

**REVIEW: Călin-Horia Bârleanu, *Strigățul lui Benjy. Contribuții asupra tipologiei idiotului în literatură* [*Benjy's Howl. Contributions on the typology of the idiot in literature*]
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With his innovative spirit, daring to the point of risk, including that of a self-mannerism, Călin-Horia Bârleanu, an academic from the University of Suceava tries, through his excellent study *Strigățul lui Benjy. Contribuții asupra tipologiei idiotului în literatură* [*Benjy's Howl. Contributions on the typology of the idiot in literature*], an ontological decipherment, i.e. from the perspective of the “speculative theories about the ultimate essences or principles of all things” (MDA, 2010), which would premeditatedly avoid the “harmony of words, so deceptive and by which the trust, as a form of faith, has been emptied of any content”(p. 344), of “the typology of the patient with diminished mental capacity, real and equally projected on him” (p. 204), starting from and analyzing Faulkner's novel *The Sound and the Fury*, in which the typological character “is, among the resonant forms of the archetype, an entity as palpable as the fear of the dark or the obsessive «devouring jaws», because it represents and it is described by the American writer as a unique form of manifestation and communication”(p. 344), following “the unique typology of Benjy’s projections” especially “through the psychoanalytic lens or the Jungian psychology”(p. 78).

We have no way of knowing whether or not Lucian Blaga was right, when he claimed that, in such approaches, which aim at the literary creation, namely *the stylistic fact* that we call literature, “no matter how seductive the «innate knowledge» hypothesis or the hereditary «archetypes» theory may be for a fabulous fantasy, they do not seem necessary for us to clarify the facts that require our attention” (Blaga, 1976: 156), a suggestion rejected almost instinctively by Călin-Horia Bârleanu, who remains faithful to psychoanalysis, which he places, from the innovative literary criticism perspective, “among the few analytical lenses capable today to bring a new vision on topics debated by whole generations of commentators” (p. 11) and, as a consequence, as an argument, “Corin Braga makes use of the refined psychoanalytic tools to strengthen a Freudian hypothesis”(p. 11).

But perhaps it is precisely the excess of *analytical lenses* of this type, undoubtedly completely innovative in the Romanian literary criticism, that places his new study at the level of excellence, because, in arguing the frequent resources he uses, for instance, “we invoke Jung's hypotheses and research on significance” (p. 34), “it is beyond doubt that the phrase proposed by Jung”, “remarks Jung” or “as Jung stated” (p. 86), Călin-Horia Bârleanu shows off not only an

impressive culture, but also a dynamic of argument and analysis that includes, in his presentation, a good part of the literary creation of mankind. And, quoting Emil Cioran, – the philosopher who saw in “the variety of forms of existence an occasion of eternal delights and sorrows” (Cioran, 1990: IV), – “he who does not suffer because of knowledge, he knew nothing” (Cioran, 1990: 200); precisely for this Platonic “knowledge hunt” (Noica, 1995: 37), Călin-Horia Bârleanu exposes himself to the aggressiveness of those able to give verdicts exactly because they do not know and do not understand much of the “metaphors that encipher (...) archetypes and feelings most often associated with the unconscious” (p. 50), remaining abandoned in ossifications specific to a classicism of the rigor of school textbooks.

The innovative and sometimes surprising critical approach, through which seems to have been brought back to life and imposed as ontological reason not only the vision of Carl Gustav Jung, but also “the cultural fashion of the '60s -'70s” (Silion, 2016: 311), does not exclude a parallelism of finalities, through which, from the infinity of interpretations of a creation, with unspecified intentions, overlaps emerge on the finality of the works of some “writers whose literary message includes the theme of otherness and the feeling of minority. Therefore, we are talking not only about Don Quixote and Sancho Panza, but also about Ishmael, along with Queequeg” (p. 30), because “Eliade also saw in Parsifal «an admirable prototype of Don Quixote» – and, we would add, of Prince Mishkin from Dostoevsky's *The Idiot* – regretting that Unamuno did not know the medieval literature very well, nor the «delicious descriptions of Chrétien de Troyes»” (Picioruș, 2015: 567). After all, the great spirits are related, and when Călin-Horia Bârleanu, who discovers in “the Prince Mishkin, from perhaps the most suggestive novel called *The Idiot* where stupidity is, more clearly than in other texts, only a reality that people project deliberately unjustified, on a man who does not accept to be part of or to share the same unwritten moral codes and laws”(pp. 173-174), has nothing to lose, but, on the contrary, he gains in the authority of his lucidity, when there are formulations, if not similar, at least complementary, such as: “from Dostoevsky's *The Idiot* we could extract a true anthology of laughter”. Strangely enough, the characters who laugh the most do not have the most developed sense of humor, but on the contrary, they completely lack it” (Kundera, 2009: 29); these are formulations that, in fact, call into question “the idiot, as a comic character from the medieval interludes” (Moraru, 1997: 13-14), because “the function of the idiot is positive, given the fact that without him we would understand neither genius, nor normality” (Țuțea, 2009: 57), and “the latent nature of symbols bears the first signs of an otherness without which we can neither understand, nor approach the type of *the fool*, through its effects on the group to which he belongs” (p. 173).

