

Poetic and stylistic of Anton Holban's prose

- summary -

Anton Holban's prose raises the literary critic's attention out of three different reasons: its connection with Marcel Proust, literary work the superiority of the short-story over the novel as esthetic option and the link between the literature and biography. The analysis of the poetics and stylistic of the Romanian writer leads to the delimitation of a specific structure – fragmentary structure and the identification of a inner coherence which René Girard attributed to the novels that explain trough each other and from which the critics must borrow their methods, concepts and meaning. The inner coherence of A. Holban's prose is given by the continuous interrogation of the others, of the ego, of the permanent refusal of the ultimate answers, by the attempt of discrediting the idea of an novel.

The Holbanian prose reveals to the inquirer the depths of the structures which allow the analysis, according to the model of writer who applies its variations from music to the literary text, until the end of the directions opened by the fundamental themes of the literary work: writing, loneliness of the creator, death, stranger, authenticity, love, jealousy, music, women, sea, literature. This thesis brings into attention the elements of poetry and stylistic indentified in the literary texts and in articles in the attempt of reevaluation of the writer. Anton Holban's texts are placed firstly in the content of evolution of the Romanian novel, then correlated with the emotion of the writer and the biographical experiences. Each text is accompanied by the assessment of its critical perception which points out the chanced perspective over the prose of Anton Holban together with the alteration of the critical instruments and proceedings.

The contribution of the thesis lives in its poetical and stylistic analysis of the holbanian prose in search for those elements which ensures its inner coherence. The poetical analysis establishes as main reference points the concepts utilized by the writer himself: excerpt, static and dynamic novel, authenticity, to which the relation final-beginning, narrative time and space and its relationship with models are added. The character is being analysed in a different chapter, due to the particularity of its poetry and the complexity of the analysis. The theoretical support has in view the evolution of the literary character from antiquity till present in relation with its critical approach and offers methods of perceiving the holbanian character. The different analysis

of the novel character is determined by changing in the perspective from one type to another: in the novel the subjective perspective is the dominant one while in the short-story the objective perspective is the dominant one.

The stylistic analysis is oriented towards the essential elements of the epic Romanian discourse, incipit, the description of the space and title, elements that are given significance due to their marginal position. The esthetic considerations are surprised both in the epic text as well as in articles, and contributes to the involvement of the poetry in a more coherent, comprehensive system. A. Holban's literary work aspires to an ideal and conceptual unity, which only the fragmentary structure itself cannot sustain.

Chapter 1 – Ways of perceiving the prose of Anton Holban

The Romanian novel between the two wars has known a surprising evolution from the question: "Why don't we have a novel?" to a real inflation of published texts during the year 1933. The local Romanian productions not only imitate the directions or methods of creation of the European novelists, but they also propose new original perspectives, proving a creative assimilation of the innovations of the European novel. The novels of Anton Holban which admits as masters writers as Marcel Proust and Hortensia Papadat – Bengescu, bring to attention a new personal vision of the novel.

The evolution of the writer is marked by the image of the violent and authoritative father, the parent's divorce and also by the glowing image of the grandmother and the literary influence of the uncle, Eugen Lovinescu. The first literary text signed by A. Holban is the work *Different people* forwarded by the author at the National Theater in Bucharest and performed in January 1930 in an inadequate performance with an improvised distribution. The characters announce the author's ambition to express states of mind, sensations, yet they are not fully developed, reduced only to a single aspect of their existence, on which one should not insist in order to reveal nuances.

Mirel's novel is advertised through an excerpt published in January 1924 in "Gazeta literara", whose manager was Liviu Rebreanu, accompanied by a presentation signed by E. Lovinescu. In the same year in May, the novel is published and reviewed favorably by O.

Sulutiu, Felix Aderca si Pompiliu Constantinescu. It is a text in which A. Holban reveals his distancing from the objective prose and prepares the reader for the subjective narrative perspective of a character captured in the obsessive analysis of his own experiences available for the others, only to understand himself. In 1931 Anton Holban marries Maria Dumitrescu, the prototype of the heroine in the novel *Ioana* and a month later the novel *A death which doesn't prove anything* is published, with many positive reviews from the critics who name Anton Holban as one of the most important writers at the time. The switch to a subjective perspective of the character "Sandu" from the novel *A death which doesn't prove anything* who has been prepared by Coca and Mirel and becomes representative for the literary work of A. Holban, is impressed by the esthetic option of the writer for the authentic prose.

