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#### Abstract of the habilitation thesis

My habilitation thesis is called *For a realism sans rivages (without shores)*, and it treats with critical means the realist novel and its beginnings, I was inspired by *La gura sobei*, which seems to be a copy of a French novel, obviously I chose the novels that I considered appropriate that would best fit the theme, those that N. Manolescu calls *dorice* and that can be considered either realistic, or naturalistic. The idea of using a small passage from the novel to describe the complete work came to me from reading Auerbach's classic study, *Mimesis*. On the other hand, a postmodern novel that talks about this is called *The Merchant of the Beginnings of the Novel*, written by Matei Vișniec. I was also inspired by a classic study by my teachers Sorin Alexandrescu and Dan Grigorescu, **The Realist Novel in the Nineteenth Century**. The authors I have analyzed in this habilitation thesis are many, among them are Nicolae Filimon, Mihail Kogălniceanu, but also other very important authors. It is not very easy to write a history of the specific incipients of realism in Romanian literature without useless theorizing, without exhaustive and comprehensive definitions of the concept of mimesis, without taking up the ideas of G. Ibrăileanu from *Creation and Analysis*, without N. Manolescu's theory about Doric, Ionic and Corinthian, from his essay on the Romanian novel, *Noah's Ark*, but somehow to incorporate all these ideas, plus many others in a new network of arguments, in a new textual structure. I would not exclude from this introduction either the classic study of the stylistics of Romanian prose Tudor Vianu's *The Art of Romanian Prose Writers*, nor the collection of essays about the novel and not only by Mihai Zamfir, *The Other Side of Prose*, in fact the first discussions about realism will crystallize in France, around 1850, starting from the paintings of Gustave Courbet and the term being invented by a French art critic, who signed with the pseudonym Jules Champfleury, whose real name was Jules François Felix Fleury-Husson, who published in 1857 the volume of essays entitled *Realism*, but also a course written by one of the first professors of French literature at the Faculty of Letters of the University of Bucharest, Charles Drouhet, author of a famous French-Romanian, Romanian-French dictionary. In principle, various features of realism can be found in the works of Balzac, Flaubert or

Stendhal. For this reason, we cannot fail to analyze two of the French instances of realism, Balzacianism and Zolism or Naturalism.

Last but not least, I would cite Cristian Moraru's study, *The Poetics of Reflection*, inspired by the New American Criticism, and published immediately after the 1989 Revolution and a few years before the author's departure to the USA where he will settle and which is related to a very old theme born from romantic literature, that of the double. Cristian Moraru assures us in the preface of the book that he will carry out an archaeology of mimesis, that is, he will probe the texts on mimesis of ancient philosophers and writers from the series Plato, Aristotle, Ovid, etc., precisely in order to unearth and bring to the surface the original meaning of the notion of mimesis and to discover, implicitly, in its secret archives, the starting point of a "narcissistic", self-reflexive paradigm, in Romanian literature and only.

If I had known about this study I would certainly have quoted it in the preamble to my book, **The Double Narcissus**, but I honestly confess, it fell into my hands after it had already been completed. Structured in three different parts, entitled Preliminaries to a "refutatio imitationis", **The Game of Paradigms** and **For an Archaeology of Mimesis**, **The Poetics of Reflection** constitutes a meticulous approach to her theoretical thesis, the main approach being that of destroying the prejudice of the existence of an antinomy between the "mimetic logos" and the "narcissistic logos".

According to Moraru's assessment, the paradigm of the former overlaps the concepts of classicism and romanticism, in the latter case it would be a profoundly subjective and metaphysically grounded mimesis, and of the latter it involves a literary sector stretching from post-romanticism to Nouveau Roman, extremely concerned with putting the code of its own writing into the abyss. The central theoretical metaphor of writing is the myth of Narcissus, which can be found, in different ways, in the two types of discourse. Rejecting from the theoretical premises the equivalences of mimesis with partial notions such as those of "imitatio", "copying", "reproduction", "painting" etc. and going through an entire bibliography of European philosophy, the texts on the subject written by Hobbes, Pascal, Spinoza, Leibniz, Kant, Fichte, Hegel, Nietzsche, Husserl, Heidegger, Cristian Moraru proposes a broader understanding of the notion of mimesis as a "complex catropic scenario". In whose subterranean there is camouflaged, self-reflection, detectable even if only in the selection of a slice of reality, in the walk of the mirror on a certain road, of which Plato spoke in the dialogue *The Republic*. The careful interrogation of the texts of the "archaeology" of mimesis will also highlight other profound meanings of the mimetic act such as those of anamnesis, those related to vision or "inner realism". I find very interesting the delimitations in the second chapter, **The Game of Paradigms** in which mimesis is discriminated against in relation to other related terms, imitatio, copying, reproduction, mirroring, painting and even realism, but also representation, expression, fantasy, transfiguration or creation.

