

IDENTIFYING ARCHETYPES IN SOCIAL DYNAMICS. CONTEXTUALIZING THE ARCHETYPAL WORLD

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Abstract: *Cultural models, the collective consciousness, the collective memory can make up a triad needed to recover the dominant values of a culture.*

The cultural models generated by the rural community viewed as a patriarchal village in the Romanian space are a topic of current debate in the context of globalization. However, the process of model destruction is older, marked by the transition from one political system to another - in the example we bring forth, from the patriarchal village to collectivization in the communist society.

We support our comparative approach with arguments from the literary universe of a Romanian writer, holder of the Herder Prize for Literature: Marin Sorescu. The comparative analysis shows that in the Romanian culture, its tradition and values have been staples for different cultural ages and social contexts, and the creators have historically and culturally defined time and space.

Not only does Marin Sorescu rebuild an archetypal world, but he also rebuilds a world of Beginnings, reconfiguring archetypes, myths and symbols. The spectacle of the archaic world is thus restored to the Romanian culture.

Keywords: *cultural models, collective consciousness, collective memory, archetypal world, the Romanian village.*

Introduction

Cultural models, the collective consciousness, the collective memory can become a triad needed to recover the dominant values of a culture. Franz Uri Boas and Edward Sapir have defined culture as characterized by its patterns, a certain style that can be exemplified at any time through exemplary narrative nuclei, even when they have been only been the co-ordinates of some models which have lasted through history.

In his volume, the *Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (1912), Émile Durkheim developed a theory of “collective consciousness” consisting of collective representations, the common feelings of all the members of a community. Hence the use of the phrase “collective personality” similar to “collective consciousness”.

Ralph Linton added another informational layer to the definition of culture: “a life code of a society.” Culture provides the members of a community with a guide to life events¹.

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¹ Ralph Linton, *The Cultural Background of Personality*, New York, Appleton-Century-Croft, 1945.

We bring arguments for the cultural models generated by the rural community viewed as a patriarchal village in the Romanian space in a comparative excursion in the creative universe of a Romanian writer, holder of the Herder Prize for Literature: Marin Sorescu. In order to substantiate our approach, we try to answer the question of Rudolf Rezsöházy²: are our values mortal parameters that disappear during social transformations or have we come to think outside the bounds of time and to share some of them, beyond ages and cultures?³ Collective memory retained what it considered necessary in order to comply with the framework of cohabitation in the defined space of archetypes, important for defining cultural identity. But these archetypes must be preserved, recovered when ignored by generations that succeed a certain historical moment and put back into circulation through aesthetic-moralizing creations to be received as necessary references to a life of communion. And in order to be in communion, it is necessary to deconstruct the persuasive communication context.

We also discuss the relationship between the individual experience and culture which was the essence of Edward T. Hall's anthropological conception synthesized in the statement: "Culture is communication and communication is culture"⁴.

Hall's plea is all the more necessary when referring to the traditional culture, when identifying archetypes. It is known that not all cultures attach great importance to the past. In the Romanian culture, however, its tradition and values have been staples for cultural ages and social contexts, whose creations have historically and culturally defined a time and a space.

The archetypal world between tradition and current contextualization

The "archetypal world" reconstituted and re-evaluated by Marin Sorescu in the poems of the "La liliaci" (By the lilacs) series is a world "in plain sight", recognizable by its fundamental features. Moreover, E.T. Hall demonstrated (in his volume *Au delà de la culture*) that each system allows the selection, sorting, recognition and abandonment of information by the individual, an individual referring to the world. The process of contextualizing information is claimed from this process of selection and recognition. The subject of the communication, the communication situation, the status of the subject in the community, and the previous experiences are analysed in order to understand the value of the context.

The "rich context" benefits from messages rich in context ("communication in a dense context"), messages that produce the artistic form: "the qualitative expression invariably occurs in a rich context, the non-qualitative one always takes place in a poor context" [the mass of information is included in the explicit statement]⁵.

² Rudolf Rezsöházy, *Sociology Of Valors*, Paris, Armand Colin, 2006.

³ apud Dumitru Otovescu (coordinator), *The Sociology Of Culture. Foreign Writers Anthology*. 2nd Edition. Prefaced and coordinated by Professor PhD. Dumitru Otovescu, Craiova, Beladi Publishing House, 2010, p. 220.