In 1934 the novel *Ioana* is published. Sandu analyses the methods that allow him to remake the lone story for Ionana, after a three-year separation, when Ioana had a relationship with "The Other One". The novel enjoyed less publicity, being considered inferior in terms of its structure, organized like a file with notes and the impression of an exaggerated anti-artistic sense (Octav Sulutiu). When it comes to the structure of the novel *Ioana*, the literary critics has indentified different influences: threadless in love reminds G. Calinescu of "Adolphe" of Benjamin Constant, the notebooks where Sandu noticed the authentic experience that appeals to André Glide (Nicolae Manolescu), and the proustianism is considered superficial (Nicolae Manolescu) or as a moment related to the proximity of the present temporal psychologism of James Joyce (Marian Victor Buciu).

Anton Holban meets in 1935 Lydia Manolovici, the prototype of the heroine in the novel *Dania's games*. The novel is published together with an article after his death (1971). The article entitled "Literary testament" was also published after his death in 1937, in the magazine "Azi" in which the author points out the central directions of his poetry and gives a proper definition of the static and dynamic novel. The novel itself had mostly negative reviews: "Anton Holban has registered this novel into a minor stage" (Lucian Raicu), an unsuccessful attempt of writhin a book due to his structure and theme, with the exception of some successful episodes where one can identify the influence of the intimate diary (Liviu Petrescu), "inferior novel in terms of its vision and artistic techniques compared to *Ioana*" (Alexandru George).

Short-stories are more mature than the novels and more balanced stylistically speaking, due to the lack of epic vocation of the writer who makes only a combination of some excerpts in

his novels (Nicolae Manolescu). The overall impression is that there is a certain insecurity at the stylistic level through rhetoric interrogations (Sergiu Ailenei). The limited space of the short-stories represents an advantage as the writer caught only moments and sensations of the pure sense of mind, which he obsessively analyses in all its nuances.

The novel *The Teacher's Parade* is published in 1932 and receives great reviews, having a topic of discussion among former teacher colleagues of the author himself. The portraits of the high-school teachers are barely presented and completed along with traits based on the given situations, yet a better perspective on their true character is not presented. The impression of the authentically and dynamism is created by the author due to the different replies formed in the dramatic text.

Critical studies suggest different approaches, the most important ones are the study of Liviu Petrescu, which brings into discussion the idea of organicism very much present in the Romanian text, the study of Al. Calinescu where the concept of lucidity is central and the recent approach of Liviu Leonte emphasizes the cathartic assimilation of the Proustian model in the prose of A. Holban.

Chapter II – The poetic system of Anton Holban

Holban's poetry is briefly presented in the article entitled "Literary testament" had scattered in his entire literary work as the reflections of the character – narrator, being a writer himself, revealing the condition of the creator, the possibility to choose a certain type of writing, the methods and their impact upon the reader.

The excerpt matches the analytical, subjective writing of A. Holban, firstly because it goes very well with the authentic feeling that it tries to express. The fragment can make an certain atmosphere, mainly because it allows a random recombination or the analysis based on the text and also reveals the different nuances of a feeling, The excerpt as a narrative method, offers its author access to authenticity in a way that Holban confesses that cannot develop a scene to much, that his notices cannot be longer than a page.

The fragment helps him to be the first of all authentic if he relates to himself.

The structure of Anton Holban's novels raised the interest of the literary critics, especially under the impression of unity, although they are not unitary, but made from different

parts joined together. Nicolae Manolescu identifies in novel *Ioana* a structure similar to a constellation, where memories are associated with a present event, and the impression of epic development is achieved through the comments of these memories, which seem to be in a continuous move.

The static novel is definitely superior to the dynamic one, the theme is presented under different aspects, the topic has no value, the details are more important, it has got a deeper meaning, it addresses to those who believe that literature is the expression of the most intimate appeals of life itself, the plot is developing randomly, meant to explore a feeling. The action is static, replaced by a succession of observations meant to guarantee the various forms of truth. It's the narrative formula adequate to finding out the inner changes because these are noticeable only from the distance. The static novel makes his reader pretty tired and challenges him to observe more the inner side of the people.

