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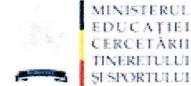
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PhD THESIS

THEME OF THE PERIPHERY IN THE ROMANIAN INTERWAR NOVEL

-Abstract-

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ARGUMENT

The Romanian literature of the periphery is a rich and fascinating one. It started under the mark of Western imitation and literary fashion, but then, when the facts described in prose started, things have changed completely, leaving the sphere of the artificial, imitation and translation (simply) or of the adaptations.

Reveals itself as a picturesque humanity, painful and hot. Upset and miserable, but with a beautiful soul, honest, dignified and proud. It is shown how foreigners were welcomed and assimilated by the romanians, without conflicts, clashes or wars. It is shown how it blossoms, simple and sublime, love in these neighborhoods of poverty, or broken destinies of people who could have great destinies, if they had been born in other media and had access to education , learning, culture.

It is about a world where death (often violent: murders , accidents, suicides - I dispute what Georgiana Sirbu says in the volume **Histories of the periphery. The Slums in the romanian novel from GM Zamfirescu to Radu Aldulescu** that there are few suicides in the slums) smiles sardonically everywhere, but in which there is, equally, kindness, generosity, love of close, hand outstretched to help, "phenomena" virtually unprecedented, however, very rarely, in "high class" or "up- put ". Of course, there is much unhappiness, but also very much sincerity. This humanity is not pretend, does not know and does not want to do. Even if he loses (and often so it happened), it does not change the principles according to the pecuniary interest of the moment. There is, in the romanian suburb, the term "honor", even among thieves, murderers or former inmates. Girls who go through the marking experience of prostitution remain with the candor that "ladies" of high society no longer have, under the hypocritical veil of good manners. Children do not know the book, but live a happy childhood, even if the decor is terrible knowing, even now, rare taste of freedom, which they will cherish and keep it throughout their existence. This is true for any suburb, any city met in those novels, be it of Bucharest, Braila, Craiova, Dorohoi, Iasi, Constanta, Pitesti Botosani or Pitesti, even if each district has distinct characteristics.

That is why I chose this theme: it is generous in "life examples", to express myself so, on the one hand, and on the other these issues gave rise to a literature of value, perhaps the most valuable in our entire history literary (interwar period prose).

What I want to prove is that the Romanian society, reaching a turning point in history, finds a devoted "columnist", even if subjective, in the novel. I say subjective because an denic

innocence transpires from these (thousands of) pages, with all the evil, misery, hunger and disease that is this universe. I will endeavor to provide evidence that people are entering a twilight zone of existence. This is due to a „negative development"of humanity, in that, gradually, it begins to give up spiritual and even religious values, slipping slowly but surely, towards nothing, absolutely existential vacuum. This happens precisely because people start to drop, imperceptibly at first, and now, today, without any restraint at all (or anyway, most) values accumulated by mankind over the centuries, millennia, including those of a mystical nature, religious. Live in a world devoid of sacred, ceremonial and ritual, modern man lives not only random, but dies the same. In other words, an unconscious life lived far from the sacred entails a full nothingness ,a senseless and purposeless death. Modern man is therefore "beneficiary" of such psyche. He lives in the heart of a maze, which however is not aware. Rather, his personal belief is that his life is fully balanced life and that he lives "as appropriate" that the order he puts in everything he does is the right one. Ontic difference from the modern world of traditional universe is that nothing in this area is not ritualized, established by rule, by custom. Neither birth, existence or death. If all these moments were highly ritualized in folklore, modern ontic, or in virtue of its exacerbated scientism, treats them with indifference, leaving it to chance. So life itself, in its whole, of the modern man, is happening by chance. We are dealing with a total dissolution, whose resort is surprised, in maybe a little too rough terms, by the critic Cornel Ungureanu: humanity suffers today, a "general gypsyism ". There are no rules, no regulations, nothing is respected anymore. Believing himself at the center of the universe, the modern, contemporary man lies at its edge.

Moreover (moment which I.P. Culianu puts, approximately, in the XVIII-th century) man, at crossroads (in front of two choices: to continue the path of perfection towards sacred or "grab" the way of production of all sorts of mechanisms, utilities, parts, supplies, etc..) chose the path of materialism, creating tangible goods and then to fail, finally, in consumerism (major impasse, it seems that insurmountable). The man has betrayed, finally, the origin, vocation and divine nature, focusing exclusively on the pragmatic, material, futile and insignificant.