⁴ E.T. Hall, *Le langage silencieux*, Paris, Seuil Publishing House, col. „Points”, 1984, p. 219.

⁵ E.T. Hall, *Au delà de la culture*, Paris, Seuil Publishing House, col. „Points”, 1987, p. 93.

Culture is an interpretation grid (Jean Caune), and traditional culture is communication in a dense context. Contextualization is especially important from the perspective of personal experience, and in his “La lilieci” (By the lilacs) volumes, Marin Sorescu “melts” all the “happenings” of the village world filtered through the sensitivity of the child and the lucidity of maturity, in an act of restoring the ineffable and the archetypal world. This is a world of conversation, as defined by Gabriel Tarde: “By conversation, I mean any dialogue without direct and immediate utility, in which one mainly speaks just to speak, for pleasure, to play, to be polite. Conversation marks the culmination of the spontaneous attention which people pay to each other and by which they would interact infinitely more deeply than in any other social relationship. [...] It is the most powerful agent (...) of feelings, ideas, means of action.”⁶

G. Tarde named the good speaker to be a *wizard* in the magical sense of the word.

From this perspective, Marin Sorescu is a *wizard*, a presence that multiplies in so many characters who become the main characters of the “happenings” in the village world.

As a kaleidoscopic reconstruction of the village world, the “La lilieci” (By the Lilacs) is the odyssey of a rural universe structured in archaic modes of life; it is enveloped in the flavour of the Oltenian “saying” and decipherable on at least two reference levels: the diachronic progress of archaic life with its narrative offcuts about existential ceremonies, and the integration into a lyrical epic corpus, a synchronic panorama of the “first” world. Marin Sorescu defined himself and stayed true to his own definition: “I’m a lyrical writer with an outlook to prose.” The world of the village rebuilt out of narrative nuclei is seen in its existential structures, a genuine and recognizable archetypal world. Its force of attraction, the empathic springs are owed to the fluidization of time and space, to the feeling of “knowing”, and especially to the intentionally confusing use of the familial / familiar paronyms. Functional identity matrices at the micro group level that is the family are also functional and at the level of the macro-group, the village world.

It is the assumption of the world beyond the immediate world (the house); the community identifies with the exponential group: the nation. The genealogy tree becomes an axis mundi for the genuine archetypal world through acts of reconfirmation over time: traditions, customs, and magic practices. The boundary between familial and familiar is systematically crossed, ensuring a continuous affective link between the present and the collective memory, between “now” and “in illo tempore”. “The proper order” has been lost from the praxis plane but has stayed in the collective memory - the character that verbally reinstates it is not nicknamed “Late” by chance.

The world of the village - the expression of the world's folkloric vision

The world of the village rebuilt in “La lilieci” (By the Lilacs) is the expression of the world's folkloric vision, as defined by Ovidiu Papadima: “An ethical order in its depth and aesthetic in its expressions.”⁷ Marin Sorescu “rewrites” the world

⁶ Gabriel Tarde, *The Opinion and the Crowd*. Translation and preface by Nicoleta Corbu, Bucharest, Comunicare.ro Publishing House, 2007, p. 77.

⁷ Ovidiu Papadima, *A Romanian Vision Of The World*, Bucharest, 1941, p. XI.

of the village into the story frames by using the free verse technique. An essentialized “utterance” with a moralizing tinge; the well-known words of the elderly are the final formula, induced to the lecturer throughout the discovery of this reconstructed universe: “It used to be like this,” now “the world is mixed up,” “not everybody keeps the proper order”.

This perspective is one of reception and interpretation, which we will approach after glancing in the past, which recalls a moment of journalistically sparked confession. We wanted to learn about the origins of the “La lilieci” (By the Lilacs) series, what triggered the inner springs of the one who never forgot the matrix space, the primary source of his creative sensibility. We asked Marin Sorescu to do an interview on this subject. In this context, we present a significant fragment.

‘Dear Mr Marin Sorescu, the volumes “La lilieci” (By the Lilacs) have been a real delight to the elevated reader, who wishes to find Romanian spirituality in the traditional village. Please tell us about the origins of this series, to which, we confess, we would like to see no end! Each volume has given us more than one facet of this spirituality.’

