickly reviewed, Papilian's works did not receive due attention from literary critics, few were those who leaned with interest on his work in a real and systematic way, especially Transylvanian critics (Mircea Zaciu, Mircea Popa, Constantin Cubleşan and others) but also Titus Bălaşa, G. Călinescu and others.

The purpose and objectives of doctoral research

The doctoral thesis, *Victor Papilian – retrieving the writer*, is presented, at first sight, as a monographic study, but in essence it represents a complex approach, of recovery and (re) valorization of a significant literary work, far too little capitalized by literary criticism. The cultural and literary area, which we have in mind, is concretely delimited and determined: the inter- and post-war era, respectively the modernist context in which the author subject to our approach falls and, in subsidiary, socio-political, cultural, literary and artistic." Also, the canon to which it is subsumed is not clearly delimited, but it certainly has a significant modernist vein present in short and novel prose.

The approach underlying this exercise of (re) construction and recovery consists in identifying a certain invariant of the narrative formula of the writer Victor Papilian, the purpose itself being the identification and valorization of his literature, which we will relate to the context of interwar literary-artistic experiments. The literature practiced by Victor Papilian is difficult to frame under a certain literary current or a single narrative formula. This dynamic and fruitful corpus, which we rely on, is an authentic one through the very "experiences" and "experiments" which creates it. To the dominant realist vein are added surrogates such as

naturalism, Freudianism, positivism, along with some modernist influences. Without proposing to create an exhaustive analysis of the work, we will identify those creations categorized as "unusual", with the help of which we will put our hypotheses into practice. Papilian's work is not a part of the cycle of "literary curiosities", as it cannot be subsumed in any defining literary value.

Walking on the realistic vein, established by Agârbiceanu, Papilian will distance himself and will reappear at certain moments from this "red thread" pursued in the direction of his writings. Due to this fact, we will adapt our exegesis according to the concept launched by Umberto Eco, that of "open work", thanks to which we will be able to identify new and new valences. Al. Protopopescu notes in connection with the history of the realistic novel:

"Between 1900-1913, the very notion of beauty is associated with the idea of depth of soul, realism turning into a matter of inner essence. Since not all reality is Romanian, it goes without saying that even the novel cannot afford to be a raw reality from one end to the other. The reality becomes Romanian insofar as it supports the expansion of consciousness on it. From an eminently representative genre, the novel tends to turn into an interpretive genre"

The conceptual landmarks that formed the basis of the monographic research

Our approach clearly aims at the physiognomy of interwar literature, as it is revealed in such a fruitful period, abundant in "experiments", innovations, techniques, models taken and (re) interpreted from the perspective of (re) circulation of themes and literary motifs, etc. It also refers to the issue of establishing the modernist canon, with all its implications, a crucial moment in the evolution of Romanian literature. In this sense, we realize in all four chapters, the morphological and stylistic mapping of the interwar cultural space, in this case of the literary one. The approximation of this context is achieved gradually by presenting the terminology specific to literary "genres" (forms), by presenting the poetics of realism, naturalism and modernism, but also by presenting the issues involved in the Romanian novel of the twentieth century, together of the European interwar novel, without eluding the dramaturgical segment. Practicing, in general, such a thematic critique, by identifying historical contexts, as well as by capturing the course of each literary genre, we feel entitled to say that our approach aims to

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² Al. Protopopescu, *The Romanian psychological novel*, Eminescu Publishing, Bucharest, 1978, p. 26.

cover a wide range of means by which great literary works are made. Drawing on the "points of view" of the novel theorists, of the investigation of the narratological coordinates of the canon, our analysis aims at a wide spectrum of the preoccupations of the writer Victor Papilian, within which we will identify multiple directions of manifestation, as well as some reflections of antimodernism, metaphysical naturalism, "Freudian-type" Dostoevsky's type", etc.