This is the central idea of my work, that the Romanian periphery novel reflects exactly this moment of rupture, turning (and in the West happened two centuries before) in the Romanian society.

Research methods used are investigation, analysis, case study comparison. Starting

from the chronological dictionary of romanian novels, i identified and analyzed 68 novels on the periphery theme, including here and those from the prewar period. Also, in terms of critical literature, i studied 68 dictionaries, encyclopedias, treaties, theoretical writings, 43 books of literary criticism as well 21 studies in books, periodicals and the Internet. I tried not only to identify novels that deal (and) this issue, but the sources, influences, directions or literary trends which they belong to. One of the greatest difficulties encountered was retrieving princeps editions of these novels, which is why when it was not possible, it has been replaced with more recent editions. Another difficulty is the impossibility of identifying biobibliographical information on some novelists considered minor and which are not included in dictionaries.

The theme of the periphery is specific to the urban novel, which in the interwar period witnessed a frenzied development, as encouraged by Eugen Lovinescu under modernism and synchronization. Along with novels like **Victoria Avenue** and **Darkness** by Cezar Petrescu, **Last Night Of Love**, **First Night Of War** and **Procrust's Bed** of Camil Petrescu, The cycle **Hallipa** by Hortensia Papadat Bengescu , **Otilia's Enigma** by G. Calinescu. Etc in which the city is represented only by the "center" or see the light of day in the era and novels which are turning their attention to the marginal world of the city, many of their authors knowing by own experience this reality. For example: **The son of Uncle Take the publican** and Love Trilogy of Poor Klopstock, Periphery by Constantin Barcaroiu,. Hotel Maidan by Tudor Gh. Stoian, Kings of the Old Court - Mateiu I. Caragiale, and Both, Ember of Rebreanu, Neranțula Chira Chiralina and Codin of Panait Istrati, cycle Barrier by GM Zamfirescu, **The Young Miss from Neptune Street**, **The Goat and Broken man** by Felix Aderca, Vacaresti Way, Fire at Hanul cu Tei, **Locked Love**, **Miss Mili's nights** I. Peltz, **The Diplomat**, **The Tanner and the actress** or **House of Girls** by Carol Ardeleanu, **A Dog's Life** by Carol Ardeleanu, **The Childhood of a wretched** , Trust, Don Juan The Hunchback Calugaru Ion , etc.

The approach perspective of these novels is an analytical one, the study focusing on highlighting specific narrative, the types of characters, as well as common premises and epic situations. I also conducted a annotated chronology of the periphery theme in the Romanian novel from the beginning until 1946, when the novel Barrier appeared posthumously, unfinished, by G.M. Zamfirescu (died in 1945), which ends the cycle with the same name. To easily find in the content of the paper of suburb novelists i have developed an index of names.

Naturally, as with any literature, there are peaks, memorable names marked. Romanian

periphery novel attracted as under a spell writers of the most different ways, this maybe because the topic was increasingly current in the Romanian society. That is why not all of the studied authors are 'peaks' of this type of novel.

Romanian novelists whom I consider the first shelf and addressing this theme are: Mateiu I. Caragiale, Panait Istrati, closely followed by Felix Aderca, Carol Ardeleanu, I. Peltz, Ion Calugaru (regarding him, i refer to the novels I reviewed here and not include the post-war that I mentioned earlier), H. Bonciu. Thus, one can speak about panait Istrati as a great writer of this type of novel. He captures like no other the wild beauty of this humanity, pride, the taste of freedom. It is the one which gives life to a whole universe, with an artistic sense and an unrivaled power of evocation. G.M. Zamfirescu, Carol Ardeleanu, Ion Calugaru and I. Peltz capture both the poetry of this world, and the cloud of sadness, of misfortune, of misery that always floats above it.

H. Bonciu is a surrealist writer, whose novelistic point of view approaches somewhat Mateiu I. Caragiale.

I would sit on the next shelf two writers: Dan Petraşincu (strong texture, with emphasis on hereditary defects), Tudor Teodorescu-Braniste and Tudor Muşatescu (both marching on irony and sarcasm).

F. Lorian (a true pioneer of romanian psychological novel) Florian Cristescu, Eugeniu Boureanu, Ion Munteanu, Margareta Moldovan, B. Jordan, Coman Constantin etc. are "minor" authors, but gained the merit of approaching the theme, although with fewer constructive victories.

