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THESIS

SUMMARY

**HYPOSTASES OF THE COUPLE IN GIB I. MIHĂESCU’S WRITING.
FROM THE BOVARIAN OBSESSION TO THE ”PERSONAL MYTH”**

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SUMMARY

Introduction	8
Argument	12
Chapter 1. Gib I. Mihăescu, in the Romanian interwar literary context: creative and specific profile of his writing.....	20
1.1. Partial conclusions.....	35
Chapter 2. Gib I. Mihăescu's writing in the "mirrors" of criticism - a diachrony of his reception...	37
2.1. The short story and the sketch. The abyss of obsession and the characters' masks in fictional couples	38
2.2. The theatre. The chronotope of memory and the "reconfiguration" of destiny	66
2.3. The novel. Polymorphic hypostases of the self projected in the space of eros	72
2.4. Partial conclusions	117
Chapter 3. Theoretical-applicative excursus on the psychocritical method. Operational concepts	120
3.1. Theoretical and methodological reference points.....	120
3.2. Working hypotheses - premises of the psychocritical perspective applied to Gib I. Mihăescu's writing.....	130
3.2.1. <i>Ego bifrons</i> : polymorphism and reducibility.....	130
3.2.2. <i>The obsessive Metaphors</i> : the changeable character and the bovarism of characters	134
3.2.3. <i>The unconscious</i> and its avatars in the work of selection, regression and reflection upon the "personal myth".....	136
3.2.4. The legitimizing filter of biography and the impact on the definition of "personal myth"	139
3.3. Partial conclusions.....	143
Chapter 4. Gib I. Mihăescu's writing in the "mirrors" of psychocriticism.....	146
4.1. The obsessive outlet and the identity split reflected in Gib I. Mihăescu's short prose and theatre.....	146
4.2. Recurrent symbolic patterns and the assimilation of overt eroticism in Gib I. Mihăescu's novel.....	203

4.3. The female model <i>versus</i> the male model. The alienation of the being in relation to <i>the internal objects</i> of desire.....	242
4.3.1. The woman, a collateral victim of war and poverty.....	243
4.3.2. The seduced woman, victim of "the incident".....	247
4.3.3. The posture of the emancipated woman.....	252
4.3.4. The anti-traditionalist view of women.....	256
4.3.5. The woman, the rise of the ideal and its demystification.....	259
4.3.6. "The incident", a necessary unmasking of the female character.....	263
4.3.7. The rise of the feminine <i>versus</i> the fall of the masculine	268
4.4. Partial conclusions.....	272
Chapter 5. <i>The personal myth</i> as a retrospective in the abyss of consciousness.....	275
5.1. Networks of associations. The fate of a regained author and the creative personality	279
5.2. The biographical control through interviews and confessions.....	285
5.3. Reconstruction of the structural unit from the representations of reception: dream, hallucination, anguish.....	291
5.4. Identifying the personal myth: "the histrionic eroticism".....	296
5.5 Partial conclusions.....	302
Conclusions	304
Index of Cited Authors	314
Bibliography	322
List of published and presented publications	344

SUMMARY

Key words: *interwar literature, psychocriticism, mythocriticism, archetype, associative networks, themes, recurrent symbols, obsessive motifs, characters, particularities of construction, pattern, personal myth, narrative formulas, narrative strategies and techniques, reception directions.*

Revealing the insights embedded into a writer's fictional meanings and structures by employing the analytical tools of critical methods may be similar to legalizing that writer's life and career. The present research draws mainly on Charles Mauron's psychocriticism, which particularly aims at investigating an author's *biography* in order to *control* the acquired results and meant to validate the characteristics of *a personal myth* shaped by creative imagination. In this respect, Nicolae Balotă noted that in the case of Gib I. Mihăescu's work, *there is little evidence regarding the writer's inner self. And to draw inferences about the author's hidden psyché by analysing his work and to project his characters' obsessions, paroxysmal and psychological disorders onto him, means to make a fundamental mistake.* The work of a writer cannot be regarded as a direct testimony, a transposition of their psychic state.¹

The research in this doctoral thesis entitled *Hypostases of the Couple² in Gib I. Mihăescu's Writing. From the Bovarian Obsession to the "Personal Myth"³* considers both the critical re-reading of the texts of this interwar author who, due to his value, is placed next to Hortensia Papadat-Bengescu, Liviu Rebreanu, Camil Petrescu and others, by structuring an integrative perspective upon his work, in the context of his era, with the current critical tools, as well as a necessary reference to the author's biographical interspaces. On the one hand, the ways of narrative construction, textual articulations, symbols and "obsessive metaphors" in the work were observed, and, on the other hand, the biographical mark was highlighted, through the themes at the confluence of determining premises such as war, social and political transformations, law, exact sciences - all with influence on the creative matrix. In studying Gib I. Mihăescu's work, strategies and

¹ Nicolae Balotă, *Labirint*, Editura Eminescu, București, 1970, p. 88.

² A first critical perspective on Gib I. Mihăescu as a "novelist of virility" belongs to Pericle Martinescu, *Gib I. Mihăescu, Romancier al virilității/ Novelist of Virility*, *Dacia rediviva* magazine, year II, no. 8, 1942, p. 4 - <https://www.scribd.com/document/378678163/Dacia-Rediviva-anul-II-nr-8-1942-pdf> - (accessed on 14.07.2021).

³ The concept belongs to Charles Mauron and was used in the study *De la metaforele obsedante la mitul personal/ From the Obsessive Metaphors to Personal Myth*, translated from French by Ioana Bot, Dacia Publishing House, Cluj-Napoca, 2001.

methodological concepts of the psychocritical method were used, with the stages theorized by Charles Mauron, as well as other interpretations proposed by Gilbert Durand in the study of the imaginary, with psychoanalytic thoroughness of the meanings.

The choice of the theme is justified by the importance of regaining a special creative destiny of the interwar period, in the intimate resources of his work revelation, in only 16 years of creation (1919-1935). In addition, it was aimed to identify some functional myths based on which the profile of the unconscious can be validated in an integrative vision, as a valid source of the origin of his work, both through what is discovered and through what is hidden from knowledge and interpretation. Starting from the "obsessive metaphors" in Gib I. Mihăescu's work, the analysis tools and the critical recurrences regarding the configured aesthetic model, the goal was to create a bridge between the critical reception over time such as the "virile mentality"⁴ - expression proposed by G. Călinescu or that of "manly pride"⁵, a phrase used by Nicolae Manolescu with respect to the writer's work and the manifestation of the deep self behind the resulting associative network.

In this context, the abyss of psychiatric disorders that Gib I. Mihăescu's characters suffer from or head for, looks like a veritable Daedalus labyrinth, the characters themselves being its designers as a result of their exacerbated imagination, out of which they could get out in the light of reality, if they would, but they choose to stay, lured by the fascinating light of deceitful obsessions, premonitions and death. Thus the captivating universe of short stories is developing, a transposition of the consciousness, which is unceasingly impacted by the assaults of the unconsciousness, by releasing repressed emotions and altered state of consciousness. The spectrum of *phantasm* is constantly altered, as a result of the perpetual personality disorders, beguiled by deceptive dreams and imagination and profoundly reluctant to his dream. Nicolae Manolescu emphasized in the preface he wrote for *La Grandiflora*, the writer's first volume of short stories, that "the pleasure of dreaming is always connected with the intense fear of dreams"⁶, exacerbated beyond any reasonable doubt, so that the characters believe the hallucinations they experience to such a great extent that they expect them to happen.

