

ȘTEFAN BOLEA, *Internal Conflict in Nineteenth-Century Literature. Reading the Jungian Shadow* (Lexington Books, 2020)

Ștefan Bolea (born in 1980), PhD in Philosophy and PhD in Comparative Literature, is a member of The Writers' Union of Romania, a multiple award-winning author, an anthologist and a translator. His activity covers various literary fields: poetry, prose, essays, criticism and literary history. For the English-speaking world, he published his papers in *Philosophy Now* (the prestigious Anglo-American journal) and in various Romanian scholarly journals of international circulation. In Romania, he is often seen as a "pioneer", due to his original and multidisciplinary research area – a "philosopher of culture", studying both high culture and popular/mass culture, fine art and pop art (encompassing literary fiction, music, cinematography, painting and so on). He is an expert on various art movements (Symbolism, Aestheticism, Decadentism, Surrealism, Expressionism, Postmodernism – and Romanticism, as we are about to see) and philosophical movements (Nihilism, Existentialism), discussed in several volumes (e.g., *Ontology of Negation*, 2004; *Introduction to Nietzschean Nihilism*, 2012; *Existentialism Today*, 2012, 2019; critical editions of works written by forgotten or neglected Symbolist poets, 2014-2017; *Theoria*, 2015).

Through *Internal Conflict in Nineteenth-Century Literature. Reading the Jungian Shadow*, Șt. Bolea introduces in his cultural equation a new, though not entirely unexpected, quintessential element: his previous works included psychological analysis, but to a lesser degree. Making this bold "chess move" (supported by an extensive bibliography and extensive research) and placing psychology (as an object of his studies) on the same level with philosophy and art, his ambitious "Philosophy of Culture" project morphs into "Philosophy and Psychology of Culture", a concept of even wider, enriched complexity.

The author's approach aims to prove that literature (in this particular case, Romantic and Postromantic literature) and related art forms (from H. Fuseli's famous *Nightmare* painting to Expressionist and even Postmodern cinematography) do not merely reflect philosophical movements and psychological theories: to a certain extent, fiction anticipates, shapes or inspires such movements and theories. Thus, Șt. Bolea brings to light an idea seemingly overlooked by literary critics: **the anticipation and the educated prediction are to be found not only in the literary works belonging to (hard) science fiction (often one step ahead of real-life science!), but also in the allegories and metaphors of any other fiction genre.**

To substantiate the above-mentioned demonstration, the Romanian philosopher "dissects" the key concept created by C.G. Jung (founder of analytical psychology): "the shadow" (and the Freudian counterpart of the "shadow" – "the personal unconscious"). Of course, the related concepts are not neglected, allowing

us to glimpse and (to begin) to understand the complexity of the subject matter (for example, “the persona” is explained in *Chapter 1*, “the double” and “the demonic/daimonic” being explained in *Chapter 2*). The resulting conclusions are then projected on seven literary masterpieces (given the multidisciplinary approach, the symbolic number could be a reference to the seven classical liberal arts), belonging to Romanticism or Postromanticism and interpreted with the generous support of Nihilistic and Existentialist philosophy.

Another very interesting idea emerging from *Internal Conflict ...* reflects **the many avatars (or faces, or shapes...) of “the shadow”**. According to Romantic literature, our “dark alter ego” acquires, under certain peculiar circumstances, an (apparent) “physical form”. This “literary shadows” turn out to be: a sinful stepbrother fallen under the spell of a powerful, demonic potion (E.T.A. Hoffmann, *The Devil’s Elixirs*), a man-made creature abandoned and doomed to eternal, maddening solitude (M. Shelley, *Frankenstein*), an embodied conscience (E.A. Poe, *William Wilson*), a destructive dissociated personality born in the protagonist’s paranoid mind (F.M. Dostoevsky, *The Double*), the inherent human evil overcoming the weak human nature (R.L. Stevenson, *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*), an alien parasite controlling the body and the mind of its human host (G. de Maupassant, *Horla*) or a grotesque portrait mirroring the soul, not the body (O. Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*). All these various “shadows” represent repressed personalities and reveal (as the author points out) the philosophical speculation and the psychological analysis brought together and strengthened by literary allegory.

The importance of Șt. Bolea’s exploratory analysis does not lie, however, “only” in interpreting Romantic fiction and revealing its foreshadowing power, its influences and its legacy, related and compared to other art forms, philosophical movements or psychological theories. **The author also coins original philosophical and psychological notions**, which, we believe, are not to remain unnoticed.