Research methodology

In our analysis we used on the one hand the cultural-sociological perspective, the thematic, and on the other hand we brought to the fore the advantages of "case study", comparativist approach, literary and stylistic analysis practiced in the academic range. The research was mainly based on the study of the literary-artistic, social-historical and cultural-scientific context on the basis of which the actual analysis is carried out, as well as on the study of the work and life of Victor Papilian. The theoretical approach is seconded by the critical and analytical one. Through the theoretical approach we establish the concepts with which we will operate during the exegesis and through the critical we aim to receive the work of Victor Papilian by literary criticism followed sequentially, in each of the three chapters dedicated to short stories, novels and dramaturgy in which we allocated a subchapter in which present the opinions of literary criticism. In the analytical optics, the original, innovative part of the research is the one in which with the help of the "case study" we carry out canonical literary analyzes using the previously exposed instruments, we will consider the advantages of the university critique.

Description of the situation and identification of research problems

If previous research has approached the work of Victor Papilian monographically, focusing on the biaxial characteristics, those of the scientist and those of the writer, musicologist, trainer and literary guide, this research aims to distance itself from this type of monograph and identifies the novelty elements proposed by the personality of the writer and scientist Victor Papilian, insisting on recovering the writer and revisiting his literary vision, to the detriment of a "historiographical perspective" on literary and scientific work (especially in

the field of anatomy). A conclusive example in this direction is the monographic study *The Life* of Victor Papilian - a delayed destiny, by Titus Bălașa and which can be considered the most dedicated to the multivalent personality of Victor Papilian and not only to the scientist, in this case the university professor of at the Faculty of Medicine of Cluj.

During our research, the problems identified were, first of all, those of a material nature, consisting in the lack of a complete edition of the works of Victor Papilian, literature from which only some titles were printed, and this many years ago and in prints. small to publishers unknown today, with limited circulation. Another difficulty, identified by Titus Bălaşa, is the lack of concrete biographical data in connection with some questionable sequences from Papilian's life (some of them were specified and identified by the author of the above-mentioned monograph).

In the absence of these sources, we considered ourselves satisfied with the only biographical work written by the author, *Memories from the theater*, published by Tineretului Publishing House in 1968 and which sums up moments in his life, especially memories from the time he was theater director, sequences related to characteristic humor and detachment. We specify that some of the manuscripts that, after his arrest, were stored in the National Security's archives in Bistrita, ended up "bypassed" in the hands of some persons of "good will" who intended to sell them in France. What could be consulted is what was "recovered" after September 19, 1996, when the Service for Combating Economic-Financial Crime within the Bistrița-Năsăud Police "made an unexpected descent" to the place where the writer's manuscripts were kept. The archive was recovered, examined and registered as a "heritage document". After the validation of the expertise, the manuscripts were registered by the County Office of National Cultural Heritage Bistrița-Năsăud and can be consulted. I did not discover texts that would change the background of the writer.

Another problem, difficult in terms of researching the literary work, is related to the parsimony of the critical arsenal, relatively weak compared to the critical approach enjoyed by other writers of the time, minor writers too. To this unforgivable ignorance can be added the impressionistic humor, the commendation, the courtesy of the welcoming criticism of the university professor, the director of theater and philharmonic, the founder and director of the magazine "The gift of time. Literature, art, science" (February - September, October 1930) or, during the Vienna Dictate, the cultural mentor of the intellectual group *Thesis*.

The novelty and originality of doctoral research

The novelty and originality of this research consists in identifying, presenting and reinterpreting unusual narrative registers that we found in the work of Victor Papilian and on which we leaned honestly and perseveringly to reveal the creative potential "assumed" with obstinacy by the author during his life and unnoticed to his real tension by the literary criticism of the time and, worse, not by those who knew his aesthetic concerns and options closely.

Therefore, the present doctoral study contributes to the correction of the hermeneutic perspective on the work, as well as to its placement in the context that generated it. Of course, we did not avoid the empathic perspective, the emotions that determined our choice for this human, cultural and literary model, hence the flat homage paid to the writer and, especially, to the man Victor Papilian.

The topicality of the theme comes from the desire to "complete" and repair certain gaps marked in the tapered canvas of the literary historical context, as well as to bring back to the public's attention of literature a complex writer, whose work we consider to be far from exhausted meanings.