In his first novel, Gib I. Mihăescu intensified psychological realism. His characters explore their lives, beliefs and experiences and are able to identify their daydream and to recreate it as an ideal aspiration. Unlike the female characters, who are created from his imagination and who seem

⁴ G. Călinescu, *Istoria literaturii române. Compendiu/ The History of Romanian Literature. Compendium*, Litera Publishing-house, Bucharest, 2001, p. 301.

⁵ Nicolae Manolescu, *Arca lui Noe/ Noah's Ark*, Gramar Publishing-house, Bucharest, 2001, p. 198.

⁶ Nicolae Manolescu, *Existența imaginară a lui Gib Mihăescu*, prefață la *Gib Mihăescu, La Grandiflora*, Editura pentru Literatură, București, 1967, p. XI.

to correspond to a certain pattern of beauty, "the male characters can be easily recognized in Romanian literature, as one of the author's first critics put it: men are taken from real life. They are among us, we see them every day, being an integral part of us. There is nothing artificial in their creation (...) they all seem so authentic because the author projected one of his own psychological experiences in each of his characters. That is way we can speak about the author's literary virility, unaltered by sophisticated rationality and yet not disfigured by sensuality."⁷ His protagonists constantly experiment the need for justification, facing the risk of revealing the double discourse, as shown in the fake confession of lieutenant Ragaiaac from the novel *Rusoaica* (The Russian Woman).

The first chapter of the thesis, *Gib I. Mihăescu, in the Romanian interwar literary context: creative and specific profile of the writing*, highlights the thematic areas: war, love and the human condition which legitimizes a tragic profile of the hero prone to introspection, then tempted by "confession" for amplifying the tension of self-exploration. Even from the first stories, some notes specific to the writer's narrative speech can be noticed, representing the germs of the features and directions of his future work. Gradually, obsessions and phantasms are being inserted into the realistic vision of the initial stage, competing with the objective reality. The existence of bookish models, such as Don Quixote and Don Juan, the characters' evolution in the city space, the tendency to lyricize the sentences bring this author's style closer to the modernist goals manifested at the beginning of the 20th century in the Romanian literature.

In the era, the prizes awarded to Gib I. Mihăescu were considered as being very important - the first one awarded by the Drama Critics Association in Romania in 1926 for the drama *Pavilionul cu umbre/ The Pavilion with Shadows* and the Prize of the Romanian Writers' Society for the novel *Rusoaica/ The Russian Woman*, awarded in 1933. We can notice numerous thematic forms common in the macrostructure of the author's work, in the analytical manner of probing into human consciousness, as well as the specific articulations of the approached genres, that are reflected in the construction of the characters and their relationships. The short prose and the dramatic genre approaches the over-theme of securing the vulnerable self, with its permanent need for confirmation in the partner's mirror, and the novels develop themes subordinated to the stated main one, by observing the evolution of the characters from the perspective of shaping destiny, identity mutations under the erotic impulse, as well as isolation in lucidity or solitude, at the end of accumulated experiences.

⁷ Pericle Martinescu, *Gib I. Mihăescu, romancier al virilității, Dacia rediviva*, year II, no. 8, 1942, p. 4 - <https://www.scribd.com/document/378678163/Dacia-Rediviva-anul-II-nr-8-1942-pdf> - (retrieved on 14.07.2021).

Thus, one can regain from his work a profile of the creator concerned with the broken mirror of the obsessive personality, aware of the complex of the individual doomed to permanently legitimize himself, through ideals and aspirations. One can notice an alteration of the states of consciousness in the case of his novels characters, compared to the deeply dramatic, monochrome effect in the other writings. The latter one focuses on the narrative discourse on phantasms and dreams, aiming at the opposition between the character and his implacable destiny, while the heroes of the novels re-invent themselves, beyond vulnerability and excesses, managing to mobilize surprising energies in shaping the ideal.

In the interwar literary environment, Gib I. Mihăescu's writing, introspective and problematizing as it was, juggles with original autofictional strategies, by inserting the elements of biography into the fictional confessional writing doubled by self-irony. Under the fascination of self-disinhibition, the protagonists always remain anchored in their strategy of winning the feminine ideal over, hence their great disappointment.

The second chapter, *Gib I. Mihăescu's Writing in the "Mirrors" of Criticism - a Diachrony of Reception*, records a shift, in the diachrony of the critical discourse applied to the work, of the fictional strategy that was used, from the area of the obsessiveness to that of the Bovarianism, becoming functional with the transition from short prose to novel. Delimited in creative stages, the writer's work is structured in the first part of the debut, the years 1919-1922, a period marked by the experience of the war in which he had participated as a student-officer, as well as by the image of the interwar Bucharest with the interest in the local literary productions, under the form of parody, then the stage of the abyssal psychology in the short stories built on borderline situations in the lives of the characters, between 1922-1930, so that, with the appearance of the first novel, *Brațul Andromedei / Andromeda's Arm* (1930), until the end of his life (1935), his work was considered as being in the stage of artistic maturity. Literary critics and historians discovered similarities with the writings of Andreev or Dostoievsky, considering the manner that captures the characters' inner crisis, as well as with novels belonging to Stendhal, *Red and Black*, or Gustave Flaubert, *Madame Bovary*. A gallery of pragmatic heroes or cynical anti-heroes will be generated from the fragmentary nature of the creation, prisoners of obsession sometimes in hallucinatory forms or subjugated by a tyrannical will in their evolution towards the assumed ideal. A specific feature of Gib I. Mihăescu, in the short prose, will be analyzed through the medium of the fictional strategy, that of "the embodiment" of the dream in reality, a form of determination through which the character becomes the creator of reality, through the power of his obsessions. Afterwards, the heroes evolve towards

the spasms of consciousness, through the technique of perpetuating suspense, including forms of alienation and dehumanization. Their role is dual, being both a judge and a convict, and guilt is often an attribute of overflowing imagination.

Considered one of the leading representatives of the psychological short story, Gib I. Mihăescu managed, at the beginning of last century, to render a modern perspective on his characters dominated by a true invasion of the unconscious, apparently with the inversion of the order proposed by the Freudian theories of the time. The anticipation of the events firstly consumed in the imagination of the characters, the technique of repressing the undesirable reality and the materialization of premonitions seem to be a necessity in the fictional organization. From here *the phantasm* will be extracted, through the premonitory implications and the bipolar attitude converging towards a crisis of loss of control.

An internal-comparative perspective on the recurring figures resulting from the overlapping of Gib I. Mihăescu's texts, after the thematic analysis and the critics' opinions, uses two directions of further research. A horizontal plan of the analysis of the texts viewed individually is presented, finding some models, masks of the characters, and a transversal plan, belonging to the textual "metaphors" grouped around some "myths" compactly reflected in the author's work, converging plans in a pattern of self-referentially projected narrative self, emergent to a current "critical consciousness"⁸.

