

*Luiza Textoris**

The Transgression of Romanian Oneirism

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In a Preface to *The Romantic Soul and the Dream*, Dumitru Țepeneag says that this inner quest started from the idea that “meaning always transcended image”. (Béguin, 1998: 5) Driven by inherent curiosity and finding other meanings, one begins to elaborate a system of analyzing causes and effects until a lust for knowledge reaches every individual in a different way. The present study questions the dream’s place and the role which Corin Braga sees fit. In other words, is the dream a simple instrument of knowledge or it becomes a whole different thing? Could it be stated that, in Corin Braga’s oneiric project, the stake consists in creating scenarios by the following rule “the world becomes a dream and the dream becomes a world”?

For instance, the Romantic period tells us that the dream is the possibility and the means through which one searches “beyond”, restoring the connection with the lost unity. More to the point, the dream is the detecting device of a space distinct from the sensory world, but at the same time it is the matrix through which one could reintegrate itself into the great cosmos.

The surrealists utterly rethink this. It still is an investigation instrument, it’s just that it does not try to find a “beyond”, but a scienstial “here”. If the Romantics are content in looking for a way towards unexplored regions of the soul through images without bringing something back to the reality of “here”, the Surrealists want to impose to the immediate reality, the laws and the logic of “beyond”; all of this by deconstructing the dream and by comprehending the structure and its mechanism.

In Corin Braga’s project, the dream takes the role of an orientation compass for “beyond”, although he is talking about a multiple beyond (parallel worlds), so it is different than the Romantic view. At the same time it is a regulatory principle for “here”. Practically, dreaming means immersing in other parallel worlds, dreaming is diving into the unconscious and creating. Dreams are independent microcosmoses, rhizomatic nodes I might say, through which one can draw the map of an oneiric project.

His choice in opting for the dream theme and not something else is made explicit in his confession: “The dream seems to directly suspend the criterion for

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acknowledgment, thus we do not feel the need anymore (or we lack the possibility) to excise the fantastical elements or the obscure, liquid ones. In here, everything is equal. Because they are fragmented, being isolated one from another, ordinary dreams do not have anything threatening. They do not disrupt the certainty of life. But when they are linked in a continuous way, and gain some sort of coherence (although not a rational one), they build a unitary vision which can easily replace the real one. Hence, parallel oneiric universes are born; worlds that are overlapped or imbedded with our world.” (Turlea, 2012)

That being said, Corin Braga surpasses the formula of Romanian oneirism, because he does not see the dream as a criterion of whose matrix is capable of lucidly building parallel analogue worlds, like Dumitru Țepeneag does. He develops parallel universes right inside the dream.

Therefore, broadening our focus on the four novels mentioned before we can observe that they are not necessarily connected through their recurring characters: Adela, Anir, Fulviu, Luiza, Vladinski etc., but because of *The Great Oneiric Journey* in which they engage – the quest for an existential meaning, in recuperating the self and in transcending the nightmare. So there’s the volume *Hydra*, for instance, in which Adela lives her oneiric adventure and the character Anir appears – the central figure in *The Claustrophobic Man*, Vladinski, Dorli Ostra, but also Luiza and Fulviu from *Luiza Textoris*. The book was published next after *Hydra*. Surely what actually matters is that the plans in which the action takes place along the four narratives, must be seen as overlapped, and as the author himself admits, imbedded in our world.

But what are all these characters looking for? Speaking about the internal economy of the novel, what is Luiza searching for in her dreaming?

Luiza wants to learn how to fly, and then how to transpose this oneiric experience into reality whilst Fulviu, her dream partner, learns about the methods through which the oneiric mechanism is expanding space and time during sleep.

In order to experiment with dreaming, the two characters create doubles in their dream. Luiza’s double is Adela (from *Hydra*), while Fulviu’s dream double is Anir (from *The Claustrophobic Man*).

Both Luiza and Fulviu will end up feeling tormented like their doubles, stepping into unfamiliar living nightmares. Luiza will come to bide in a state of paradoxical awakening: “She is heading towards the bed to look at herself asleep. She then discovers that she is not sleeping. She is just laying there on her back with her eyes open, without seeing or hearing anything. [...] She came across the idea that the easiest way to regain herself is to see her eyes directly in the mirror.” (Braga, 2012: 345) Analogously, Fulviu will have to fight Behemoth, the devil of dreams who “changes things, until you won’t be able to distinguish reality and dreaming” (ibid.: 362), after he confines Anir to Herina (“I left him to be executed, but in the last minute before he died drowning I managed to recover him with a fishing net and took him to Herina”) (ibid.: 364)

Luiza enjoys dreaming so much that she falls into the dream’s trap and then she loses her ability to discern reality from nightmare, being held a prisoner in the oneiric unconsciousness universe: “She never thought that the thing in which she immersed like a dolphin, the dream, would become inaccessible to her. “I am now paying for my sleeping abuse. I’ve slept for a lifetime and I don’t need it anymore.””

(ibid.: 352) But as we come to understand, Luiza will fall into what Corin Braga calls a strange state of paradoxical awakening, in which Luiza is behaving as if she is awake while dreaming. It seems that, one of the characters tells us, “something important is off balance in the structure of her personality, but not on genetic, hereditary grounds but by dynamic processes, of sleep disequilibrium first and then in wakefulness”. (ibid.: 356)

That is to say, Corin Braga creates for his four books not an oneiric machine but an oneiric organism. This gives his characters, no matter the temporal spot they are in or their degree of consistency (human beings, phantoms, hallucinations), life, movement under the reader’s very eyes.

Roger Caillois claims in *Aproches les imaginaire* that “a creation does not exist unless it is composed and then built. Any fantasy in art assumes syntax. Enthusiasm can’t be abridged of legislation”. (Caillois, 2001: 181) The organism created by Corin Braga has a legislation of its own, indifferent to the legislation of other writings and situated somewhere far away from the minimalist predisposition of vernacular critique. For this reason, his texts do not give the impression of a collection of an irrational mass. Rather, they are tracing a rhizomatic map with its own structure and principles of organization.

One might say that the interchange of these two states, paradoxical awakening and paradoxical sleep, are creating the opportunity for the writer to play with overlapped and crisscross narrative trails.

Although Corin Braga’s writing is impeccable by allowing readers to easily follow Luiza in her oneiric and awake state, there is something unsettling. When the two worlds cannot be delineated anymore, it appears as if they would unite on a third level, where the parallel universes from the oneiric are melting with the sensory world.

Ultimately, the reader is the one who determines the verisimilitude of the stories.

As we can see, Corin Braga’s books represent an opportunity to enter and explore a magical land, repressed by the postmodernist thought. A place where one can say stop to the rational ego, accustomed to the consistency of its own order and give the reader a chance to satisfy the need for magic, in the utter absence of the miraculous.