Architecturally, the thesis is structured in four chapters: 1. *Victor Papilian - promoter of culture*; 2. *Victor Papilian's short stories*; 3. *The novels of Victor Papilian*; 4. *Dramaturgy by Victor Papilian*. The chapters follow, from a chronological perspective, the destiny of man, and later of the writer Victor Papilian, gradually annexing the necessary alloys in shaping an effigy close to his own cultural and literary-artistic identity, first.

The first chapter configures the profile of the plurivalent personality of the scientist and culture Victor Papilian, placed in the context of the epoch and of his identity parallax in complementary sequences: 1.1. Victor Papilian - complex personality of the XXth century, 1.2. The masks of the intellectual (doctor, scientist, teacher), 1.3. The artist's masks (writer, writer, musician, speaker). Following in the light of chronology the destiny of Victor Papilian, this biographical chapter has the role of reconstructing the fractured portrait of the personality of the man of culture and science, in order to offer a more complex understanding of the work and implicitly its relation to the intercultural dynamics where it was created and broadcast.

The second chapter is focused on short stories and begins with the presentation of the advantages of the theoretical approach we opted for in the narration of narratology, first of all. Through a historical overview of realism and naturalism, as directions on which Victor Papilian's short stories are folded, the sequences dedicated to the ethics of realism, naturalism and avatars of these literary schools, include details on the agonistic relationship between realism and naturalism. in our modern literature. There are illustrative subchapters such as: Realism, naturalism, and their avatars; Realism Vs. Naturalism; Naturalism - short history, "Zolism" and the revolution of medicine, Terminological options, Ethical-aesthetic predominance of Romanian naturalism, etc. These opposing attitudes, signaled in Victor Papilian's literature, are revalued by the points of view advanced in: (Pre) figurations of "metaphysical naturalism" in Victor Papilian's short stories - an "anti-modern" approach; The thematic development of the cycle "Oltenian quarrel. Short stories, sketches, stories" (1976); Victor Papilian - an antimodernist perspective on the world - Case study: the short story "Horror", as well as subchapters dedicated to fantastic short stories, religious or creative localism identified in the volumes of short stories "Oltenian and Transylvanian". After anchoring in a theoretical horizon able to support and validate our analysis / case studies, the chapter deals closely with the fantastic short story of the writer, the literary sector with the most "positive appreciations" from literary criticism.

Our exegesis focused, on the one hand, on the ways of manifestation of the erotic ailing, as it was transfigured in Romantic Story, as well as of the pathological approached in the Freudian grid, exemplified in the short story *Obsession*. The thesist question regarding the launch of "creative localism" is debated in the cycles of Transylvanian and Oltenian short stories, invigorated by the appeal to irony and grotesque, predominant categories in this type of short story. Of particular interest will be the investigation into the excerpt on religious short stories.

The third chapter deals with Victor Papilian's novels, the approach advancing in the same note, starting with the presentation of the theoretical framework, in this case with a short history of the narrative formula of the novel sec. twentieth century, doubled by a subchapter dedicated to the interwar Romanian novel, respectively to the approach of Victor Papilian as a representative of the realistic novel. The critical reception of the novels includes a systematized review of the significant critical opinions regarding Papilian's novels. As an additional clarification, we mention the fact that the study benefits from a conclusive point of view that

underlines the relevance of the case studies interested in the share of *Balzacianism in the novel In the Faith of the Seven Candlesticks*. "Freudian-type Dostoevskyism" is followed by texts from the trilogy *The Torment of Immortality*, as well as the *Passion and the instinct or the world of the urban periphery* reflected in the novel *Coana Truda*.

The fourth chapter deals with the dramaturgy that he approaches hermeneutically in the same way as the previous analyzes. The context of interwar dramaturgy is outlined from the first subchapter by the approximation of the interwar dramaturgical context. Of particular interest is the systematization of the forms of interwar theater, while the "case studies" aim, on the one hand, the drama of the "spiritualist" type approached comparatively by reference to the short story *Passed* and the passion drama from the short story "Directed".