If in the short prose and the dramatic genre, based on monochrome images of the characters' obsession, the writer reflects the tragic human condition under the imperative of war or fixes the coordinates of a world organized on antagonistic principles (a dual universe), in the novels the tools of introspection are functional, the identity mutations of the characters appear as being mirrored and the universe is understood as being divided, in the form of a collage of experiences, by means of strategies exploited at the narrative level, such as dream, imagination and hallucination.

The regressive attitude is specific to short stories and sketches and it structures the imaginary of the work in the characters' dynamics and, especially in the writings thematically circumscribed to war, one can notice the transition from the simplicity of the peasant to the dilemmas of the superiors, from the paradisiacal state of the village area to the Luciferian landscape of the front line, with the recurrence of the antagonistic terms: life/death, silence/artillery fire, adaptation/anguish, etc. In the

⁸ The term is used in the sense given by the critic Gheorghe Manolache, according to article *Recurs la o fenomenologie a conștiinței critice/ Recourse to a phenomenology of critical consciousness*, *Transylvania Magazine*, no. 5, 2011 - <https://revistatransilvania.ro/gheorghe-manolache-recurs-la-o-fenomenologie-a-constiintei-critice/> (accessed on 11.12.2022).

other texts belonging to Gib I. Mihăescu's short prose, the fictional convention relies on another form of disturbance of the consciousness of the heroes involved in the complex mechanisms of love or the implacable transformations in their lives. In this way, pathological love forms appear and they dynamitate the reality and produce a translation of the existential component into the serious register: the shaping of destiny exposes the establishment of fatality as hybris, the routine of the characters' lives slides towards destructuring and chaos, the state of relative tranquility turns into crisis and anguish. In the same line, figures of control obsession are generated inside the couple and outside of it, based on the principle of sought "virility", including the extreme form of establishing a demonic hegemony that postulates behavioral deviations of the protagonists. The rhetoric of doubt inserted into different levels of the diurnal and nocturnal imaginary of the heroes is specific to his dramatic writings and short prose. Mythical figures such as Narcissus, Don Juan or Job come together, capable of recalibrating a unique central figure by isolating the phantasm that controls and corrects the desires of the ego. The statement according to which the male histrionic eroticism is the main organizing factor of the epic in Gib I. Mihăescu's novels, "through the obsessive erotic ideal"⁹, with strategies adapted to the hero's sensitivity and from them surprising tensions descend, reclaims the myth of the seducer inserted both in the social self and in the self creator.

From the projection of the imaginary as a filter where emotions germinate (*Rusoaica/ The Russian Woman*) or the resizing of the aspiration of the narrator self (*Zilele și nopțile unui student întârziat / Days and Nights of a Late Student*), to the "adolescent fixation upon an unknown woman (*Donna Alba*)"¹⁰, all are hypostases of a naked self, formed in the purifying fire of creation, at the beginning of the 20th century. As a starting point in revealing the interiority of the characters, one can axiomatically cut out the crisis of (self) knowledge that ceases to be a simple problem of perception, becoming a space of self-illusion. The imagined world predominates in counterpoint to what actually happens to the heroes.

Thus, deeply meaningful acts such as *making love or protecting one's own child* are altered and re-signified, with violence or hypocrisy, to be assimilated in a distorted way. The path followed in the flow of remembering the facts has the effect of exacerbating the anguish, the observations turn into obsessions and these prove to be sufficient to the characters for the accreditation of the terrible thought of murder/suicide. In the thematic space of the eros projected in the short stories, a dystonia is manifested at the level of the characters' psychic structure, favouring behavioral deviations or, at

⁹ Ion Negoïtescu, *Istoria literaturii române (1800-1945)*, Editura Dacia, Cluj-Napoca, 2002, p. 308.

¹⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 308.

least, by configuring some cases of consciousness as an expression of the penetration into the troubled areas of anxiety or anguish and in the writings belonging to the drama genre, there is an emphasis on character traits emerging in the dialogue, which establish central themes such as that of destiny, the human condition, love, etc.

Through the novels written by this author, one enters an area of the doubling connoted with "lucidity", that is, of the characters' inner monologue, with the association of some antagonistic traits in the imaginary matrix of the same character, a bovarism of the will and power added on a background of shyness and fears, an erotic-reflexive zone from which the *phantasm* is born as a parasitic element of self-consciousness. Seen as a whole, Gib I. Mihăescu's work resonates in the interwar literary climate with a special sonority, both from the point of view of the characters' own psychoanalytical mechanisms in exploiting the characters' abyssal psychic areas, as well as by removing some barriers of false modesty in approaching the theme of sexuality and behavioral deviations. But it must be mentioned that the language does not take on licentious forms, it is expressive and clear, with numerous lyrical valences and selective scientific information that reveals a solid documentation of the author.

Referring to the book *Realitate si romanesc/ Reality and Novel-like Character* (1969) by Liviu Petrescu, the critic Iulian Boldea appreciates the comparative research approach regarding the modernist and postmodernist periods. The study highlights the "analytical subtlety (...) in the relation between *reality and narrative* verified in the works of some writers such as (...) Gib I. Mihăescu. (...) The dynamics of the demonstration is manifested by the predilection for interiority, for the inner space through which reality is enriched and nuanced. (...) Literature is no longer reduced to the predisposition to slavishly reflect the data of reality, it integrates the empirical into the structures of interiority, reshaping concrete forms and giving them a new, beneficial scope"¹¹ within the framework of psychological analysis prose.

In the third chapter, *Theoretical-Applicative Excursus on the Psychocritical Method. Operational Concepts*, the theoretical and methodological considerations of the psychocritical method are approached, exemplifying the benchmarks that constitute working hypotheses on the text. Concepts such as *ego bifrons*, "obsessive metaphors", the unconscious and the forms through which it transpires in sequential avatars will lead the research results to mythical figures able to

¹¹ Iulian Boldea, *Critici români contemporani/ Contemporary Romanian Critics*, „Petru Maior” University Publishing-house, Târgu-Mureș, 2011, p.89.

decode, following the legitimizing biographical thread, a personal myth of the author reflected in his writing.

By presenting the strategies of the psychocritical method defined by Charles Mauron, the "internal objects"¹² selected from the creative work appear, recurring figures that polarize the discourse, signaling a distillation process applied to the literary language and its ability to symbolize, through its double intention of concealment (connotation) and revelation (decoding). In the analysis, a distinction is made between conscious and unconscious fantasies, both of which being compensatory ways of correcting anxiety states. The authorial "personal myth" and the thematic reconstruction of the creative universe result from the return to the work, after the identification and correlation, of the revelatory associative figures in the writer's biography.

Dramatic situations and figures of paternal authority and maternal love, figures of suffering brothers, figures of the inaccessible beloved woman, thanatic or erotic symbols liable to be subject to the flow and ebb between the conscious and the unconscious authorially projected are thus exposed. This chapter allows the understanding and application of specific psychoanalytic terminology such as *denial*, *projection*, *prohibition*, *sublimation*, *complexes*, *projective identification*, etc. In the end, through reducibility, one can argue a certain typology of masculinity applicable to the majority of the protagonists in the studied texts and the way in which it correlates with the authorial biographical elements (in the case of Gib I. Mihăescu).