By trying to ‘see’ and discern from a different angle, from a different experience, the human creation we call literature, through the almost stubborn certainty with which Călin Bârleanu argues his critical novation, often giving it a narrative substance of literature in itself, in which not one novel or another, but the typology of certain characters prevails – although he does not ignore the previous exegeses about the respective writings, with indisputably exegetical vocation –, every single character consecrating “something from the psychology of the jester (which) remains in all cultures, as a necessary reality, one related to a psychotherapeutic form instinctively identified by the community”. Not only the jokes, present since Antiquity, fit into

the playful pattern, specific to *the trickster*, but also everything related to a quick and simple challenge of good mood” (p. 28) – an idea that, otherwise formulated, we also found in the writing of Milan Kundera.

And if the whole human creative act means imagining a world, thus *a language* of symbols and suggestions, both of them with an almost mythical, if not religious consistency – as Țuțea stated: “In front of God, genius is the cousin-german of the idiot” (Țuțea, 2009: 43) or as Bârleanu affirms: “the figure of the fool or that of the idiot represents an archetype at the opposite pole of *the wise old man*, as a universal presence in almost all cultures of the world” (p. 27) – “the world means a written or spoken text, with all its peculiarities, difficult for any child who pays tribute in the first part of life, almost exclusively, images”(p. 31), then “the world is no longer an opaque mass of arbitrarily stacked objects together, but a living, articulated and meaningful cosmos. In the upshot, *the world turns out to be a language*. It speaks to man through his own way of being, through his structures and rhythms” (Eliade, 1978: 133). In this ontological context, often positioned and adopted beyond the borders of human creation, which we call literature, through which Călin-Horia Bârleanu, beyond defining his finality called interpretation, defines himself, with the whole horizon, even with the universe from which he borrows light; his discourses acquire the vigor and authority of professionalism, through not only valuable but often even axiomatic judgments, entitled to be used as arguments, in similar circumstances, as the references in Blaga, Eliade, Cioran, Noica, Țuțea and so on.

That is why, not only do we not question the validity of such claims, but we also subscribe to the observations according to which “the four chapters of the novel *The Sound and the Fury*, together with the four so different brothers of the Compson family, manage to cover in an exemplary manner the functions appointed by Jung, so we can even easily associate them: Benjy to the sensation, Quentin to the feeling, Jason to the thinking, and Caddy -his mother- and Disley, to the intuition or foreboding”(p. 107), and without finding out, from the next paragraph of the book, that there are “a number of other exegetes of Faulkner's literature who did the same exercise, but with fewer references to the Jungian archetypes, by correlating, only in general, the characters, the Compson brothers, with the aforesaid four psychic functions” (pp. 107-108).

Through erudition and the mobility with which he develops his arguments, a mobility specific to the philosophers of culture, Călin-Horia Bârleanu defines himself, in his critical novation, despite the psychoanalysis excesses, but which, fortunately, he does not attribute or reflect on the intentionalities of the authors, but only to the finality called world, universe, as archaeologist of a different mythology, that of the cultured literary creation, intended for the exercises and vocations of involvement, and by “the ability to probe one's own unconscious, to access archetypes, in which lies the main difference between the great writers and the writers who remain stuck in the descriptive discourse, engaged only aesthetically and oriented to capture strong emotions at any cost” (p. 14), but also the difference between those who skillfully understand the writings, which we call literary critics.

The analysis of Faulkner's prose, in parallel with works signed by Dostoevsky, Rabelais, etc., is done thoroughly, including on the bases of an impressive bibliography, used in an inspired way and not only quoted, without neglecting “the landmarks proposed by Jung to the introverted typology” (p. 85), but consecrating, within these landmarks, his own theses, stating that “never, until Faulkner, was *the flow of consciousness* captured, at such an intensity, in whole fragments that require a real, active participation of the reader to be understood, or, for the

beginning, to be at least identified” (p. 18); or, in the spirit of the *participatory reading*, which he unconditionally supports and promotes, underlines that:

if the archetype represents a form or a concept specific to the collective unconscious, the contact with it, through reading, of a cognitive activity, involves updating feelings with a strong emotional load, generated by the “ritual” nature of images with a real cultural content. Faulkner's obsession with space, but also with the movement through space, often as a wandering, introduces mental, imaginative exercises into the "narrative forest," as *The Sound and the Fury* requires, for decryption, a kind of “participatory” reading, which in turn, given the nature of the projected characters, proves at least uncomfortable for some recipients of the literary message.

Apart from the meanings hidden in *Benjy's howl*, a code of communication that is impossible to translate for most of his relatives, we were interested in the possibility of integrating such an unusual hero of the novel written by Faulkner into a category that, on an archetypal path, has existed since forever in the modern imaginary, and not only, of humanity (pp. 11-12).

Walking only on paths known to him through *the narrative forest*, where “the childhood becomes the main symbolic source of narrative flow for many writers” (p. 9) and thus promoting *a type of reading* but also – mucho more important – of *participatory* literary criticism, Călin-Horia Bârleanu imposes himself on contemporaneity also through another vocation of his own, through “the real desire of the writer to create, animated by a complex specific to each artist, facing the nothingness towards which he directs his spirit through a pen, brush or chisel” (p. 10), a vocation that contributes decisively to the clarification of his critical discourse, through which he militates, with reference to Faulkner, “in opposition to the surprisingly rich imaginary in terms of symbolic representations and as proof that he really exists in the typology constructed (consciously or unconsciously by the American writer), with intuition and empathy exercises”, in favor of an exeget's duty to approach “exercises of the hero's inner vision” (p. 75), with all the universal reverberations of inner visions, which are contained in the human creation we call literature.

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