After reading Romanian interwar novels on the periphery i can say that there are writers such as Carol Ardeleanu, H. Bonciu Dan Petraşincu, Tudor Teodorescu-Braniste or Ion Calugaru (with a interwar writing far above the value of the socialist-realist one which was noted after the Second World War) unjustly marginalized and deserving rehabilitation. Also, I would propose reintroduction ,in the curricula, of the novel There are still good folks by D. Ionescu-Morel, of a great educational value.

Following investigations i can say that from a literary point of view, the slum becomes a veritable topos in Romanian literature, ignerating a veritable literary orientation, current also today.

Abstract

The Romanian novelists during the interwar period, writing about the suburbs or neighborhoods, are still wrongly outcast. We say "wrongly outcast" because these novels depict an entirely separate world.

The suburbs represent a closed universe, a continuation of the rural life, with its own traditions and customs, a space in which bullying is normal, yet accompanied by poetry at all times. The daily hardships are difficult to overcome; however, compassion, grace and solidarity are aspects that counterbalance all the ugliness in life. Even if the factory is within walking distance and it represents the place where all aspirations are buried, hope still manages to find its way, waiting for the right moment to thrive.

As far as the current status of my research, I can state that lately more and more interesting, modern and applied research studies have been done on this subject, from various critical and methodological perspectives (by Paul Cernat, Adrian Majuru, Georgiana Sarbu etc.).

One of the critics writing about the Romanian suburbs is Georgiana Sarbu, in her book **A History of Suburbs** where, after a fairly exhaustive presentation of Romanian novels containing the suburbs theme, she analyses three such novels, written in three different periods. I personally choose not to adopt the much too sociological position of the literary critic's point of view. Paul Cernat published in 2007 the volume **Romanian avant-garde and the suburban complex: first wave**. This is an interesting critical point of view regarding the relation between the city center and its suburbs, when we consider the relation between the West and the East. Cornel Ungureanu, deeply engaged in the analysis and interpretation of this concept, wrote in 2002 the volume **Mittleuropa of suburbs**, in which he scrutinizes this painful relation between the "outskirts" of empires (or former empires) and the "center". Nicolae Manolescu, in **A Critical History of Romanian Literature**, makes a thorough, pertinent and to the point analysis of this also very important part of Romanian literature. For example, when he considered the atmosphere in the novel **Domnisoara din Strada Neptun / The Damsel in Neptune Street** by Felix Aderca, he wonders if this work had not been read by Eugen Barbu before the latter wrote **Groapa / The Pit**. Constantin Cublesan is the critic who, in his volume **Literary discussions**, points out the influences of the French literature in the Romanian novels on the suburbs, besides establishing an "agreement" among the modern critical methods.

This volume performs a *historical* analysis of the Romanian novel on the suburbs, from its beginnings and until the last novel of the interwar period was published in 1946, after its author's death in 1945 (*Bariera / The Barrier*, by G.M. Zamfirescu). The ethnic issues, the hardships of day-to-day life, the strictly-kept traditions outline a specific environment, different from the actual environment of the city. However, one should be aware that the present-day problems are not at all rooted in the present, but in the very distant past... Indeed, they are rooted in the major issue of the centers of social, political and economic power, which are confined from the outcast population and the marginalized environments, which are forgotten and forsaken by the *Center*. On the other hand, the literature dealing with these conflicts is also marginalized, categorized as "vulgar" or "non-literature" and rejected from the *literature heritage*.

This paper contains 392 pages and it is structured in five parts and 17 chapters, as follows: Chapter 1: **The suburbs: Clarification of terminology; definition;** Part 1. **The suburbs theme in the pre-war Romanian novel:** Chapter 1. **Representative places of the suburbs;** Chapter 2. **Types of characters;** Chapter 3. **Epic situations.** Part 2. **The dynamics of the interwar Romanian novel:** Chapter 1. **The dynamics of the themes and the various epic formulae;** Chapter 2. **The realistic novel and its relation with the prose on the suburbs;** Chapter 3. **Continuity and rupture.** Part 3. **Narrative and conflict:** Chapter 1. **The specific narrative;** Chapter 2. **Epic situations;** Chapter 3. **Conflict;** Chapter 4. **Meanings and message.** Part 4. **The characters in the novels on the suburbs:** Chapter 1. **Theoretical determination;** Chapter 2. **The characters in the novels on the suburbs;** Chapter 3. **Spatiality and temporality: continuity and rupture.** Part 5. **The geography of the suburbs:** Chapter 1. **Main places and their epic burden;** Chapter 2. **Time;** Chapter 3. **Continuity and rupture in the space and time of the novels on suburbs.** This thesis also contains a chronology of the Romanian novels on suburbs, from the beginning of the period and until 1946, as well as a name index of the novelists mentioned during the analysis.