Thus, the authorial "personal myth" is the result of the defragmentation of the sequential avatars discovered in the recurrent structures of the work and finds its finality in ensuring the coherence of the artistic universe. One can outline a myth of the Orphic descent into the inferno of existence with the exploration of the self hidden by the censorship of the conscious self, recovering archetypes of the being through the figures of Don Quixote or Don Juan.

From a psychoanalytical perspective, by juxtaposing texts, the *obsessive metaphors* lead to an archetype layer, most of the times a composite myth, the so-called *personal myth*, whose facets, like an *ego bifrons* (two-faced ego), are revealed in numerous rational paradigms with self and others. Thus the archetype scenarios are created, such as the marital triangle or parental alienation, situations where the characters are striving to achieve balance by creating a fictional personality, which meets their expectations, by identifying an ideal status which ensures their success: they are

¹² In the theorization proposed by Charles Mauron, *From the Obsessive Metaphors to the Personal Myth*, op. cit., p. 35: "internal objects (...) can be considered both instances of personality and images of external realities, as they were indeed constructed in this way, from identifications in both senses between external and internal elements (. .)."

strong, educated, attractive and intelligent. However, the *bovarism* of Gib I. Mihăescu's characters eventually proves to be a defence mechanism. The protagonist can be easily mistaken for a character with a histrionic personality but the psychocritical analysis proves otherwise. In his imaginary escape, the protagonist makes the supreme sacrifice for his ideal love, being positive that he can achieve *perfection* and thus remains anchored to the feminine ideal orbit. To conclude, as recovered forms of *bovarism*, the *Russian woman* of Ragaiac's dreams is just a pretext for relentless search, *donna* from Mihai Aspru's dreams reveals an ostentatious display of perseverance whereas the beautiful and well-educated lady from Mihnea Băiatu's dreams could be his own aspiration towards escaping the vicious circle of facile conquests, not only the romantic ones.

The fourth chapter, *Gib I. Mihăescu's Writing in the "Mirrors" of Psychocriticism*, goes into the articulations of the texts with the tools proposed by the assumed method, a detailed research on types of discourse, following the model of the analysis done on Hortensia Papadat-Bengescu's texts by Ovid S. Crohmălniceanu in the study *Five prose writers in five ways of reading*. The exercise of penetrating into the rumination of the ego will have to face not only the methodological limits, but especially the limits between which the characters "move", impossible to be interrogated like the method in the office of psychology.

In this section of the thesis, after the integration into the context of the era, highlighting the reception of Gib I. Mihăescu's work and based on the theoretical benchmarks of the psychocritical method, along with the thematic and symbolic interpretation of the texts, by reference to archetypes and mythical figures, it is delimited in the existence of mask-characters those "internal objects" that function analogously to psychic phenomena. Introspection, soliloquies, characters' dialogues, on the one hand, but also ambiguity, dissimulation and speculation, on the other hand, assimilate reasonable arguments in the logic of the imaginary to ensure correspondence with the terms proposed by the psychocritical method.

The followed path takes into account the Freudian view on repressing traumatic events, their creation in the subconscious, then their return to the surface by triggering some psychic mechanisms of freeing oneself. But, in parallel, this path is corrected with observations related to the specifics of the author's work, especially regarding the dream or the dream deformation, the premonition or the regression that precede the outlet of the imagined elements in the data of reality. The quality of the

characters to become "owners of reality" ¹³ and that of possessing a demiurgic status in the narrative universe are constants of the narrator's complicity in the realization of destinies organized as *fatum*.

The text overlapping, by types of discourse, will allow the outline of recurrent typologies and revealing "obsessive metaphors" in the economy of Gib I. Mihăescu's narrative. The demonstration will prove its applicability both in the establishment of an artistically transfigured mysticism of the author and in the composition of a demonism of the being, always prone to the birth of the demonic double from the voluptuousness of displaying the self and the obsession of verifying its image in *the other*.

The adventure and the happening, the two nuclei responsible for the "coagulation" of the action, can be found in the writer's imaginary universe, having the double function of source and control of the narrative tension. In setting some symbolic frames such as the family's opposition to the love of the two partners, the prodigal son and paternal clemency, the fall of the couple from the paradisiacal state, realistic frames appear unveiled, sometimes under the narrator's ironic touch. Illness, poverty, betrayal, time passing will constitute existential themes on which a moralizing discourse is often inserted. From these perspectives, the social, cultural and political context of the interwar period will also be observed in using the method.

It is a period of important socio-economic transformations, movements of female emancipation, of cultural recovery of an appreciable distance from the great cultures, especially the Western one. The sub-chapters fragment the corpus of the work into complementary thematic areas, such as masculine/ feminine (recognizable as hypostases of dysfunctions, fears, suspicions and revealing psychological complexes appeared as problems in interpersonal relationships), affective crises and pathological deviations (through the tendency to project the object of desire outwardly, possessively - Cain and Oedipus complexes, according to a classification by Charles Baudouin, castration and withdrawal complexes, grandeur complex, power complex, inferiority complex, superiority complex and others). An obsessive-recurrent reading grid focused on basic psychoanalytic concepts combined with elements of thematic criticism can be created, with the aim of highlighting some structures and associative networks capable of discovering a *pattern* of imaginative fantasy.

Investigating the construction of obsessively recurring *phantasms* by impacting recurring fictional structures, one can draw different networks of associations in short stories and theatre

¹³ Alexandru Protopopescu, *Romanul psihologic românesc / The Romanian Psychological Novel*, Eminescu Publishing-house, Bucharest, 1978, p. 203.

compared to novels. In the first case, one can hypothesize the author's preference for pathological forms of investment/ counter-investment that facilitate or block the access of unconscious representations and desires to the consciousness. Characters create mental barriers with amazing easiness to evade reality or select content that compulsively satisfies their obsessions and complexes. Dreaming, imagining and hallucinatory states amplify anxiety, foreshadow the anguish, being the main source of fuel for the pathology of dementia or extremist mental constructs that lead to murder/ suicide.

The exploration of the characters is mainly done in their interiority, where passions become imperatives of their actions. In the case of novels, along with introspection and the dynamics of eroticism, one can notice complex relationships, disjunctive labours, impulse interferences, bipolar tendencies and other aspects activated not only in the consciousness, but also in their temporal evolution, through different associative fields. The characters are prone to multiple metamorphoses, a fact that determines the identification of several sequential avatars that validate possible fragmented, valorizing or persecuting personal projections.

Ever since the critical studies contemporary to the author (consulted and integrated in the bibliographic corpus of the thesis), the analysis of authorial consciousness brings to the surface the psychological survey exploiting the most intimate areas of the being, doubled by that of the dynamics of the unconscious layers whose repressed phantasms migrate into the conscious area and it alters the being's ability to lucidly correct the dialectic of the self. According to the psychocritical method, that Orphic descent into the abyss of the characters' existence is recurrent, and Charles Mauron, in Gérard Genette's view, "sees in artistic creation not a direct expression of the unconscious, but a kind of implicit self-analysis or controlled regression to the original traumas and the infantile stages, an *exam of the unconsciousness* in which the *Orphic ego* would poetically play the role of synthesis between consciousness and the unconscious, otherwise performed by the psychoanalyst.

