

**UNIVERSITATEA DE MEDICINĂ, FARMACIE, ȘTIINȚE ȘI
TEHNOLOGIE « GEORGE EMIL PALADE» DIN TÂRGU MUREȘ
ȘCOALA DOCTORALĂ DE LITERE, ȘTIINȚE UMANISTE ȘI APLICATE
DOMENIUL : FILOLOGIE**

**DOCTORAL THESIS
SYNOPSIS**

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Scientific advisor:

Prof. univ. dr. Dorin ȘTEFĂNESCU

TÂRGU MUREȘ

2020

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**THE FUNDAMENTAL LOCAL MYTHS AND THEIR
LITERARY DEPICTIONS
SYNOPSIS**

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION.....	ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.
1. THE MYTH – GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS	ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.
1.1. Definitions and Related Aspects	Error! Bookmark not defined.
1.2. Classifications.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
1.3. The Mythology	Error! Bookmark not defined.
1.4. Literaturalization and Desacralization.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
1.5. The Popular Ballad	Error! Bookmark not defined.
2. THE MYTH OF ETHNOGENESIS OR THE TRAGIC BEGINNING	ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.
2.1. The Founding as the Love beyond Death	Error! Bookmark not defined.
2.2. Dochia Seen as <i>Alma Mater</i>	Error! Bookmark not defined.
2.3. The Cult of Heroes and the Game of Destiny	Error! Bookmark not defined.
3. THE MYTH OF CREATION. DESTINY, LOVE AND FAITH.....	ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.
3.1. Area of Spreading and Versions	Error! Bookmark not defined.
3.2. <i>Monastirea Argeşului</i> , a Bridge of Mythical Founding	Error! Bookmark not defined.
3.3. The Revolt of Creation and the Futility of Sacrifice	Error! Bookmark not defined.
3.4. Hypertextual Elements. Demystification as a Pretext	Error! Bookmark not defined.
3.5. Duty above Love.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
3.6. Death, between Acceptance and Punishment	Error! Bookmark not defined.
4. THE MYTH REGARDING MIORIȚA, BETWEEN ARCHAIC ONTOLOGY AND CHRISTIAN ANTHROPOLOGY	ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.
4.1. <i>Miorița</i> , a Primordial Mythical Depiction	Error! Bookmark not defined.
4.2. The Palimpsestic Myth or the Initiatic Novel	Error! Bookmark not defined.
4.3. The Anthropological Sublayer and the Christianized Myth.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
5. THE MYTH OF THE FLYER. THE MANIFESTATION OF THE TRANSFORMING EROTICISM.....	ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.
5.1. The Fatal Attraction and the Art of Seduction	Error! Bookmark not defined.
5.2. The Scenario of an Indifferent Game	Error! Bookmark not defined.
5.3. A Lucid Vision of Feelings	Error! Bookmark not defined.
5.4. A Ritual of Metamorphosis	Error! Bookmark not defined.
5.5. The Humanizing of the Flyer or Getting out in the World	Error! Bookmark not defined.
5.6. The Demonizing of Eros	Error! Bookmark not defined.
5.7. The Good News and the Erotic Manifestations	Error! Bookmark not defined.
5.8. Eros– the Material Temptation	Error! Bookmark not defined.
6. THE DESACRALIZATION OF THE MYTH. REINTERPRETATIONS AND ACTUALIZATIONS	ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.
6.1. The Wedding with the Death. A Textualist Replica.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
6.2. Art above Death. A Symbiosis of Myths.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
6.3. The Ethnolinguistic Genesis. A Serene Founding.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
CONCLUSIONS.....	ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.

It is within our human nature to always be preoccupied by the things that are around us, by everything we see, by everything we hear, by everything we feel. Therefore, by everything there is in this world. Yet, some mysteries of the world are difficult, if not impossible to know, even by human beings, who are endowed with reason. In order to create some sort of connection between one and the universe, the human being has created the myth, which in different forms, has continued to reside in the collective mind since the beginning of the world and until today. The troubled world we live in continues to be an inexhaustible source of myths, although many of the mysteries of the universe seem to have already been discovered. That is why, “the myth appears from the human being’s necessity to explain its own being and its presence in the universe, to give meaning to its existence. But also from the need to have certainties, from the human being’s vital desire to cover the white spots, the fears that accompany its own existence”¹, being known that “the old popular cultures have created a universal thing, the myth, a value to which, within the cultural system, a difficult task of an ordering agent has been assigned, capable of giving meaning to the relationship between the human being and the world.”² This fact contributed to the myth becoming an object of study for various research enterprises, many of which trying to establish the true value of the myth.