In summary, our monographic approach focused on an applied presentation of narrative experiments, the literary imaginary and the thematic universe.

Our perspective on the literary creation of the writer Victor Papilian is filtered through the flow of his protein evolution, an evolution that involves accommodation with the experience that the modern novel proposes.

Of course, this evolution is largely symptomatic of what is accepted as / through transliterature interested in violating the boundaries between fiction and factuality with visible effects in the "transformation of medicine into literature", with the folding of Romanian fiction on some issues particulars from the medical life of the Romanian world from the intersection of the second millennium.

Conclusions

The basic feature of the writer Victor Papilian, as it appears from the present research, is located in the sphere of self-teaching, permanently present throughout his literary, musical, cultural activity, in general. The tireless researcher and scientist has worked diligently in multiple directions and fields, being a pioneer primarily in the field of medicine (anatomy), but also in the fields of anthropology, literature, musicology, culture, theater, etc. The versatility of his spirit will constantly develop, his professional and personal evolution being the basis of his concerns.

Our approach aimed at identifying some samples with a certain degree of literary-artistic value present in his work. Out of the obvious desire to pay due attention to the obstinately practiced literature by the scientist Victor Papilian, I tried an objective relation to the morphology and narrative syntax (mainly) of the literary forms that the writer promoted by discussing, whenever the situation he demanded, the way in which his literature was received by inter- and post-war literary critics.

One of the possible hesitations of our literary criticism and history in fixing a special place in the context of Romanian realism is in the discreet way of manifesting his literary vocation the writer, publishing his works in small publishing houses, which did not attract the attention of literary critics. he hurried to "label" as "trials" the writings of a scientist with aspirations in the field of literature. Although our analysis was not an easy one, especially due to the difficult identification of some of the works, which were published in small editions, at local publishing houses, without being republished, our approach reached its goal, that of identifying "Authentic literary outbursts" in the work of Victor Papilian. The multidisciplinary and versatility of his personality, as Mircea Zaciu remarks, made it more difficult for him to highlight his literary and artistic qualities, the author being a first-rate personality of Romanian medicine.

In terms of short stories, the "resuscitation" of naturalism, which we followed closely, along with identifying the invariance of the narrative formula at the level of fantasy short stories, allowed us to identify and highlight the "innovative" direction of short prose. Along with these priorities, we followed the ways in which the coordinates of the "creative localism" rendered, in the case of short stories, were fixed by re-placing the narrative formula in the context of the dynamics of interwar experiments.

The partial conclusions regarding the short story, the most generous and eloquent part from a literary point of view, highlight, on the one hand the outline of a faithful perspective on his work, treated in a psycho-critical way, and on the other hand, it confirms representativeness by presenting and investigating texts belonging to all types of short stories experienced by the author, in order to present both the virtues and the limits of his writings. We agreed with G. Călinescu's opinion regarding the overcoming of naturalism and "modern realism" by promoting literary models such as Victor Papilian's short stories:

"Mr. Papilian's new voice is equivalent to a lifeline. He not only restores contact with the tradition of glorious memory of the Romanian short story, but opens, for the powerful who will be able to follow him, an unprecedented path. Stuck for a long time in the fetid swamp of a naturalism that was not at least of Romanian tradition, lost in the dry cocoons of that modern realism that rhymes with all the experiences of the West, our young literature can extract from the solid lesson that Mr. Papilian offers the living essence of a poetic burn."³

Victor Papilian's novels, ample social frescoes, are based on the experience of short stories reused as a creative "foundation" of Romanian architecture. True to the method of analysis practiced on the short stories, we reviewed the poetics of the novels, by referring to the multiple directions of manifestation of the artistic self, fixed under the auspices of realism. Therefore, we targeted Balzacianism, the world of the periphery, Freudian-type Dostoevskyism, psychological analysis, the pathological "case", etc. as options characteristic of Victor Papilian's novels. The "case studies" applied to the novels identified the central direction in which the author folds, namely the "ethics of realism", developed in the complex light of his narrative form (s). This approach also identified the effects of Victor Papilian's visible distancing from the ideology of "Gândirea", to which religious short stories were reported, presented in a special dedicated subchapter. A special category, as a literary value, belongs to the construction of the character, an option that, in the novel, is much more eloquently structured from a narratological point of view.