This descent into the inner hell is the psychocritical version of the Orpheus myth."¹⁴ The scenario and the mythical themes of bringing back the lost lover Eurydice, with the help of the song from the lyre that tames the gods of darkness, make Orpheus the archetype of the Creator endowed not only with the mystical function of meeting the divinities and subduing them, but also with a therapeutic role in the triad writer-eros-sacrifice. Such a "descent" is also mentioned in the case of the author analyzed in this thesis: "If by poetry we mean the art of capturing life in its most intimate

¹⁴ Gérard Genette, *Figuri/ Figures* Univers Publishing-house, Bucharest, 1978, p. 61.

features, at the point where the boundaries of existence touch the boundless unknown, with the unfathomable miracle, then Gib I. Mihăescu is a great poet, before being a skilled epic organizer."¹⁵ Like any incursion into the abyss, the Orphic descent denounces "the thrill of apocalyptic dimensions that runs through his entire work, (...) a tendency to escape from the limits of the conventional (...) to the misty regions of hallucination or madness, the preference for the study of obsession, done with infinite care (...)." ¹⁶

In the author's writings thematically anchored in the background of the war, it was observed that the evocative dynamism results from the lived event and from overcoming it in the imaginary by correlating symbolic thinking, through analogy and metaphor, with images filtered by the psychic, interactive process of the characters forced to reconstruct the tragic event in the consciousness. Sometimes it becomes reducible to the art of survival, through a simple, unadulterated structure of consciousness (soldier Nistor), some other times the tragic impacts the being so deeply that it fatally counteracts the survival instinct (corporal Robu/ corporal Robu). On the other hand, the fictional register of love, including the genre of erotic determinations, generally configures *objects of desire* negatively charged from an affective point of view, by projecting frustration (Mihai Aspru), suspicion and mistrust (Mr. Rărunc, Sava Manaru), through the fascination of *the forbidden fruit* (Panait Macarie), through alienation mediated by the labour of mourning/ loss (Emanoil Badea), including sublimated forms of deviation from the ideal (Lieutenant Ragaia), etc.

The process of reconstructing the tragic thematically touches on the human condition confronted by illness with the imminence of sensing one's own death (Minunica), as well as the awareness of passing the age of childhood and the birth of the ego crisis, unable to prospect the autonomous universe of the adult (*Ierni jilave/ Wet Winters*). The imaging operators, when they transgress the autoanalytical forms, engage in the iconic thinking of *the eternal feminine* within a self-referential logical system where the hero assimilates his anthropophagous lover, subject to his own virile condition (Lucian Negrișor).

Considering that the self, deeply deciphered as a myth and emerging from the network of recurring symbols and metaphors, has the role of mediator between *the creative self* and *the social self*, as proposed by Charles Mauron in his method, it is necessary to adapt it to the framework of

¹⁵ Ion Chinezu, *Gib. I. Mihăescu*, revista *Gând românesc/ Romanian thought* magazine, anul III, nr. 10, October 1935, p. 503 - https://dspace.bcucuj.ro/bitstream/123456789/6832/1/BCUCLUJ_FP_BALP73_1935_003_010.pdf - (accesat în data de 10.12.2019).

¹⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 503.

empirical biography, known to the public from consecrated (auto)biographical sources. *The personal myth* is shaped, as a result of the application approach prior to this chapter, through the effort to correlate some known data and events from the writer's life and validate their projections through the work. The attribute of "virility", a defining one for most of the protagonists and admitted as their characteristic by the critics of Gib I. Mihăescu's work, can be interpreted as an expression of the strength, courage, potency and dynamics of the heroes. But, according to Mauron's argument, "the essential knowledge of the work escapes scientific inquiry. It is a revelation that extends into personal relationships (...)"¹⁷, which would imply a possible legitimization through the filter of the author's life. In this sense, G. Călinescu observed the "dense monograph of the virile mentality"¹⁸ spread in the work and admitted a compensatory character of the work, considering the author as being "a man stalked by death and unable to trully live", while Nicolae Balotă used the term *expressionism*, rejecting an "alleged erotomania of the author."¹⁹ But there are also interpretations in the monographs of researchers such as Mihail Diaconescu, in which it is stated that "the end of the gentle and taciturn Gib is connected to an unhappy love story. (...) Gib I. Mihăescu told some of his friends, sometimes jokingly, sometimes seriously, that he had fallen in love with a beautiful unknown woman from Prague"²⁰, talking about Suzanna Dovalova, a young teacher with whom the author would exchange letters. Some drafts of these letters are at the Academy Library, discovered after the writer's death, recorded in the documents by the author of the mentioned monograph as "a true novel, with all the earthquakes of the soul and consciousness that a late and unimaginably strong love can give birth to."²¹ Therefore, in the directions of concretizing the "personal myth", the erotic vector is inserted, as the vulnerability of the being and, equally, as regenerative energy, a component of the anamnesis that places the characters on the quicksand of preconceptions, the demand of the ideal as a factor of orientation in the fragmentary nature of the being and an important critical reference to the political class.

Through the biographical control (which also includes a corpus of interviews and confessions), as well as through the documents archived throughout the writer's existence, recurring

¹⁷ Charles Mauron, *De la metaforele obsedante la mitul personal/ From the obsessive metaphors to the personal myth*, *op. cit.*, p. 12.

¹⁸ G. Călinescu, *Istoria literaturii române de la origini până în prezent/ The history of Romanian literature from its origins to the present*, *op. cit.*, p. 764.

¹⁹ Nicolae Balotă, *Gib Mihăescu. Omul și opera/ Gib Mihaescu. The man and the work*, preface to the volume *Nuvele/ Short Stories*, Tineretului Publishing-house, Bucharest, 1969, p. 33.

²⁰ Mihail Diaconescu, *Gib I. Mihăescu*, Minerva Publishing-house, Bucharest, 1973, p. 299.

²¹ *Ibidem*, p. 300.

fictional projections can be confirmed: people and places from Drăgășani area, Gib's childhood paradise, the parental figures and the difficulties of adapting to school, the legal studies interrupted by the mobilization for the World War I, then his return to college due to his father's urge, the practice of law in the absence of other means of subsistence, the position of a civil servant (an experience transfigured, it seems, in the short story *Urâtul / The Ugly One*).

Also in the regained destiny of a fictional authorial profile are the passions that marked the biographical existence: astronomy and the exact sciences (only sketched in the short stories, but detailed in the novels), compensating for the ephemerality of human existence. In the last part of the chapter, the recurring *phantasm* in the work of the prose writer will be delimited, a successive identification in the voluntary hero, who has the attitude of a seducer in a romantic manner, for whom *She* must not only be beautiful, but keep her mystery and feed the man's permanent desire for winning women over.

When asked about the role played by *imagination* in his novels, Gib I. Mihăescu said that "its genuine contribution to literary creation is that it connects eternal and immovable realities."²² Consequently we can speak about an expansion of human aspiration towards reaching perfection. However, if the psychoanalytic method applied to the *personal myth*, can be accused of isolating the restrictive syntagm regarding the creative work of a writer, which is such a complex phenomenon, by restoring the unified structure of this work, "the myth becomes a connector, enabling a sound balance of passion"²³, resembling a line which connects the disparate points of a drawing. It remains an enigma the balance of forces between the author's consciousness and unconsciousness, whose creation enables the orientated interpretation inside the labyrinth of the literary creation, of the phantasm of frequently recurring characters, where imagination becomes a performative act par excellence.