One such remarkable example is “**the shadow of the shadow**” (see *Chapter 5*): if our “shadow” possesses some “Luciferian depth and height” (“the golden aspect of the shadow” – the Jungian potential “light”; or the theological “Paradise Lost” mark – alluding to the previous grandeur), “the shadow of the shadow is completely deprived of nobility, and rectitude, having a somewhat animalic quality” (p. 71). Introducing “the shadow of the shadow”, Șt. Bolea replaces the duality of human nature (reflecting the spiritual struggle between Good and Evil) with human nature’s trinity: deep inside ourselves, we carry not only the germs of the Biblical Fall (mythological and theological references are not avoided in *Internal Conflict ...*), but those of the absolute Ruin (the Nietzschean Abyss), too. Man is, at the same time, the potential source of the Not-man (a term coined by E. Cioran, meaning “post-man”, something “entirely different”, a “stranger to Humanity”), through his “shadow,” and of the Subman, through the “shadow of his shadow.” This new paradigm nuances, even challenges the Nietzschean Superman doctrine: Man cannot

become more than Man (Superman), but can become something else (Not-man). All our “becoming” possibilities are to be found in our “shadows”, “the shadows of our shadows” offering none. Considering his nihilistic and existentialist roots, the Romanian philosopher reaffirms here (as we see) his confidence in the regenerative power of the “decreation” process.

Also relevant is, for the targeted fields of knowledge (philosophy and psychology), the revealing of an “authentic **philosophy of the mask**” (found in F.M. Dostoevsky’s *The Double* – see *Chapter 6*), followed by Șt. Bolea’s own explanations and considerations regarding the “personology”. The “mask” (or the “persona”, a concept rooted in A. Schopenhauer’s writings – see p. 14) is invested with special (positive) “powers”, becoming a necessary counterweight to a dangerous, unleashed “shadow”: “life is either a ‘carnival’ (where persona, the interface between individual and society, is the sole ruler ...), or an ‘inferno’ (where the shadow, the not-I and the inner split are the only masters)” – p. 77.

A third term standing out here is the “**pre-shadow**” (*Chapter 9*): “a version of the shadow is encrypted in the spiritual code before the archetypal shadow (Sauron’s eye) exerts its influence” (p. 117). The apprentice-master relationship is thoroughly explored and the thesis of the “innocent victim” is firmly rejected: you cannot fall under the “spell” of a “shadowy mentor”, unless your true, hidden nature mirrors your “master-to-be”.

Reading *Chapter 10 (The Shadow in Philosophy)*, we have the opportunity to find in C.G. Jung’s writings the very beginnings of ... Șt. Bolea’s “philosophy and psychology of Romantic fiction”: “I was held back by a secret fear that I might perhaps be like him, at least in regard to the ‘secret’ which had isolated him from his environment . . . Thus Spake Zarathustra . . . like Goethe’s *Faust*, was a tremendous experience for me”. But for C.G. Jung, acknowledging his personal connection with Nihilism and “Sturm und Drang” (proto-Romantic) literature was merely (co)incidental: although the Swiss psychiatrist seems to have been seriously interested in this idea (see also the quote: “[T]he self often appears as supraordinate or ideal personality, having somewhat the relationship of Faust to Goethe or Zarathustra to Nietzsche” – p. 8), he did not extend it beyond the above reference and did not use these thoughts to begin an interdisciplinary study: “In addition, Jung’s interpreters have highlighted some shortcomings of the seminar. One of them notes that Jungian analysis is purely psychological” (p. 125).

In the same chapter, the following daring statement captures our attention: Fr. Nietzsche “practically creat[ed] psychoanalysis,” being “among the first to speak of repression, resistance, unconscious, shadow, anima, self” (p. 126). **Psychoanalysis is, therefore, nothing less than philosophy’s legitimate offspring.**

And, finally, in *Coda*, the author points out, among other things, the very essence of his guiding idea: “**between philosophy [and psychology – n.n., O.C.] and literature there are only distinctions of method, and not of substance**” (p. 145).

We could list here other merits of *Internal Conflict* ..., but it is not our intention to spoil the reading; we have already revealed enough to outline the originality, the complexity and the value of this authentic investigative and interpretative work. However, **we cannot conclude without noticing the bridge built by the Romanian author to two new related disciplines, maybe a future addition to his area of research: criminology and the sociology of deviance.** In fact, these (inter)disciplines gain in *Internal Conflict* ... the same secondary role previously assign to psychology; this could be, therefore, the beginning of interesting future developments. After all, the selected seven Romantic “shadows” are indisputably haunted by antisocial and criminal (even homicidal) urges and impulses, every and each one of them thoroughly analyzed and diagnosed. The incorrect, improper or superficial management of the “shadow” may unleash a monster far more terrible than Frankenstein’s: C. Lombroso’s “The Criminal Man”. This is precisely the warning of Romantic literature, highlighted through philosophical and psychological means.

Can we extract from here, therefore, a criminological theory foreshadowed by dark Romanticism’s doppelgängers and by Fr. Nietzsche/C.G. Jung’s “shadow”? Philosophy being “the art of questioning” and *Internal Conflict*... being, more than anything else, a philosophical work, this is, we believe, one important question we are entitled to ask ourselves.

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DOI: 10.26424/philobib.2020.25.1.16