This paper analyses and comments upon 57 novels from the interwar period and 11 novels from the pre-war period, dealing with the suburbs theme.

In the first chapter, **The Suburbs. Clarification and definition**, we started from the definition of the term *suburbs (periferie)* given in the **Explanatory Dictionary of Romanian Language** and the French explanatory dictionary **Le Robert**, and then we went on pointing out the different applications of the "*center*" and "*suburbs*" *dialectical couple* as defined by Remi Hess in the study **Centre et périphérie**: in linguistics, philosophy, biology, etc. As we

have shown in this paper, the center represents the often abusive and tyrannous power which, if it lacks an opposition or resistance, expands in a limitless manner. However, two forces are at work between the center and the suburbs: a centripetal and a centrifugal force. Usually, these forces are in balance. In case of imbalance, counter-measures are applied. On the other hand, literature reflects reality, as pointed out by Virgil Neoiianu in his study **A Theory of the Secondary** or by Nicolae Manolescu in his **A Critical History of Romanian Literature – 5 centuries of literature**. For this reason, and starting from the theories stated by Jean-Marie Durand and Antoine Jacquet (in the Foreword to the volume **Centre et périphérie. Approches nouvelles des orientalistes**), by Gyorfi-Deak György (in the article **Reduction to the center**) and by Virgil Nemoianu, we have identified the two representations of the duality center - suburbs: *a horizontal*, geographical and space-related one, as well as *a vertical*, hierarchical one. The outskirts of the city are depicted mainly from the horizontal and geographical point of view, and this aspect has been also considered in this thesis. We have reached the conclusion that this space often acts as a background, however influencing the actors and their development and leading the plot of the novel towards a certain outcome. Moreover, if we consider the *open* and *closed* spaces, the suburbs are, paradoxically, a closed space – the barrier symbolically confines this distinct world from the rest of the city, from the “center” – and the closed spaces in the suburbs (the dwelling, the pub, etc.) do not provide the hygiene or comfort conditions needed for the development of the personality of its inhabitants. We also referred to the mythological elements of this marginal space, which are introduced in literary works, from archaic medicine, magic and culminating with the “animality” of those who “dominate” this territory.

In Part 2, **The suburbs theme in the pre-war Romanian novel**, we started from the novels **Hoții și Hagiul / The Thieves and the Muslim Pilgrim** (1853) by Alexandru Pelimon, **Manoil** (1855) by Dimitrie Bolintineanu; **Mistere din București / Mysteries from Bucharest** (1862, volumes 1 and 2) by Ioan M. Bujoreanu, **Misteriele Bucureștilor / Mysteries of Bucharest** (1862 - 1864) and **Muncitorii statului / State workers** (1880) by G. Baronzi, **Don Juanii Bucureștilor / The Don Juans of Bucharest** (1875) by N.D. Popescu, **Mița** (1889), an unfinished novel by Carmelo P., **Tâlharul Fulger / The Thief called “Lightning”** (1892) by Ilie Ighel, **Salvată! / Saved!** (1914) by Cormană and **Tineretea Casandrei / Cassandra’s Youth** (1914) by V. Demetrius and we pointed out the difficult and rudimentary beginnings of the Romanian novel. The “vernacular novel” takes over and imitates the aspects in the European mystery genre, although this theme is not (yet) specific to

