

**MINISTRY OF NATIONAL EDUCATION
„1 DECEMBRIE 1918” UNIVERSITY OF ALBA IULIA
FACULTY OF HISTORY AND PHILOLOGY
THE PHD/DOCTORAL SCHOOL OF PHILOLOGY**

**DOCTOR’S DEGREE
SUMMARY**

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Prof. univ. dr. Popa Mircea**

**PhD Student:
Danciu Diana-Maria**

**ALBA IULIA
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The Prose of Alexandru Ecovoiu

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Keywords: postmodernism, the new French novel, magic realism, Political Correctness, literary synchronism, imaginary, metaroman, alter ego, exoticism, alienation, solitude, apocalypse, order, obsession, freedom, power, critical opinions.

Taking the form of a doctoral thesis with the title *Prose of Alexandru Ecovoiu* the present paper represents a multidisciplinary research direction, which aims to outline a complete study of the mentioned writer's work. We consider Alexandru Ecovoiu's work a milestone in the renewal of Romanian literature after 1990 and its synchronization with international literature.

A first meeting with the author Alexandru Ecovoiu represented a reading of the novel *Saludos*, as a subject for a parallel between an opera belonging to Romanian literature and one from another literature. Alexandru Ecovoiu is a writer typical of postmodern nonconformism. He leisurely juggles more or less taboo topics: religious controversy, religious apocalypse, the power of the Word, the individual's obsession with power and order, the search for the unique and absolute truth and his own identity, ethics and fatherhood, sexuality, etc.

Tudorel Urian in the *Waldorf School of Prose*¹ notes that Alexandru Ecovoiu's work adheres to the conventions of the new French novel. The critic appreciates in his writing the ability to put in difficulty to find the keys of interpretation and the potential for debate. Later, in 2013, Irina Petraş comes with the same finding and states that A.E.'s writing insists on ambiguity, secreting doubts (many played, I suppose) and putting the ultimate meaning of his speech under doubt. His books are prose essay, with sometimes poetic intonation relying on word / text polyphony, on never-ending and definitive interpretations, on the generosity of the signs².

The objectives of this work were: framing the writer in the postmodernist current, defining and identifying the need to write fiction, staging creative periods, identification of recurrence elements in both novels and short prose, the statement in a synthesizing form of the perception of literary criticism on the work of Alexandru Ecovoiu.

¹Tudorel Urian, *Școala Waldorf a prozei*, vol. *Prozaromânească a anilor '90*, colecția Critică și istorie literară, Editura Albatros, București, 2000. p. 116.

²Irina Petraş, *Alexandru Ecovoiu*, vol. *Oglinda și drumul. Prozatori contemporani*, Editura Cartea Românească, București, 2013, p. 203.

The study tried to capture the substantiated proof of Ecovoiu's belonging to postmodern writers and identify elements that confer originality of his work - themes, motifs, symbols and other elements and techniques specific to narrative art. We were interested in the elements of recurrence and of major importance in the interpretation of texts as well: the theme of power, the religious controversy, the theme of travel, alienation, the presence of the alter ego character type, the metaroman elements and we tried to show the way in which his works develop these themes in the form of a parable.

The motivation and the need to approach such a topic came, first of all, from the lack of a solid critical bibliography regarding the work of Alexandru Ecovoiu. The reception of Ecovoiu is limited to chronicles or reviews in periodicals and articles, summary presentations in literary dictionaries focused on several titles, considered the best. Too few exegetes dedicated large spaces or a special attention (among them we mention Tudorel Urian and Irina Petraș that were mentioned earlier, but also Ion Simuț or Cornel Regman). This phenomenon is also caused by the controversies related to the importance of his writing that the Romanian public does not know in the true dimension.

Another shortcoming of the exegesis is the lack of vision. Existing materials take into account parts of the writer's work, without giving an overview of his entire narrative art, of the mechanisms that make him a viable and true author. So far, there are, as I mentioned above, only summary, partial articles in the dictionaries of literature, but which fail to truly capture the importance of the writer's work on the Romanian literature scene in the context of the evolution and the tendency to synchronize with the art on the whole world. Literary criticism promoted the image of postmodern writer of the prose only with the appearance of the novel *Saludos* (1995), ignoring his literary evolution up to that date. The complexity of his work gave rise to the desire for an exhaustive, coherent and in-depth research on Alexandru Ecovoiu's work. No least, there is the intrinsic motivation arising from reading the novel *Saludos*. The aforementioned work has caught our attention from the first pages that introduced us to a world of the fabulous, the miraculous, giving us a universe different from reality. Also, we were able to identify in that universe some apparently chaotic and disordered elements, but which are easily found in today's society.

The work dedicated to the analysis of his prose was structured in five chapters:

I. Alexandru Ecovoiu – Postmodern Writer

II. The Need for Imaginary in Literature and the Political-Cultural Context

III. Narrative Art or How to Write Parables. The Faces of the Imaginary in the

Novels of Alexandru Ecovoiu

IV. The Short prose - from the Caterpillar to the Butterfly

V. Alexandru Ecovoiu under Literary Criticism

each of these chapters being organized in the corresponding subchapters.

The first chapter, entitled suggestively *Alexander Ecovoiu - Postmodern Writer*, we followed the drafting of biographical and literary activity relevant to the writer's inclusion in the postmodernist movement. The demonstration was logically and coherently argued and contains both critical opinions and concrete examples from the writer's works, which indicate his belonging to the postmodernist current, but also to the Political Correctness orientation. There was also a delimitation of the author's creative stages and the specificity of each of them with the recurring elements. The delimitation of the three periods of creation was based on the chronological order of the editorial appearances and the approach of the main themes, the evolution of the narrative art and the language. Thus, we identified the eighties, the nineties and the 2000s and we demonstrated the specificity of the narrative art and technique of each of them.