“This series has reached its Fifth Book, which was published last year, the Sixth Book⁸ has been written and I’m still thinking whether to write “the end” on the last page or to continue.⁹ I am inclined to continue an unprecedented literary enterprise, I would say. A first, in terms of Romanian poetry. To me, in any case, a reason to always be at the centre of the world, because, as it is well-known, as Blaga says, “eternity was born in the village”, and I consider the village a kind of centre of the world. Octavio Paz said that whenever a child shoots a sling, the stone always falls into the centre of the world. The centre of our thoughts is the village. I started writing this book, which is, after all, just one book, but only larger, in New York, very far from the centre of the world, but in a way another centre of the world, and I would say that this very discrepancy between the old and the new...

‘Has enhanced this state ...’

‘Yes, it has enhanced the state of naivety and nostalgia for the world which I believed to be in twilight; because of civilization and the progress that is performed in all directions, it is a threatened world. Not now, or in 10 years, or in 50, but there is this European levelling, which has taken place in all the industrialized countries and we will have a rich but artificial folklore.

‘And differentiated at some point ...’

‘Yes!’

‘... keeping only the archetypes.’

‘Yes, because the real creators will be hiding in towns. The victim will be hiding in the executioner or the executioner in the victim. This migration from the village to the city, which has occurred in recent years, the rather poor situation of the peasants after the war, etc. in addition to this steamroller of modernism destroys the ancient fortress of the Romanian village.

⁸ Published posthumously, 1998 *n.n.*

⁹ Professor Ph.D. George Sorescu, the writer’s brother, is trying to bring together the last manuscripts for the “Book Seven” *n.n.*

‘Have all these thoughts made you write La lilioci?’

‘Yes, all these thoughts, enhanced within the resonance box of the concrete and stone skyscrapers. I went back to my origins, to Bulzești, and I said to myself, “What if I wrote my autobiography within hundreds of other autobiographies? That is, the biographies of my parents, grandparents, neighbours, villagers, of all those who in one way or another touched my childhood or the lives of my parents or relatives, and so on.” In the beginning, though not so clearly, rather instinctively, the first book was born, I evoked my childhood years and things developed along the way.

After a year or two of confusion for the critics, when no one knew where to place such writing, if it was poetry, if it was parody, prose, or a kind of modern replica to Sămănătorism, after a while, many stood up for this kind of lyrical construction; of course, I would have continued my thoughts regardless. If I am to blame for anything in writing this book, it's that this book is hard to translate. It is such a genuine Romanian phrasing, so unusual, that it is hard to find its equivalent in other languages. However, the book has been successfully translated into German, French, and recently, into Swedish. The echoes are also very good worldwide. Still, I think the phrasing is the good thing, because, as I once said, I wrote the book for the sake of the Romanian language, for the sake of the words that die, for the sake of the words that named some crafts that are about to be extinct, that would evoke the loved ones, everything that for me meant living and a direct participation in the existence of a community in Oltenia.¹⁰

On the Identity of a Symbolic World

A comparison between the poems in Book I of “La Lilioci” and those in the posthumous volume, Book VI, made us define the world rebuilt by Marin Sorescu as an “upside down” universe, a reflection in mirrors that deforms the prime reality, in the sense of the primordial; it is a metamorphosis of the rural universe struggling to save the first world, but unable to do it due to the interference of the city and especially of the socio-politics, the collectivization. This is a difference we can define through the traditional “night and day” phrase, in its primordial sense from the sacred to the profane, from accuracy to alterity.

It refers to the descending path from the identity of a symbolic world encompassing the known and respected “proper order” to the devolution of a world that has lost its self-identity. Our conclusion is supported by the lyrical confession of poet Marin Sorescu in “An Ugly Man” (Book VI).

“I’m writing all this now, in July 1995, in the new house at Bulzești. I’m trying to collect all the characters of the lilacs. To see who has done what, *what happened to them* (s.n.)”.

An applied comparison will help to support our assertion: Marin Sorescu would rebuild an archetypal world as frame stories; his lyrical prose approach configures the mangling of the first world, the “proper order” due to the process

¹⁰ Interview taken on 15 January 1996, published in Gabriela Rusu-Pășărin, *Marin Sorescu. Images. Ethos. Evocations*, Introduction by George Sorescu. Translation into English: Andreea Bratu. Translation into French: Dana Dincă, Bucharest, Academy Publishing House, 2007, pp. 43-44.

of collectivization. The verticality in the beginning with its feeling of belonging to an identity matrix corresponds to the “overturned” image of the tree with its roots in the sky in Book VI; only faith and beliefs save what was once rooted from oblivion.