the Romanian society. A long time had to pass before the “large urban centers” of Romania (especially Bucharest and Iasi) had become “modern cities”, problematic, at the same time, from the sociological point of view, just like the cities in Western Europe. Therefore, the city characters are borrowed and (only) localized. Things are only beginning to be outlined not only from the point of view of the problems dealt, but also from the point of view of novel structure. The Romanian novels from the “groundbreaking” period are schematic, simplistic, with minimal narrative, extremely poor both from the content and the significance developed (or to be developed). The Romanian novel-writing started fairly late, at least several hundreds of years behind Europe, if not even half a millennium. Therefore, although the performances are neither great nor numerous from the literary history point of view, they undoubtedly prepare the ground for the glorious period of Romanian prose, i.e. the interwar period. The suburbs theme was considered by the Romanian writers even in the Romantic period and one of the first influences which can be identified, and which is however obvious, is the French mystery novels influence (also identified by Constantin Cublesan in his volume **Literary discussions**). The suburbs theme entered the Romanian literature from external and not internal literary trends, and the novels written on the theme during this period are mostly popular and sensational fiction. The suburbs space is compulsorily provided with the factory, the pub and the church, as possible centers of real life. As far as the characters are concerned, Ioana Dragan proposes the following classification – the hero, the monster, the victim, with which we agree, as it is applicable to the other novels in the period which are not popular fiction (e.g. **Manoil** by D. Bolintineanu). We must stress that these are not masterpieces, but merely imitations and localizations of European novels of the period. However, they are important because they stimulate the passion for literature and because they are the base of the later Romanian novels. As a consequence, we have indicated here this trend of the pre-war novel on the suburbs of taking over themes from the European mystery novel and the fact that the writings deal with the beginnings of the Romanian society development.

In the third part of this thesis, **The dynamics of the interwar Romanian novel**, we have indicated, as predicted in the title, the dynamics of the themes dealt with and the various epic formulae of the interwar Romanian novel: the historical novel, the realistic novel, the psychological novel, the mythical (initiation) novel, the love story, paraliterature (such as the science-fiction, adventure and detective novels), imagination novel the experimental and avant-garde novel, and we have demonstrated, starting from literary history, that the novel of the suburbs makes an integral part of the realistic novel and, more specifically, of the

environmental novel. When considering the Romanian people performance, this period is extremely important as it represents a peak development period of Romanian society of all times. In the European statistics of the period, Romania was ranked 5th (!) in 1938 from the point of view of the income per person, known today as GDP. The suburbs of great cities, especially the Bucharest suburbs, also evolve during this period; therefore, the *outskirts* become a genuinely interesting subject for the Romanian literature, not just a bookish one. We have also pointed out the fact that the Romanian novel of the suburbs is an integral part of the Romanian interwar novel. The epic formulae and the general themes in the novels of the period can also be found here. Together, they are taken as a whole – one cannot speak about the interwar Romanian novel in general without mentioning the novel of the suburbs. Among the remarkable writers including the “marginality” in their novels, we must mention Liviu Rebreanu, Panait Istrati, G.M. Zamfirescu, I. Peltz, Carol Ardeleanu, H. Bonciu, Mateiu I. Caragiale etc. Two important trends can be identified in the period: the traditionalism and the modernism, in a polemic dialogue. We also indicated that the novel of the suburbs also contains: *the samanatorism, the naturalism, the postromantic, psychological analysis novel* influences and tangencies, which are not independent. In this part we have also pointed out the fact that the suburbs represent an environment which is part of a larger one: the city. However, the novels describing the suburbs are not just geographic descriptions. This is unavoidable, as the suburbs are inhabited. And its inhabitants, the suburbanites, become characters in the story.

The third part of the thesis, **Narrative: conflict, ideology**, deals with the aspects of narrative and conflict in the novels of the suburbs, written in the interwar period. The problematic of the **narrative** is defining for the *novel*, just as one cannot imagine *poetry* without *prosody* (even if the poem is written in *blank verse*, it needs *rhythm* and *intonation*) and without specific *figures of speech* such as the *metaphor, the alliteration, the simile, the epithet* etc. Quite many prose experiments have tried to prove the *contrary* – thus leading to the *nouveau roman, the new nouveau roman* or the *post-modernist prose*. They resulted indeed in memorable masterpieces; however, the reader’s interest returns today to the *tale, the story* - this is a sign that *prose* cannot exist beyond this limit. As far as the **conflict** is concerned, it evolves from the *classical* one, taken from the folk *tales* and based on the struggle between *good* and *evil*, to the *psychological conflict* inside the individual (character). When speaking about the Romanian literature, a first example is the celebrated **Ciocoii vechi și noi / The Old and New Boyars** by Nicolae Filimon, which manages to overcome the