The second chapter is entitled *The Need for Imaginary in Literature and the Political-Cultural Context*. In this part of the paper we sought to clarify the need to write fantastic literature, to escape the imaginary, both in the totalitarian period and in the present. During the communist regime, evasionist literature appeared as a form of manifesto against the regime that promoted proletarianism, the cult of leader's personality and politics; evasionism was a form of expression of personal freedom, of one's own ideas and thoughts. The closing of the Romanian space between the limits established by the borders with the neighboring countries and the lack of communication with them, the restriction of access to the evolution of technology, the rigidity of the rules imposed by the totalitarian regime had the effect of a monotonous existence, lacking the capacity to react on their own, inert, without intellectual activity, in which even literature had a commanding character. Despite trying to completely close the communication channels with the western countries, their influence managed to penetrate the country. The role of fiction is to correct, even only hypothetically, reality. Under the pressure of a dictatorial regime, people needed fiction to create an artificial universe in which they could live what the regime had forbidden them. The works that did not fit in the program imposed by the censorship, were removed from libraries and melted.

After 1989, the evasion literature came to compensate for the deficiencies, the mediocre reality and the disappointment with the democracy applied in the wrong way. These fictions are not only established in forms of evasion, they also present current issues: lack of communication among humans, solitude, identity crisis, slanderous belief in the Divinity,

desecration of the sacred, the struggle for power, themes that are also found in the literature of Alexandru Ecovoiu. Their effects are the lack of human verticality and a society in which freedom is misunderstood, causing chaos.

The third chapter was dedicated to large-scale prose and is titled *Narrative Art or How to Write Parables. The Faces of the Imaginary in the Novels of Alexandru Ecovoiu*. The six novels written by Alexandru Ecovoiu were analyzed both comparatively and in terms of common characteristics. The one can easily notice the exoticism of the topos, playing with the power and the obsessive desire to establish their own order in the society. His characters are universal travelers who are in search of a unique and indisputable Truth and who, along this initiatory path, are hit by the issues of power, the desire of an opposing character who wants to reorient mankind or considers himself to be reorganizing the existing order. Some characters perceive a synonymous equivalence between power and freedom. The one who holds the power is free, while the others must submit to it.

One observes the author's constancy for the alter ego character, built to mirror the principles by which the protagonists are guided, which drives them, in order to play back the thoughts that the heroes are reluctant to expose in a specific statement. The presence of the writer / scribe and the elements of metaroman is customary. In his novels the technique of *mise en abyme* predominates, specific to the new French novel. At the same time, the onomastics of the characters is relevant to their role and mission.

The author takes myths and deconstructs them, demitizes them, arousing literary and religious controversies. His characters do a hard job of penetrating the essence of the universe and want to show that truth and divinity are in each of us and not necessarily in the Christian faith. For the author and for his characters, God is only one, regardless of the religion adopted and He is the only one of purely divine origin, Jesus Christ and the other saints being exposed and predisposed to sin through their human side. In his novels one can observe the predilection for the apocryphal texts. The religious act has become a mechanical one, realized without consciousness, there is no religious vocation, spiritual calling, the priesthood being transformed into a certain profession, renamed like the other occupations.

The next chapter is, again, one of analysis, but this time the focus was on short prose volumes. The stories in each volume, considered micro-novels, were analyzed in chronological order, taking into account the main themes, the construction elements and the particularities of language. Through the short story, Alexander Ecovoiu prepares his later novels. These represent also his first less successful beletristic exercises, which is why his first two volumes of novels have gone almost unnoticed by literary criticism. The two volumes

published before the fall of the communist regime were joined in 2001 by the Three children-Mozart opus, which is an index of the writer's evolution. This third volume completes the data from the novels published in the period 1995-2000, we see here an author whose language and literary-artistic style has crystallized.

In the last chapter, we made the inventory and synthesis of its critical reception in order to highlight the importance and necessity of the study of his work. Both the appraisals and the objections were highlighted and commented on, we could see how the Romanian literary society received the works of Alexandru Ecovoiu, the reluctance of the Romanian critics, but also the total openness of the literary world in Europe and Latin America to his short stories and novels. His work is better known and appreciated outside the Romanian borders.

As can be seen, the proposed research is intended to be a literary survey that will complement the existing critical bibliography and has tried to treat the author's works from as many perspectives. Certain sequences cannot be understood without considering the historical and literary context, which is why it was necessary to define the notion of the imaginary, but also to present the effects that communism has had on the Romanian culture.

As we mentioned above, the bibliography of the work includes the writer's works, dictionaries and literary histories, articles of criticism and literary history appeared in volumes and periodicals, interviews and electronic bibliography. When required, we performed translations from the international criticism to be able to carry out a complete and complex study on the work of Alexandru Ecovoiu, so that the research methods used to achieve the objectives proposed by this research paper were: analysis and synthesis, deduction, analogy, direct interpretation of texts literary and critical, comparative analysis, heuristics, translation and adaptation.

In conclusion, the present research is intended to be a useful tool for future research on postmodern literature, its evolution and its particularities by direct application on the work of the writer Alexandru Ecovoiu, who, although trying to evade any literary group, adopts and develops a postmodern style through excellence. Through this work, we managed to bring some new elements that literary criticism has not reported or that it has not given enough importance.

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