The dynamic novel is that type of novel which addresses to mediocre readers, who perceives literature as a way of entertainment, a mere method of satisfying their curiosity. The action, the plot and the characters are much more important, in other words what Anton Holban refers to as "the external things".

The structure of the A. Holban's novels allows an interpretation from the perspectives of the relations between incipit and final. It's not about the type of a relation specific to the objective traditional novels, which underline these sequences from the perspective of a pact with the reader regarding the creation of a fictional world with precise temporal and spatial coordinates. As far as become Anton Holban writing style is concerned these two elements are functional in creating this type of atmosphere. The two elements are not fixed, but flexible so as it is the position of the character – narrator towards everything that interferes with its interpretation. The character doesn't change, do not evolve, do not alter their way of relating to each other they only find new significations with the same gestures and experiences. The literary critics explained the open – ending novels of A. Holban through their relation with the contemporary literature of the author, the attendance of poetry and also the ambiguous structure of the writer and modern sympathy (cf. Silvia Urdea).

Anton Holban's prose make a difference through its temporal and spatial coordinates that play an important role not only from the perspective of a analytical, subjective writing but also from a poetical perspective. The space is pretty limited according to the classical conception of

using space more like a background because in Anton Holban`s prose the action is substituted by the inner analysis its is only natural that there is a lack of space when it does exist it only has a symbolic role. The narrative tense involves two different aspects: the past relived to understand the present. The lack of consistency both of the past and the present suggests the importance which Holban gives to the living moment, in perfect accordance with the fragmentary structure of the text.

Writing in the first person narrative means to Holban maximizing the possibilities that the literature offers to realize his own inner portrait and to extend the existence beyond the written word, even more, a way deal to his person because “ I have to live with me till the end of time”. This narrative formula does not involve simple lyricism, nor does it exclude the subjectivity of the living sensations, but another way to attain objectivity.

Lucidity is the cultural term of Anton Holban poetry, not only because it defines him, but also because it represent the creative impulse for the writer and the character – narrator: “I do not make interpretations in different forms to find myself excuses, but only from an organic necessity”. Lucidity is a defect in the sense in which this permanent self – quest prevents the writer from perceiving a pure sentiment.

Anton Holban insisted on identifying the models that influenced him and the impact upon his texts and the character`s way of thinking. The two names which are frequently associated with the holbanian prose are M. Proust and Racine. Nevertheless the novelist accepts a much larger influence on his work admitting that in his text one can find everything he thought of literature since he started reading.

Chapter III The character`s poetry as reflected in Anton Holban`s prose

The theories of the literary character are determined by the perspectives on this concept: the character regarded as a component element of a structure, character seen from psychological perspective in relation to the other characters, the narrator, the reader, himself or the character perceived at linguistic level as sign, language or discourse.

The existence of the character is delivered by the action itself, inner living sensation, the way it relates to the others or the self, and by the word it expresses.

The character created by Anton Holban plays a unique role in the Romanian prose due to the complexity of the relation that it develops with his creator: each and everyone contributes essentially to deciphering the other's personality according to the pictorial model of procedure entitled "mise en abime". We learn about A. Holban through a careful analysis of the character Sandu who is deeply marked by the presence of the double – ego, the stranger who sees him as a burden, as he is perfectly aware of the danger of his own lucidity and the fact that he accepts the borders of knowledge, but not the ultimate truth. We find out about Sandu by comparing him with Anton Holban the action of writing is a form of life, the only authentic one; fiction may be source of biographical experience and the writer is also the first reader of the literary work.

Chapter IV – Anton Holban's prose's stylistic

The stylistics has the mission to report the reality of the text at the languages standards, the writer's personality, the deviations of the language, the intentionally – unintentionally relation in construction of the message and to identify what is particular and individual in the collected data.

The incipit of a novel is stylistically significant not only because it determines a narrative rhythm that was definitely influenced by the author, but it opens an imaginary world, after the tale's model representations or it represent a link between real and imaginary. The first stage contains the unaltered authors esthetic option, the way he goes himself in the fiction space and puts the elements of interest for the reader.