It is not possible to say exactly when realism penetrates Romanian literature, perhaps in the Pașoptista era, a rather significant moment is Nicolae Filimon's novel, *The Old and New Ciocoi*, but also in some passages from the literary letters sent by Ion Ghica to Vasile Alecsandri or in the short stories of C. Negruzzi, especially in *A Horse Run*, a short story in which realism becomes a pretext for textualist, postmodern avant-la-lettre, or in Mihail Kogălniceanu's fragment of a novel, as far as it has come down to us, in *The Mysteries of the Heart*, not to fall into the trap but Cristian Teodorescu's novel is not a continuation or a rewriting of the book, re-writing, see Christian Moraru's definition of the novel, but the fixation or development of all its valences will be done in the Junimist period. The famous correspondence between Titu Maiorescu and the author of our first novel cycle, Duiliu Zamfirescu, proves it more than necessary that realism did not have a good name in the classical era.

### 1.1. Literary realism between Platonic mimesis and verisimilitude

The term mimesis, in Greek μίμησις (mīmēsis), from μιμεῖσθαι (mīmeisthai), "to imitate," from μῖμος (mimos), "imitator, actor", which gave us the word mima, and the verb to mime, expresses the idea of imitation present in art, in a different way from the dialogue of John, in which Socrates exemplified the idea of mimesis by describing the work of art as being generated by a mirror driven with the help of an ox cart through a landscape. In the dialogue *Republica* (from the etymon *Res publica*, public affairs) Socrates discusses with one of his students and presents mimesis in the form of the parable or parable of the three beds, the first being the creation of God, the second being the creation of a woodworker imitating the divine idea and the third the creation of an artist imitating that of the woodworker. Socrates wanted to demonstrate that the literary work, the statue or the painting is only an imitation of the third rank, not a second, purer game, as the poet Ion Barbu stated in his poem, and this type of ternary model later entered the poetics of the Middle Ages or the Renaissance, and underwent a continuous metamorphosis reaching the era of European Modernism. The essential book for understanding European mimesis, however, remains the magnificent critical work of Erich Auerbach, a famous German philosopher, *Mimesis, The Representation of Reality in German Literature*, whose introductory chapter brings the distinction between the different types of mimesis in Homer's *Odyssey* and then that of the Bible, which, according to the same Auerbach, has configured the very imaginary of Western culture, a book that has had an extraordinary impact on literary criticism in our country, enjoying a very good reception at the time of the first translation and constant attention since then. Without a doubt, *Mimesis* is one of the great books of literary criticism of the twentieth century, along with several others written by Northrop Frye, Gilbert Durand or

Roland Barthes, and would occupy a leading place in the top of any humanist of our century, and it is unlikely that this reading has not been read. In **The Republic**, Plato opposed the term mimesis to diegesis, which in Greek meant story and which emphasized the act of narration and the way in which a character endowed with narrative powers presents the world of which he is a part and which he describes without actually excluding an interaction with it. If in mimesis the emphasis is placed on the world described and on the act of reflection, in diegesis the emphasis falls on the narrator and on the act of narration itself, and for this reason, the two modes of initiation of the literary work shake hands and collaborate in the composition of the whole, in relatively equal parts. In fact, since it is an imitation, the degree of truth or truth of such a phenomenon does not really matter, but rather its fence of verisimilitude, because the literary work is more like the Real, that is, it assumes the idea that Goethe attributed to any literary gem, that of expanding the Real and giving it an additional dimension. From this point of view, fictional stories do not have to seem true but only plausible, that is, they are similar to the Real, and from this point of view they go beyond the idea of Truth and Falsehood, but are subscribed by a logic of fictional worlds, presented in our country in an exhaustive study written by Toma Pavel.

Leafing through some older files and preparing to write this book as well, I passionately reread Erich Auerbach's book, **Mimesis**, since my student days and I tried to imagine a similar book from us, the only example that comes to mind is the chapter on Doric from N. Manolescu's essay, **Noah's Ark**, which I don't really think overlaps entirely with Erich Auerbach's wonderful op, but in the absence of another study on Realism I could hope that someone will invent such a story in our country as well, in which the demonstration always starts from a fragment of the book, as in a wonderful hologram, with the whole in a pars pro toto relationship, but I don't think I would have the patience to identify those fragments, I prefer to talk about the realistic works of Romanian literature, starting with Slavici, Eminescu, Creangă and Caragiale, continuing with Camil Petrescu, Liviu Rebreanu, Hortensia Papadat-Bengescu, G. Călinescu, Marin Preda, Petru Dumitriu, Zaharia Stancu, etc.

Of course, there are other very useful studies by Romanian specialists who deal with other forms of European realism, I am referring first of all to a university course written by Professor Charles Drouhet that can be consulted in the library of the Faculty of Letters, but also to Livius Ciocîrlie's volume, on the Realism in French Literature.