schematic conflict between the *positive* and *negative forces*, as outlined in the folk tales. On the “other side”, we would like to refer to Camil Petrescu or Max Blecher, where the internal conflict of characters such as Stefan Gheorghidiu or Ladima creates a parallel universe with the “story” (more weakly represented from the formal point of view in this kind of novels). With all this “less pregnant presence”, the story in this kind of novels sheds a new light on the core of the human character. One should note, emphasize and remember the fact that the interwar prose changes from an essential point of view. Not only from a thematic point of view, but also from the epic point of view, of the general problems dealt with in the story. Until this period, the writings had been “dedicated” to the rural, to the village life – the land is one of the most important aspects in the Romanian prose – at least until the interwar period, as the **earth** represented, for centuries, the most important means for earning a living and, from the spiritual point of view, a *modus vivendi*.

Suddenly, once the cities started to develop, but however timidly and unsteadily, the problematic of the city character or city dweller, with his needs, torments and anxieties, is considered in literature. Suddenly, the interwar novel is populated with alternate genres, where the conventional story of the narrator is intertwined with other literary genres or species (the novel **Craii de Curtea-Veche / Old Court Libertines** by Mateiu Caragiale was considered to be poetic rather than realistic prose, as it contains entire paragraphs pertaining to this literary genre), the character's voice is mingled with the author's voice, fragmenting it, and different “spokespersons” of the author's voice appear, thus making it less distinct and obvious. On the other hand, the narrative adapts itself to the evolution of the character. This is because the main idea of the books on this subject is that the corrupt city attracts in its destructive turmoil the destinies of the “poor” peasants who feel lost (and uprooted) in the city. The moment this becomes obvious, the narrative also “starts” to become more tense, more dynamic and more alert. As far as the “narrative style” is concerned, one should notice the evolution from the “social obsession” towards the psychological, inside obsession. Even if there are not many masterpieces in this respect in the Romanian novel of the suburbs, we feel important to point out that such initiatives have indeed existed. We have therefore proven that the narrative type of the novel on the suburbs is the realism tending to exacerbate the real and become closer to naturalism; however, elements of the psychological analysis are also present.

As far as the narrative conflict is concerned, we must point out that the suburbs as such represent a world in permanent conflict and war with the self and the individuals around oneself, with one's own self, forever discontented, a world finding itself in a state of social,

moral and existential war. Therefore, one will unavoidably identify a predominance of the *exterior conflict* in the novels on the suburbs. The conflicts represented here are various: *the conflict for establishing the zone of influence* (in the novels **Domnișoara din str. Neptun / The Damsel in Neptune Street** by Felix Aderca, **Maidanul cu dragoste / Love Ground** and **Cântecul destinelor / Song of Destinies** by G.M. Zamfirescu, **Codin** by Panait Istrati and **Hotel Maidan / Bare land Hotel** by Stoian Gh. Tudor); *the home (family) conflict* (**Maidanul cu dragoste / Love Ground** by G. M. Zamfirescu, **Povestea unei fete / Story of a Maiden** by Ioan Pas); *the ethical conflict* (**Casa cu fete / The Girls' house** by Carol Ardeleanu); *the social conflict* (**Maidanul cu dragoste / Love Ground** and **Bariera / The Barrier** by G.M. Zamfirescu, **Ghetto veac XX / 20th Century Ghetto** by Ury Benador, **Diplomatul, tăbăcarul și actrița / The ambassador, the tanner and the actrice** by Carol Ardeleanu); *the religious conflict* (**Ghetto veac XX / 20th Century Ghetto** by Ury Benador); *the ethnic conflict* (**Copilăria unui netrebnic / The Childhood of a rascal** by Ion Calugaru, **Ghetto veac XX / 20th Century Ghetto** by Ury Benador, **Domnișoara din str. Neptun / The Damsel in Neptune Street** by Felix Aderca); *the political conflict* (**Țară bună / A good country** by I. Peltz). The *interior conflict* is also of a different kind: *the ideological conflict* (**Cel din urmă erou / The last hero** by Eugeniu Boureanu), *the psychological conflict*: (**La 18 ani / 18 years old** by F. Lorian, **Viață de câine / A Dog's Life** by Carol Ardeleanu), *the conflict with one's own self* (**Aventurile din str. Grădinilor / The Adventures in Gardens Street** by M. Sevastos).