The final data reflected the deep self underlying the "associative network", resulting from overlapping the texts of his work, with the validation of a "personal myth" connected to the existence of a "psychological phenomenon" captured in its essence, as the author foreshadowed in an interview given to I. Valerian for *Viața literară / The Literary Life* magazine, in 1927: "I am very interested in the environment of the province. People's lives unfold more truly. A good observer has vast material to use. In the province it is easier to catch a psychological phenomenon in its very

²² I. Valerian, *De vorbă cu autorul*, interview published in *Cronicarul*, year I, no. 2, March 1930, p. 3, *apud* Diana Cristev, *Însemnări pentru timpul de azi*, Dacia, Cluj-Napoca, 1975, p. 273.

²³ Pericle Martinescu, *Gib I. Mihăescu, romancier al virilității*, *op. cit.*, p.4.

essence. With such material I am now working on a novel, in which are trapped all my provincial heroes, whom I meet every day at the court, in the market or at parties."²⁴

By overlapping the texts, we moved to the stage of redefining the *phantasm* and analysing the metamorphoses of eros in the form of adventure, an important endocentric structure in the writer's work. Along with the strategy of the conjugal triangle noted by the majority of literary critics, the prolonged erotic-reflexive component in the tragic farce was analyzed, with various variations of the discursive motives: suspicion, exposure, compulsion, frustration, anxiety, revenge and others. Equally, this research used the rigorous selection made by Gib I. Mihăescu himself in the two volumes of short stories, *La Grandiflora* (1928) and *Vedenia/ The Apparition* (1929), highlighting the author's exigency towards his writings, but also the efforts to create the critical editions belonging to Alexandru Andriescu (the first one in the 70s and the second one under the auspices of the Romanian Academy, in 2008). The contribution of the researcher Leon Baconsky proved particularly important through the publication, in 1973, of the volume entitled *Gib I. Mihăescu. Theatre*, containing dramatic art, including unfinished texts, with important critical and bibliographic references, with the volume *Gib I. Mihăescu. Short stories regained*, published by Echinox Publishing House in 2003, a restitution necessary for our literature of a considerable number of the writer's unpublished short stories.

The monographs of Mihail Diaconescu, Dumitru Șerban Drăgoi and Florea Ghiță were used, as well as extensive literary studies written by Nicolae Balotă, Dumitru Micu, Nicolae Manolescu, Doina Modola, Octav Șuluțiu, G. Călinescu, Stelian Cincă, Al. Protopopescu, Diana Cristev and many others who were interested in Gib I. Mihăescu's work and approached it. These represented a first level of reading, as an exercise of interpretation, to illustrate the reaction of the readers and the diachronic impact of the author's writings. The demonstration had in view the sedimentation of Gib I. Mihăescu's creative position, since the beginning of his creation, not only in the consciousness of the expert reader, but also of the public in general, based on the notes of realism in rendering the "elementary psychologies"²⁵ capable of moving the boundaries of the knowledge of the self and the Other to an abyssal space of being.

With the publication of the novels, it could be noticed that the authorial perspective on the characters transgresses the dream-reality symbiosis, evolving towards an eros invested with the function of knowledge. The components of the identity dilemma are added to the portrait of

²⁴ *Ibidem*

²⁵ Alexandru Andriescu, supervised edition, introductory study, notes and variants, *Gib I. Mihăescu. Opere/ Gib I. Mihăescu. Works*, volume 1, Minerva Publishing House, Bucharest, 1976, p. XXI.

erotomaniacs, sometimes in an ironic way, through doubling, overcoming the vision of "monomania"²⁶ from the previous writings, including the dramatic ones.

The polymorphic hypostases of the self configured in the novels are shaped as a complex typology through aspirations competing with eros, such as the interest in astronomy or the exact sciences, passions that slip from Gib I. Mihăescu's real life into the fictional framework. The research focused on the main feature that characterizes the characters, their orientation towards a specific purpose of their existence. From this point of interest the drama of the male character is generated, but also his ability to mobilize all his energies towards reaching the ideal. In his shadow, the image of the female character develops in a double perspective: from the position of the ideal, an angelic one, or from that of the superficial existence, the demonic one, unable to understand the partner's demands. The nuances of vesting and object regression introduced between the previously stated limits make possible a reconfiguration of the masculine disinhibition, sometimes up to true identity mutations in the heroes' consciousness.

The "sexual detectiveism"²⁷ mentioned by G. Călinescu in the unfolding of the events that make up the substance of the Romanian epic is added to the elements of mystery through which the female character does not clarify her position, in this way keeping attributes specific to the eternal feminine, never fully won over. Moreover, beyond the apparent demonization of the theme of love, the writer succeeds in inducing, through the dynamics of desires and the metamorphoses of the characters, a "retroversion of the illusion"²⁸ in which the two pivotal themes, *the expectation and the ideal*, appear unveiled as a "Romanian novel."²⁹ Underlying the motive of the inaccessible woman, we can observe surprising soul labyrinths in which the hero wanders, cloistered, almost all the time at odds with the woman he loves, especially engaged in a battle of winning her over through the seduction technique, in the end finding out that right from the very beginning he had been close to what he was craving for. The fictional background reflects a petty world, full of selfish ambitions, socially and humanly decadent. The hero aspires to penetrate the caste interests of the aristocracy or overcome the resistance of the woman he loves, most of the time confident in his own strength. The

²⁶ Ov. S. Crohmălniceanu, *Literatura română între cele două războaie mondiale/ The Romanian literature between the two world wars*, volume I, Minerva Publishing House, Bucharest, 1972, p. 512.

²⁷ G. Călinescu, *Istoria literaturii române de la origini până în prezent/ The history of Romanian literature from its origins to the present*, Minerva Publishing-house, Bucharest, 1985, p. 764.

²⁸ Alexandru Protopopescu, *Romanul psihologic românesc/ The Romanian Psychological Novel*, Eminescu Publishing House, Bucharest, 1978, p. 196.

²⁹ Nicolae Manolescu, *Arca lui Noe/ Noah's Ark*, Gramar Publishing House, Bucharest, 2001, p. 202.

G. Călinescu, *History of Romanian literature from its origins to the present*, Minerva Publishing House, Bucharest, 1985, p. 764.

criticism after December 1989 emphasizes the psychoanalytical perspective on the heroes, highlighting some behavioral disorders, states of anxiety associated with the control obsession, fears that alternate with an excess of confidence in one's own strength, a variety of contrasting emotions.

The conclusions chapter proposes a synthesis of the forms of *the personal myth* and its reintegration into the work, after checking through the biographical data filter. The fictional universe can be unitarily reconstructed according to the last psychocritical stage, revealing the hero's hypostasis - a knight-errant between the attributes of the (*eternally feminine*) ideal and the concrete characteristics of the beloved. His drama comes from the inability to get out of the autarkic forms of his own self, split in consciousness, always tributary to the reality he eludes.