Having become a literary phenomenon, the myth organically takes part in another textual structure different from the original one, in which it does not lose its value; the myth is *literaturalized*, and the limits between mythology and literature become almost nonexistent, the numerous literary texts inspired by mythology being the proof of it.

The analytical approach taken in writing the doctoral thesis called: *The Fundamental Local Myths and Their Literary Depictions*, constitutes the study of some literary texts, popular or cult ones, in which one or more of the fundamental myths are reflected, from the point of view of the myth interference with literature, of the contribution brought by some authors who have approached texts bearing a mythical component, but also from a perspective of the evolution of creation and that of vision. George Călinescu, in his *Istorie...*, referred to the fact that “some myths were created, among which four, were and are still fed with an increasing frequency, constituting the mythological starting points for any national writer”³,

¹ Elisabeta Munteanu, *Motive mitice în dramaturgia românească*, Editura Minerva, București, 1982, p. 12.

² Silviu Angelescu, *Mitul și literatura*, Editura Univers, București, 1999, p.19.

³ G. Călinescu, *Istoria literaturii române de la origini până în prezent*. Ediția a II-a, revăzută și adăugită. Ediție și prefată de Al. Piru, Editura Minerva, București, 1982, p.58.

myths that are reflected in works as *Traian și Dochia*, *Miorița*, *Monastirea Argeșului* or *Sburătorul*. It is an interesting fact that the above mentioned works, being regarded themselves as having an irrefutable value, constitute sources of inspiration for works belonging to the body of Romanian literature where myths are reflected in various ways, some being even homonymous. What with their identical component, these works also reflect the author's mastery, but more striking is the fact that sublayers of various representative myths for our entire national culture can be identified and whose significance has been transposed into literary works irrespective of the social-historical context in which various writers created their works. Therefore, the doctoral thesis focuses on the analysis of the way the above mentioned myths are reflected in works belonging to the body of Romanian literature, works that have been selected with the help of an aesthetic criterion established in the literary critic, but also through the way in which they reveal aspects of the myths that have been mentioned earlier.

The literary depictions referred to in the title of the thesis are nothing but personal ways of interpreting some texts in which the four fundamental myths are reflected, they are not labelled as such on the analysed texts, but rather constitute an attempt to highlight the essential aspect of each chosen work in which one can find mythical aspects.

The research motivation for this topic takes into consideration many aspects. First of all, that myths represent for human beings the first step of knowledge, the primordial way of establishing the great truths of a world that was given in their possession, things that allow us to perceive and analyse the various fundamental values which allow, for instance, that a creation can be made complete or that the human beings become integrated with the natural surrounding from which they came. Secondly, myths are a continual source of inspiration for the anonymous and cult text authors as in the present research paper one can identify various ways of perceiving and working with the same myth, in works belonging to different authors. Lastly, it can be shown that mythical characters, often time even human ones, find their correspondence among human beings, they generate- characters, happenings and human feelings from a typological point of view.

Our research paper has come into being as a result of a hard and long road, as the approached topic is an extremely generous one, that is the reason why our approach is not and it does not pretend to be an exhaustive one, as it would be impossible to comprise into a unitary work, the literary works in which these myths are dealt with. The research work holds as primary objectives the highlighting of the way in which various myths are reflected in literary works to establish connections between literary works and proving that myths,

although essentially the same, have transformed in time and that every creator of literature had some influence upon them.

There are numerous studies on fundamental myths, but often time they are treated individually, without being considered a unitary whole which defines us as a people and without having been observed in their interference, as I had mentioned earlier. The chief value of this study could very well be the offering of some kind of answers to the way various literary works illustrate aesthetic depictions of some myths that originated from the popular wisdom and the mechanism through which they interfere in a creative way.

As research methods to be applied, one can enumerate the case study, the analysis, the synthesis, work hypotheses established on the principle of intertextuality, which operates in almost all cases, but most of all, mythocritical studies, when considering the already existing opinions on the chosen subject, combining them, opposing them, where the case be and trying to advance new solutions for the given topics. These hypotheses which, with the help of the comparative method, need to account for the vast circulation of the subjects in question, considering the dynamics in permanent creative transformation of a true complex of mythemes.

The initial documenting was made through the rereading of the texts discussed in the research paper and also of the fundamental critical works, the directions advanced in those works needing to be thoroughly researched through the study of other relevant texts.

This doctorate thesis is structured on six chapters, thus an introductory chapter, a purely theoretical one, a chapter dedicated to each of the fundamental myths, as they were mentioned by George Călinescu, while the last chapter is a synthesis one, where literary works which contain a certain myth that interferes with the others, are interpreted, but, mostly, where the influence of myths is not that obvious.