In the fourth part, **The characters in the novels on the suburbs**, we have identified defining traits of the characters in the suburban environment, as well as the character types, we have pointed out the common or divergent aspects of the same character type in different novels and, making reference to sociological aspects, we created a connection between the person and the character, between the real and the imaginary worlds. The characters in the novel on the Romanian suburbs are not very complex. They manifest themselves and act, but they do not stop and ponder too much on the meaning of life. The only motivation of their existence is earning their daily living, to provide for themselves and their family. This is a precarious day-to-day existence, which leaves no place for "self-reflection". The character of the suburbs is described in literature from a somewhat generally idealized point of view, as a victim of the dehumanizing capitalistic society.

From the point of view of the way in which the characters manifest themselves, the *suburbs* in the Romanian novel are presented as a huge theater stage. The *third character*

exists not only in literature, but also in life, with the role of maintaining the ethic order, the balance, the proportions, so that things do not mingle and none of the categories is invaded by another. Usually, the character playing this role is the author character. In the novels included in this study, the characters *are not allowed to develop freely*, being confined to the ethic rules of the society. Thus, the author becomes a receptacle of the *public ethics* and its norms which he himself observes and "constrains" his characters to do the same.

We have also identified some of the *feminine character types*: **the fortune teller, the spinster, the prostitute and the suicidal woman**) and some of the *masculine character types* (the man in the suburbs represents the strength; often, he is the only one bringing money to the household; he works in the factory, as a porter, trader, fiddler; he is always the head of the family, and is often alcoholic and violent; he can also be affectionate, however imposing respect): **the go-getter, the suburbs womanizer, the pub owner, the suicidal man**. In fact, these *character types* are specific to the literary realism and they refer to the *extent to which the characters are representative for the novel* – this is a very important aspect, as the readers try to identify themselves with the problems presented in the novels and especially, with the **characters**. Also, these types of characters' capacity to **persuade, influence and seduce** resides in their **truthfulness**. It is true that literature is **not real life**; however, it is a **good representation and a reflection** of it. The Romanian character is extremely different, varied and complex. Thus, he can be strictly sketchy, as most of the characters at the beginnings of the Romanian novel are, or he can be very complex, impossible to understand, hidden and mysterious. As we have already discussed in the comparative chapter, the character in the interwar novel is more complex than the character in the pre-war novel of the suburbs, however maintaining certain sketchy features.

In the fifth part, **The geography of the suburbs, we have established (and defined) the representative locations and the time-related aspects of this fascinating environment of the suburbs**. First of all, we must say that **space** is extremely important for the novel. The narrative creates a *specific, unmistakable space*. It refers to geographic, historic and, moreover, to *human* aspects. The great novels of the world, besides emphasizing *characters* and *existentialist ideas*, they bring forward and forever establish the **space** (the Russia, in *War and Peace* or *Anna Karenina*, France in the Romanian stories of the *Human Comedy* or the **suburbs environment**, when considering the Romanian novel). With regard to the problem of *space* in the Romanian novel of the suburbs, this is complex and at the same time productive from the narrative point of view. It is complex because, unlike the city or the

village environment, the suburbs represent an entirely new space and, at the same time, a transition between the former environments. Most often, the suburbs of the great cities in the world have been "included" in the city. However, the reverse is also valid in the last century. On the one hand, the center has "expanded" over the suburbs, but on the other hand, the suburbs have occupied the city and changes have occurred. These changes have occurred not only in the mentality of the people, but they are also space-related. Thus, in the great European capitals, the center is occupied by the great stores, banks, public institutions, etc. and... by the marginalized people (coloured people or people of various ethnic origins, prostitutes etc.). The "upper class" has withdrawn to the... suburbs – meaning that luxury neighborhoods have been built at the outskirts of great cities where the well-off people and not only prefer to live, far from the city stress and pollution.

We must also point out that this literary theme, the suburbs, is generous, as it allows the creation of other spaces, where a rather tragic show unfolds: *the pub, the brothel, the street, the church*. It is interesting to note that all these locations usually and in a "normal" context do have certain positive significations and functions, as the urban-like collective gatherings have this final purpose, of providing increased safety and a better and easier life to the city dwellers. Not to mention the church, which has not only an important function in any community, but it is the actual *center* of the spiritual and physical world (the church is built in the center or, more specifically, the city is "built" around the church). In the Romanian suburbs, these elements receive a negative connotation. Even the church, which represents hope and aspiration to a better future. Here, in this world of absolute perdition, the church itself is poor, sad and powerless. At times, it appears as a land of heavenly happiness the suburbs people never catch a glimpse of.