As we have stated our intention to compare the First and the Last Book of “La liliesi”, we have considered the change of perspective, some images’ change of meaning, it being in fact the same universe in different historical stages.

„The Hanged Man” in the First Volume has as a family life narrative core:

(Mitrele, every time he argued with his wife/ Took his cord down to the willows, to hang himself / She’ll see, evil take her, / What he meant to this house, there!)

The ending bears the print of peasant humour, a funny view of life seen from the “noose”. The reaction of the community was circumscribed to the area of compassion, whereas the children accepted it as a play: “We would have liked to see a man hanging so he would frighten us.”

On the other hand, the poem “The Unused Whip” strikes the tragedy register, in a radical change of perspective. The gesture of the hanged man is not just an intention, to scare the woman, it has a social reason - the collectivization:

„Gosu lu’ Mitru Măriei lu’ Niță”. „S-a spânzurat. I-auzi că se spânzură!”. „I-au luat grădina”. „Acum nu mai avea nici boi, Ce să mai mîne cu biciușca?” / Și-a pus-o la gât”.

(“Gosu of Mitru of Mara of Niță”. “He hung himself. Hear him hanging himself!” “They took his garden.” “He had no more oxen now, What would he urge with the whip?” / “He put it round his throat.”)

The ending of the poem reminds that the trauma is only a pretext for the poet Marin Sorescu, whereas the last sequence outlines the writing in the nimbus of the reverberating poetic image: “He left so angrily to the other world, / With his long neck, to stretch it. To look over the fence, onto the gardens of God.” These are two aspects of the same gesture, in different temporal frames - a complex journey from anecdotal to tragic.

The patriarchal village is received both as a whole and as its defining material components. For the peasant, the animals “in the backyard” represent part of his existence. Traditional mentality interpreted an “empty yard” or a “barren animal” as symbols of material precariousness.

Two “mirroring” poems support our assertion, the change of perspective on existence, in an explicit trajectory from the strange to the tragic.

The initial dialogue has an affective connotation, with a whim of involuntary humor:

“Woman, we had sheep enough... / ‘What are you talking about?’ / ‘They’re so happy, they’re not even howling ... / ‘Who?’ / ‘The wolves ... I brought them one, that gentle one, I left it by the pond, bound / ‘By a willow.’ [...] / The old Mother crossed herself [...] / ‘Why couldn’t you at least have left that one, the barren one ... / Old Mother said, two hours later, unable to sleep.” (“Hau-hau!”, Book I)

From the humorous the poems will evolve to the tragic, the essential cause being the collectivization and its implications in the change of existential rites, an existence under the sign of loss, of dispossession.

The “Sun Eclipse” projects the same image of giving the animal away, this time under the social imperative: the peasant takes the sheep “to share it”.

The village after collectivization is associated with the sun eclipse. The night and the sun eclipse are times of evil, implicitly, of sacrifice.

The feeling of loss is experienced in a crescendo which pursues a devolving world that loses its original unit.

The “mirroring” of poems „By the Lilacs” (Book I) and “The Man” (Book VI) is equally significant. From the image of the whole village gathered in the graveyard to the commemorate the dead to the woman’s desperate search throughout the cement-covered cemetery by the order of the new society, the drama is assumed serenely (according to the traditional mentality) or desperately (in a society malformed by the intrusions of the new order). From “the proper order” to the “new order” - this is the diachronic journey of a desecrated time and a space that loses its identity matrix.

Conclusions

Not only does Marin Sorescu rebuild an archetypal world, but he also rebuilds a world of Beginnings, reconfiguring archetypes, myths and symbols.

Therefore, the spectacle of the archaic world is restored to the Romanian culture, with its unique cyclic rituals, the insidious presence in the claim of the recomposing some archetypal and mythical models.

It is a unique work of restoring myths, an impressive universe based on the technique of fascination while gradually experiencing of an age that loses its sacred nature, but which is designed in the universality of the creative act.

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