Regarding the literary "destiny" of the Papilian scientist, we referred to the opinion of Liviu Petrescu who, in his extensive study, Poetics of postmodernism, dedicated to the "ages of the novel", underlined the fact that "early modernism", in the parallax of which I noticed Victor Papilian, he was particularly concerned with "defining a scientific knowledge, knowledge that is said to be in the highest degree characteristic" of the prose practiced by this author. Numerous discussions revolve around the "positive method", which is limited to the technique of "believing only the facts, of admitting no other means of solving all problems than the observation of the facts."

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³ G. Călinescu, *goted study*, p. 433.

⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 16.

Claude Bernard, on the other hand, says Liviu Petrescu, does not hesitate to reveal an extremely important issue, that of doubt that hovers, despite the advancement of science, on the unexplored aspects of reality, in immediate or fictionalized version. Thus, quoting Claude Bernard, Liviu Petrescu notes that, at the base of the scientific experiment, there is, Cartesian speaking, doubt. As we would demonstrate, there are at stake principles not at all foreign to Victor Papilian's scientific conception and literary choice, this curiosity dependent on the axis of doubt reflected, of course, in the sphere of his short stories and novels.

Dramaturgy, the sector classified as inferior to prose, has its own directions of propagation, mainly due to Victor Papilian's experience as director of the National Theater in Cluj, which he will decant and capitalize on in most of his plays. Familiar with the new acquisitions in the area of interest of theatrology, the playwright Papilian manifests, at the same time, the role of writer, screenwriter, director and actor. I remembered that his plays were blamed for the superficiality of the conflict, the artificiality of the character's construction, the predominance of the philosophical substratum, etc., a fact that we do not dispute. What we have identified, however, as representative is the unusual perspective, the integrated approach of different visions in a dynamic dramaturgical corpus, meant to capture the "scene of life" in the complexity of its forms of manifestation. Our analysis aimed at passionate and spiritualist drama, by identifying the themes and literary motives that anticipate some acquisitions in the sphere of modernism ("the world as a stage", "acting and authorial mask", "the condition of the artist / genius man"), fruited by Luigi Pirandello, playwright to whom we approached him through the "double continuity of living and reasoning" between character, actor and author or by some of our interwar playwrights:

"These dramas express the turmoil of the scientist's conscience, lacking the support of a philosophical conception that would satisfy him and give him the coveted certainties. But they also express the formal, tectonic, and dramatic expressions of a good connoisseur of contemporary theater. Of course, in this sense, many book echoes can be detected, without the dramatic fabric having assimilated them, the artificial character of some attempts being visible."

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⁵ Mircea Zaciu, *qoted study.*, p. 368.

Victor Papilian transposed in his great work a significant part of the experiences of the scientist, whose life was a permanent flight in search of the truth and the real meanings of human existence.

That is why we consider that Victor Papilian's literature is valuable by its very nature, that of an exponent of a possible reality reconstructed fictionally from fragments, authentic "slices of life":

"The myth of the transformative power of the scientist was born against the background of a climate of confidence and optimism, established as a result of unprecedented progress made in a very short time, especially by the natural sciences. Paradoxically, it may only seem that this vigorous scientific optimism goes hand in hand with a rather pronounced philosophical pessimism, the roots of which should be sought, there is no doubt, especially in the theses of Kantian agnosticism."

According to Liviu Petrescu, the scientist Victor Papilian also adheres to such a perspective, being permanently dominated by an optimism and a total confidence in science and its ability to discover the real truths of existence, but it is also marked by a "philosophical" pessimism, as Liviu Petrescu calls him, who intervenes when science is not enough and is outdated in discovering, questioning and revealing the personal truths of the human being. That is why the "postponed destiny" of the writer Victor Papilian will be marked especially by the pessimism of a "philosophical" nature, remaining in the shadows in an assumed and accepted way.

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⁶ Liviu Petrescu, qoted *study*, p. 19.

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