When considering the **time** of the story told in the novels of the suburbs, most often there is not an absolute and exact time reference. Therefore, the Romanian novels on the suburbs create a truthful world of those times in which people enter an existential "twilight zone" due to the fact that they start to give up, unnoticeably at first and then without any reserve, all (or most) of the values accumulated by mankind along the centuries.

The **space** is accompanied by a **specific time of the novel**. It can be a historic time (the historic novel is also a very attractive artistic means to evoke, present and identify with the past); the *historic time* also represents, from the point of view of the most modern writers, another aspect of the past or a means to "judge" the present. The novel also includes *the present time*, one of the most complex and interesting "times" for the writer, as this time

includes the torments, the discontents, the interests and the desires of his contemporaries. There is also a *narrative time* and an *auctorial time*, an *interior time of the character* and a time of the *referential reality*.

In this thesis we also performed a comparative study on the space and time in the pre-war Romanian novel of the suburbs and in the interwar Romanian novel. We have reached the conclusion that the important places evoked in the pre-war novel can also be found in the interwar novel, added to new ones. Regarding the time, we have noticed continuity in the temporal representation in the pre-war Romanian novel of the suburbs and in the interwar Romanian novel; however, the night is still depicted as the time of wrongdoing and, in the pre-war novel one cannot speak yet of the suburbs time, not to speak about the day-dreaming time.

With their good and bad aspects, these novels describe a world of the marginalized, a tough and tormented world, where everyone struggles for survival. The characters are people living in the suburbs of the city, but also at the margins of society. The authors often depict this world in an understanding and even affectionate tone.

The suburbs are an environment which is depicted in an realistic and almost authentic way (and it does not matter if we are speaking of Dorohoi, Iasi, Bucharest, Constantza or another city), populated by characters from all walks of life.

The simplistic and confined image of the suburbs individual in the novels at the beginning of the period eventually evolves to a complicated and complex social status, with an increase awareness of his role in the society. Placing responsibility on his social status compels the individual to struggle in order to come out from this confined space, which will produce characters with strong interior conflicts generated by their origins (of suburbs individual), but also by the desire to become a city dweller.

This type of literature shatters the idyllic image of the suburbs, depicted in the novels **Țară bună / A good country** or **Pui de lele / Love child** by I. Peltz. This is a struggling, tough world, in a continuous degradation process.

This thesis was written starting from the intention to outline the way in which the suburbs are presented in the interwar Romanian novel; we have pointed out that this novel is a novel of the different environments, revealing to the reader its darkest and most hidden secrets. Even if there are exaggerations and one cannot speak of a complete authenticity, this type of novel remains an objective and realistic one and the facts, events or descriptions being easily recognizable.

The element of novelty in the PhD thesis is given by the large number of novels referred to, without being limited to a certain number of writers, this allowing better organization and a more expanded selection area than in other works in this field, as the above-mentioned writings of Georgiana Sarbu. Another original element of this thesis is the attempt to outline a theory of the suburbs from the literary point of view, with the help of the literary sociology. Also, I believe that this thesis has brought important contributions by analyzing the narrative type, by establishing the type of characters present in these novels of the suburbs, by identifying the representative main places in the suburbs and by revealing their significance, as well as by creating an annotated chronology of the Romanian novels of the suburbs written between 1853 and 1946. This paper will be a starting point for those who wish to further study this very interesting, complex and captivating aspect of the Romanian literature. A real reorganization was necessary regarding the suburban theme, from the beginning of the period and until 1946, and this represents an element of actual novelty.

I have not only attempted to rehabilitate this Romanian literary genre, but I have especially wished to shed light on this kind of literature, in order to increase the readers' interest in reading it. This is most important as the expectations of nowadays readers are completely different from those in the past. Educated for decades during the interwar period and oriented towards high-quality literature and culture, the taste of the public was "stabilized" during the communist period because, even if the Marxist politics and ideology were on the first place, the value of the major Romanian literature masterpieces has never been questioned (except, of course, for the proletarian culture period). Nowadays, the "tastes" have diversified, so that the "paraliterature" has gained a larger ground. This kind of novels is read by persons preferring a certain literary genre; however, it (still) maintains the intrinsic (and absolute) value of literature.

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