The present thesis aims to identify the red thread that inter-connects Gib I. Mihăescu's writings and to create a framework of the scriptural identity, not as a biographical image, but as a response to the author's need for self-fictionalization through the work. If the myth operates to reduce recurring figures to their essence, then *the personal myth* descends from the creative laboratory, being the starting point for other prolific phantasms of the prose writer, validating the premise that the work is a living organism living through the reader who interprets it.

As a conclusion, the "personal myth" - that would constitute the most frequent *phantasm* in Gib I. Mihăescu's work - depends on this successive identification of voluntary, strong personality models, manifested through eroticism, beyond the introspective excesses, being sometimes deviant. The hero fights against his rival in order to gain, according to a romantic conception, the right to love (*Donna Alba*), he lurks and looks for an ideal of love whose genesis, derived partly from fiction and partly from the experience lived by another, reveals the same Donquijotesque intention to save his dream lady (*Rusoaica/ The Russian Woman*). Even when he does not succeed, he fights till the end, accepts the variables in the existence of the woman he loves (*Zilele și nopțile unui student întârziat/ Days and Nights of a Late Student*), with the mentioned exception of Andrei Lazar, the other male characters prove a tireless capacity for seduction (*Brațul Andromedei/ Andromeda's Arm*).

In spite of these similarities, the heroes' destiny reveals itself as a singular way compared to other characters' course, and in these paradigms lies the (re)knowledge of the "personal myth" configured by the characters' physical or speculative force. Analyzed from the perspective of the phantasms populating their consciousness, the main characters, without exception, adhere to an introspective psychic formula, but as an expression of the active reverie always under the empire of that surplus of energy indispensable to the seducer's endeavor. Masculine *virility*, the control

obsession and the unbridled desire to correct other characters' mistakes are dominant features of the short prose, whereas the novels thematically-obsessively cut out from the deep layer of the heroes' consciousness, the obsession of affirmation through the status of *the seducer* that fascinates and constrains to the pursuit of the ideal, especially of an erotic nature. For Eleonora (*Femeia de ciocolată/ The Chocolate Woman*), Lucian Negrișor goes beyond the fantasy scenarios and takes action, possessing her when he understands that there was nothing left to lose. For Zina Cornoiu (*Brațul Andromedei/ Andromeda's Arm*), almost all male characters create a scenario favorable to seduction, but the most pragmatic of them, Nae Inelescu, will win, sensing the frivolous nature of the woman. For Arina Velovan (*Zilele și nopțile unui student întârziat/ Days and Nights of a Late Student*), Mihnea Băiatu will face his destiny, like Orpheus, obsessed with saving her from the inferno of her own fantasies related to the seduction of a strong, untamed man. For Donna Alba, in the homonymous novel, Mihai Aspru will dream of a lawyer's career, but also the sentimental goal of being "seen" by the woman he adores. Alone, Lieutenant Ragaiaic (*Rusoaica/ The Russian Woman*), a Pygmalion unable to represent Galatea, will excessively test his talent as a seducer, to the point of ridicule. In this sense, in the article *Literatura de „frontieră” a lui Gib I. Mihăescu (romanul Rusoaica)*, *The "Frontier" literature by Gib I. Mihăescu (the novel The Russian Woman)*, Vasile Spiridon wrote about Ragaiaic that "for the one who, surrounded by the ocean of *solitude*, stands guard at the fronts, the feverish vigil for erotic reasons changes the logic of looking, of perceiving the crossed spaces.

And, as seeing is itself a form of interpretation, not just a mere recording of stimuli, the distortion of perspective has repercussions upon the understanding of the fore-seen world, this kind of *extraterritoriality* distorting ordinary spatial relations in the *symbolic geography*."³⁰ In this way, the inner conflicts that mark the path of the ego towards its ideal reflect the unsatisfied tendencies that the consciousness re-forms in relation to what it knows about itself and the other, operating in liminal conditions the reducibility of experiences that move the ego away from the ideal.

Thus, allowing himself to be possessed by the phantasm of power, Vucol Cornoiu (*Brațul Andromedei/ Andromeda's Arm*) sacrifices his relationship with Sultana Șoimu, his first wife, while Lucian Negrișor (*Femeia de ciocolată/ The Chocolate Woman*) overcomes the pathetic escapes of his imagination and starts the final erotic assault. Lieutenant Ragaiaic (*Rusoaica/ The Russian*

³⁰ Vasile Spiridon, the article *The "frontier" literature of Gib I. Mihăescu (the novel Rusoaica/ The Russian Woman)*, in the Conference *A century of conflagrations: reality and fiction*, 7th edition, June 8, 2018, Chișinău, Republic of Moldova, Department of Universal and Comparative Literature, USM, 2019, p. 35 - https://ibn.idsi.md/sites/default/files/imag_file/32-39_12.pdf - (accesat în data de 23.07.2022).

Woman) cynically reveals to Niculina his intentions to capture *the desired woman*, Mihnea Băiatu (*Zilele și nopțile unui student întârziat/ Days and Nights of a Late Student*) inhibits his frivolity and internalizes his love until its sublimation in the form of existential questioning and Mihai Aspru (*Donna Alba*) defeats through histrionic eroticism the dialectic of the ego with her self, by thickening the persuasive discourse and the proteanism of the masks with which he parades on the stage of the seductions necessary to appropriate the feminine ideal. Susceptible to the inability to be honest, the fictional self shapes itself in a *bovarian* way in the attempt to outline its profile, always placed on the two pillars of its discourse: "the attraction of the imaginary and the repulsion of the imagined."³¹ A competition is established between the pleasure of the characters to rearrange and explore elements of reality in their imagination and the obsession to become "creators of reality", by virtue of the demiurgic power with which they were endowed. The imagery in Gib I. Mihăescu's writings coagulates around human flaws, an exile in the hell of suffering of any nature: erotic, organic (disease, infirmity), poverty, inadaptability, social frustration, etc.

The isotopy of the way and that of the water reflects the dynamics of the "diurnal regime of the image"³², when the shadows do not yet have the density of the emotion that obturates the horizon of the ideal. So the dominant darkness in the heroes' minds appears flashed by the rays of hope, thinking that it would be a misunderstanding, an explanation that escapes the logic of events, a hallucinatory dream, in the last instance, he will wake up from. But the *path* engages thematically, as a rule, the anguish of the character, and the *water* hides in its turbulent waves the mechanism of fateful destiny, both isotopes functioning as definite boundaries between what the character is able to do and what he wants, this stage "manifesting the antithetical and methodical recapture of the negative valorizations of the first one."³³

Here is born the abyss of the hero's existence, through the forms of cleavage in consciousness, also from here comes the alienation and disavowal of reality. Gib I. Mihăescu's universe mainly migrates towards the unaltered theme of love, with heroes' numerous cognitive and behavioral variables that function as affective barriers. The external dangers that threaten the heroes' existence (gambling, social injustice) are equally serious as the internal ones, implacable coordinates of the feminine (frivolity, levity) or masculine nature (authority, suspicion, jealousy).

³¹ Nicolae Balotă, *Gib I. Mihăescu. Omul și opera, Nuvele/ Gib I. Mihaescu. The man and the work, Short stories*, Tineretului Publishing-house, Bucharest, 1969, p. 29.

³² Gilbert Durand, *Structurile antropologice ale imaginarului/ The anthropological structures of the imaginary, op. cit.*, p. 67.

³³ *Ibidem*, p. 67.