The lesson that Anton Holban learnt from Racine is the one of maximal concentration, of limitation of the present of the décor to let inner analysis space to be held. In consequence, when the Romanian writer introduces décor elements they are given special significance. The analysis of the fragments of description reveals new senses of the text, as well as poetry and esthetic prose elements.

The title is in correlation not only with the text, with its message, which it confirms or infirms, but also with society and with values, and even with literary tradition. The relationship of the title with the text may be analyzed as a dialogical relationship. Gerard Genette considers the paratexte as the privileged place where the pragmatic dimension of the text manifests, in the

sense of the action exercised over the reader through an initial pact. The title gets, in relation with the text, a stylistic function, a function of identification and of signification.

The Stylistic analysis of this structure elements of Holban's prose offer the reader a support for a overall view of the work and for the identification of that binder who unites the text into an artistic universe. The bad style, with inequalities from a fragment to another goes very well with the esthetic conception of the writer who puts in the foreground self-knowledge through the knowledge of the other, who is aware of the limits of this knowledge, but doesn't give up searching for a sense even in trivial, instinctive gestures. Anton Holban's style is much more than to his contemporary writers "single speech" which Laurent Jenny considers a revival in speaking to a type of activity of interior language differentiation. This type of speech is specific to modern time, as the study author states, through ambiguity expressed in any act of speech: in language uttering, the subject discovers itself and act in the same time uttering.

Chapter V – Esthetic approach in the literary work

The esthetic attitude is one of the fundamental human attitudes and it has been called "inattention to life" or "interruption of the daily bond of the human being". Of all the concepts attributed to the esthetic attitude, the esthetic value is the most general one and it is accomplished by means of the other values. It depends on the occurrence and appearance, not reducible to the object on configuration and it is always different depending on the receptive item.

The esthetic elements described in the literary work and the music and art items do not pretend to be organized in a unitary system, but some coordinates which reveals a bit Anton Holban's creative personality as a precise esthetic conception creator can be identified.

Anton Holban's esthetic conception lies in the literary text as the esthetic conception of the writer Sandu, who set his mind on authenticity in order to revive an experience, for the fragmentary structure, the truth subordinated to significance, that is conscious of the limits of itself knowledge, the impossibility of knowing the other one and the pointless effort of finding a formula which can evoke the true sense of like. Anton Holban makes this concept complete by suggesting that music should be sensed as a unique experience, difficult to be share with someone else, this is a similar experience to the one of death.

Chapter VI – Poetry, esthetic and stylistic – delimitations and interferences

This chapter underlines the clear difference between the three main domains: poetry, stylistic and esthetic, through the presentation of the most important contributions in each of them, without the pretention to exhaust the material which can make itself the object of an amplitude study. Critics directions from the XX century will put around them this opening to psychology, as well as preoccupation to understanding the work as a linguistic product in which it reflects not only the authors' mentality, but also the ideological environment one in which is creating.

The poetry is seen as an interdisciplinary science that makes use of both the instruments of linguistics and literary critics. The word has more meanings: general, poetry, poetry of the genre (prose, drama, novel).the most recent one, the author's poetics, deals with hypothesis, intuitions, being very close to what we call "poietica".

In the 20th century the esthetic is perceived more like an attempt to offer solutions for the domain of art, rules and regulations. It transcends into a theoretical dimension the beauty, the art, the esthetic value, taking into consideration the genesis, the structure and their functionality.

The literary stylistic is mainly an analytical method of the literary work, which according to Eugen Caseriu has the role of an intuitive judgment. This approach is confirmed by the occurrence of the stylistic of the effect and receive (Michael Riffaterre) or as a means of introduction into poetics,

Chapter VII - Conclusion

The poetical lecture of A. Holban's prose is the most adequate type of reading due to the relation between the literary text and the theory about the literary text, its meaning developing as the reader follows the concentric line from the text to the poetical conception. The message of Anton Holban's literary work is build permanently with the same frequency and oscillation of

the perspectives from which his character analyses a gesture even though ordinary but where it may be the very essence of life. The theoretical analysis of Anton Holban's literary work may be continued through an applied research of the motif of the stranger which deserves broader attention because it held the message of the author himself.

We do Believe that the critical directions will find a generous material within the literary work of Anton Holban, who has never stopped surprising his commentators.