## 1.2. Theoretical glosses on European realism

Whoever discusses the issue of realism in Romanian literature cannot avoid that absolutely famous study of Mihail Bahtin, the one on the chronotope, presented in his study on the chronotope in the novel, the term being originally from relativistic physics

and being translated into the field of literary studies by the great representative of Russian Formalism. I don't know if the Mimesis in Erich Auerbach's definition does not carry this influence in its seed, probably not, but the two notions have a common ground. In this area of the realist novel, which is delimited by R.M.Albères in the chapter **The Drunkenness of Realism** in the classic study **The History of the Modern Novel**, exactly in the spirit of another famous essay written by Camil Petrescu a few decades before him, we are talking about **The New Structure and the Work of Marcel Proust**, in relation to that specific Zeigeist or Weltaunschaung, in relation to the conquests in biology, botany or genetics, if we refer to the specific theories that determine the appearance of the characters dragged, knocked down by diseases with genetic transmission or by the strength of the naturalist novels of Emile Zola, in which R.M.Albères appreciates the stoicism with which the heroes struggle to live these fatalities. In fact, to be able to talk about one of the forms of metamorphosis of the tragic, which is preserved quite well in the areas of modern theater or drama but also of the novel, a good example being Tess, the character of Thomas Hardy's novel, a victim of social conventions but who will commit a crime and is arrested somewhere in the area of the ancient Stonehenge temple, sacrifice of these absurd social laws. In fact, Thomas Hardy, characterized in Romania by G. Ibrăileanu as one of the most important European novelists of his time, explained that he built his character within a plot that closely resembles the scenario of an ancient tragedy precisely to capture a little the formula by which the ancient tragic metamorphoses and becomes an integral part of the modern novel.

In fact, the great European novel will be more or less realistic, I am referring here to the novels of great novelists such as Dickens, Tolstoy, Balzac or even Flaubert, comparable to the mystery literature of his predecessors Eugene Sue, Paul Feval or Alexandre Dumas but especially concerned with social mysteries. In fact, French realism, characterized by the demiurgy of the omniscient novelist, with a Balzac who knows everything like a true chief of police who could even have had access to the files of Providence, who will fail in naturalism or in the saga novel, the German or the English will be fertilized by the great Russian realism, starting with Turgenev, and continuing with Tolstoy, perhaps the most important representative of this current, Gogol, Chekhov or Fyodor Dostoyevsky, the latter being a kind of missing link and making the transition to the Ionian or Corinthian areas as N. Manolescu calls them of Russian literature. In the twentieth century, Russian literature will return to realism, first through Maxim Gorky, who will become an uncrowned father of socialist realism, then also through Sholokhov, Pasternak, Shushin or Alexander Solzhenitsyn, to give just a few examples of realist authors of a somewhat more recent date. In reality, not even the hard core realist novelists such as Dickens or Balzac are subsumable only to this current, The Skin of the Scab or the Androgyne motif in the short story Sarassine, admirably analyzed by Roland Barthes in a study that is the basis of poststructuralism, but realism will be

seriously undermined by the postrealist novel, by the mob novels, by the psychological analysis novels.

In another, somewhat more recent study, entitled *The Thought of the Novel*, Toma Pavel will give a relatively low space to realism, his reign being a builder of a history of the European novel starting from the thesis of victorious idealism. However, Toma Pavel does not forget to typologize, identifying several forms of realism, the best represented being the social one, followed by the psychological, formal or descriptive one. The four different forms of realism have, according to Thomas Pavel, two related functions, that of testimony and that of psychology.

In my habilitation thesis I reviewed the beginnings of the Romanian realist novel, starting with the older period, with **The Old and New Ciocoi** by Nicolae Filimon, or *The Mysteries of the Heart* by Mihail Kogălniceanu and Caragiale, Eminescu and Slavici, Creangă, between realism and magical realism, continuing with the saga of the Comăneșteanu's family by Duiliu Zamfirescu, then with the cycle of C. Stere, **Around the Revolution**, but also with Liviu Rebreanu, from short stories to novels, from **Adela**, Ibrăileanu's unique novel, on the elements of realism in Camil Petrescu's novels, then I referred to **The Saga of the Hallipas**, Mihail Sebastian, novelist, in **The City of Acacia** and **The Accident**, passing through the literature of Mircea Eliade, Caesar Petrescu with the novel **Darkening**, G. Călinescu, or pastiche or parodied realism, approaching contemporaneity through the literature of Marin Preda, the stories or novels of Mihail Sadoveanu, including his magical realism, **End of the Century in Bucharest**, by Ion Marin Sadoveanu, passing through socialist realism, Zaharia Stancu with **Barefoot** and **Shatra**, **Family Chronicle**, by Petru Dimitriu, the critical realism of Paul Goma, Mircea Horia Simionescu and **The Well-Tempered Ingenious** and Radu Petrescu's **Diary**. This is followed by *The Book of Metopolis*, with *The Gallery with the Wild Vine*, of magical realism, Ștefan Bănuțescu, a Faulkner from Dobrogea, but also the universe of the prose of Radu Aldulescu and Matei Vișniec, with **The Merchant of the Beginnings of the Novel**.

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