The *phantasm* takes a multitude of forms in relation to the mysterious projection of the beloved, the irreversible time passing, including the characters' narcissistic self-image. In the dynamics of the chimeras, a potentiation of the mystery was observed, not so much by what the beloved woman does or does not do, but mainly by the protagonists' predisposition towards uncertainty and their appetite for creating scenarios of disaster in love.

It was noticed, especially in Gib I. Mihăescu's novels, that the associative networks become much more complex compared to the previous ones, under the *phantasm* face coexisting the double of the female figure (angelic/demonic), with the metamorphoses of its desacralization. Zina Cornoiu (*Andromeda's Arm*), Eleonora (*The Chocolate Woman*), Arina Velovan (*Days and Nights of a Late Student*), Niculina Bălan (*The Russian Woman*) and Alba Ypsilant (*Donna Alba*) are exponents of the *eternal feminine* locked in the crucible of the male ego, figures of the passionate and cerebral woman.

During the sixteen years of creation (1919-1935), the stages of the writer's artistic maturity entail a deeper penetration into the paradigm of the self that confesses, apparently through a sum of reasonings and falsifications of the perspective resulting from the dream technique enunciated in the previous chapters. In this way, the characters take specific masks, such as those of the victim, the aggressor, the prankster, etc. The canonical dispute between traditionalism and modernism indisputably places Gib I. Mihăescu closer to the modern style of writing, reflecting the obsession with freedom as a necessary experiment against the rigors of tradition, city space, introspective states.

In the case of Gib I. Mihăescu's writing, the present study aimed to critically mediate the assumption of overcoming a classical model of writing by approaching topics considered taboo or outside the literary sphere, such as sexuality. The elements of psychoanalytic depth that the heroes bring to the surface in the process of self-legitimization are highlighted: the sublimation of negative energies, the dislocation of traumatic emotion, the isolation of failure as a form of regression, the denial of an unacceptable reality and the projection of abandonment, rivalry and sexual self-affirmation complexes, as well as superiority complexes. The drama of the character's identity arises from the fear of rejection and is subordinated to the manifestation of primal instincts. The satisfaction of the obsession becomes an imperative that structures the stages of the reception of events, fantasy being the *sine qua non* condition for the integration of suffering. The formative matrix of the writer's *personal myth* - "the histrionic eroticism" - fictionally coagulates around the beauty/ fidelity of the female character as an internal object of virile desire, bringing to the

conscious reading fragments that outline *her* face. The work reveals itself to the reader as multiple perspectives of the female image composed like a mosaic of dreams, imaginations and fragments of reality. Competitively, the motif of time associated with the mysteries of the sky develops, an artistic vision counterbalanced by the ephemeral human destiny and marked by dramatic situations. The hero lucidly penetrates into the *solitude* of the being (a fact that does not discourage him), through successive attempts to decipher the universe and the metamorphoses of *the other*.

In his props, the instruments are most often speculative, they circumscribe their own imaginary and discover that, before using their discursive methods, they were closer to the ideal. In the end, from the network of symbols and associative fields, a character who boldly conquers his ideal, and only exceptionally, a shy, persistent and complex young man emerges. His eroticism is a weapon that he does not hesitate to use in excess, forced to create a mask under which to hide his vulnerabilities. The personal myth ("the histrionic eroticism") claims its identity traits from an initial "romanticism"³⁴ assumed by the writer and necessary to legitimize his ideal, a debatable feminine eternal; basically, a self-referential strategy of self-display and the pleasure of self-contemplation. An element of originality in the present analysis is represented by the recurrence of instinctual terms under the light of the collapse into the abyss of consciousness, simultaneously with the desire of the characters to rise.

The identification of this double source makes it possible to isolate *the personal myth* as an enunciation of the unfolding of psychic phenomena as complexes of the affirmation of male "virility". The approach of the present research studies the mirroring of a *deep self* in the work, validated by the interpretation of the image of the self revealed on the basis of biographical elements. We cannot speak of a reduction of the work to a biographical character, just as it is not possible to separate the work from the area it was conceived in. The polymorphous figures convergently tend towards the constitution of a central image (*the personal myth*) and diverge back into the work as an "exam of unconsciousness", a performative act.

Equally, the thesis used the biographical and autobiographical materials, monographic research, dictionaries, literary histories, articles and studies with the aim of restoring, on a macrostructural level, the unity of the universe of Gib I. Mihăescu's work. The empirical demonstration highlighted the importance of *aspiration* in the unconscious processes that rise to the conscious level and motivate changes in the character's personality, with identity metamorphoses

³⁴ Ștefan Vornicu, interview with Gib I. Mihăescu, *Nationalul nou*, year II, no. 298, May 11, 1935, p. 2, apud Diana Cristev, *Însemnări pentru timpul de azi/ Notes for today's time*, Dacia Publishing House, Cluj-Napoca, 1975, p. 290.

and mutations. In this way, the male erotic archetype is completed with the specific factors of a double reality: the social self and the creative self, sequentially reflected in repetitive forms observable in the dynamics of the characters. The complexity of the mechanisms of cutting out the *personal myth* relates both to the interwar reality from a social point of view, with the gradual loss of the aristocracy class power, the partial dispossession of the landlords from the lands and inherited privileges and the appearance of new political ideologies, as well as with the literary reality, in the alignment of the writers of that time to a Western expression not only through thematics, but also through the cultivation of an innovative spirit that penetrates, along with the objective perspective, in the lyrical, memorialistic, fantastic, symbolic area, etc.

The fictional unity of Gib I. Mihăescu's work is based on three partitions concurrently connected to the turmoil of the ego in its effort to understand itself and the world it moves in. These instances that order the narrative discourse and are only theoretically distinguished, being assimilated to a truthful cognitive process, they refer to the imaginative fantasy that filters and potentiates the elements of reality, to the hazard diagram deducible in the leitmotif of destiny and the configuration of a surreality of the chimera-obsessed ego. An essentializing perspective on the work of this writer could appeal to the image of a Pygmalion overwhelmed by the result of his work, foreshadowed in the hope affirmed by Gib I. Mihăescu, according to which the authors will live from their work, without having to practice other jobs for financial reasons.

The fictional profile of Gib I. Mihăescu's character is unitarily reconstructed through the structural analogies revealed by the psychocritical method, being camouflaged in the hypostasis of a histrionic eroticism, Oedipally longing for an impossible love, wasted in the conjunctural love that does not satisfy his demands. Wandering between the imagined ideal and the concrete forms of love, the heroes most frequently borrow the mask of a knight engaged in battle with the erinyes of the imagination. Regardless of whether it lives in a couple or not, the fictional self closes itself in the autarkic forms of its projections, split and alienated in the consciousness, under the guise of a creative self always tributary to the reality it eludes. At the opposite pole, the social self vehemently inserts itself at the beginning of the 20th century in the scene of Romanian social and political transformations, through the incisive journalism that Gib I. Mihăescu made. Psychocritical analysis has the duty to link the author's writings and frame his identity, not as a reducible form of biography, but as a response to his need for self-fictionalization. Myth operates a reduction to the essence of repetitive figures, but the personal myth is only the point of departure for the writer's other prolific *phantasms*.

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³⁸ *Ibidem*

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