The first chapter is called *The Myth- General Considerations* and it is, as it can be deduced from the title, a theoretical chapter in which I have tried to give a general presentation of the term we referred to as “myth”, relying on opinions of some universally famous researchers in the field, as Mircea Eliade, Lucian Blaga, Victor Kernbach, Bronislaw Malinowski and others. By far, the most cited work, *Aspecte ale mitului*, belongs to Mircea Eliade. The myth is a universal constant thing and defining it as “sacred history” is one meant to highlight in depth, but also the fact that, in a literary text in which one creates, as one wants to, a story, irrespective of the genre and the species which it belongs to, this story is never the same, even if the sublayer is a common one, as I showed in the analysed works. Through the created works, the author is a maker of myth, and his use of the resources belonging to the

popular literature is adequate and established on the various activities that the popular poet made and which allowed him, despite the tasks he had to fulfill, to sing his feelings through music and lyrics that were extremely beautiful, which lyrics influenced completely indefinitely through time, the area where they were created in and exerted their influence even beyond that area, becoming informal identity acts of all the people united in one thinking.

Starting with the second chapter, *The Myth of Ethnogenesis or the Tragic Beginning*, reference is made to the four fundamental local myths mentioned by George Călinescu, considering the source texts that generated them, but also those that constitute literary creations that appeared later, in which the myths were dealt with. Thus, concerning the myth of ethnogenesis or, as it was also called, the myth of Traian and Dochia, one can add that appearance of such myths sprang from the need of the Romanian people to relate to certain settling heroes, without whom the later glory of the Romanians, even before they were called like that, would not have been possible. Asachi's work *Dochia and Traian*, which constitutes the basis for this myth, is a satisfactory creative act of the Romanian people's need to establish its origins, and its descent from Traian gives it the status of a great people, a privileged one, as a similar origin could not have been shadowed by its later evolution. Dumitru Almaș, in *Povestea preafrumoasei Dochia*, contributes to the development of this myth through combining historical aspects with the literary expressive means and offering one perspective in which the self-sacrifice is the result of creating a new people. These elements make *Povestea preafrumoasei Dochia* a work in which the myth of ethnogenesis is reflected in a way as simple and as suggestive, offering a story that is worth remembering every time the idea of retracing the glorious origin of the people, to which Traian and Dochia contributed, needs to be mentioned. Not to be neglected is also the dramatic poem of Valeriu Anania, which is an edifying work especially through the restoring of king Decebal's image, whose role was decisive in the ethnogenesis process. The roles of Dochia and Traian are also extremely important, their courage and capacity to fight against their destiny are elements that will indirectly lead to the forming of a new people, through their contribution. Seen as a whole, it is obvious that the myth of ethnogenesis was less dealt with in literature, a fact that does not however, imply that it has a diminished importance, as the subject to which it refers is the starting point for the other myths. What would *Miorița*, *Meșterul Manole*, *Zburătorul* have been without having a specific area to manifest themselves in and within the spirit of a people that would treat them at their right value, is being brought into question here.

The Myth of Creation. Destiny, Love and Faith, the third chapter of the thesis, is dedicated to the myth of the master builder Manole, where one can notice that the sacrifice of

walling in, fuelled by the faith related to the offering of a soul to a building through a human sacrifice, is spread around an extremely vast territory, particularly in the Balkan area, even within the Romanian boundaries, there are a lot of versions of some texts that are based on this character. This myth became known through the popular ballad *Monastirea Argeşului*, which is representative for our approach as it constitutes the first literary creation common to readers, in which one can find this sacrifice for creation and from which, creating a bridge over time, new and new texts will appear, belonging to authors like: Adrian Maniu, Octavian Goga, Lucian Blaga or Valeriu Anania, who put their imprint on the story as such, but they surpassed its boundaries through the originality of the vision they had and the multiple contexts. Manole in the ballad is the character who sacrifices himself rather out of instinct, of pain, of his inability to hear his wife's cries from within the walls. In Adrian Maniu's work, the master builder fights against the creatures that struggle against being part of a new walling in, while, *Manole in absentia*, seen by Octavian Goga, is a contemporary one, with a set of specific problems. Blaga's character is the guilty-coward type, who in a conscious way, is incapable of making a sacrifice, that is why when he realises what he did, he wants to tear down the walls in order to free his wife. The version proposed by Anania, highlights, perhaps one of the best drawn up characters, from the strict point of view of his role in the construction, as he is prepared to accept his earthly punishment, but the love for his own creation determines him to pass through the act he performs, from which his continual lucidity, which makes him a character who retains his morality.

The next chapter, *The Myth Regarding Miorița, between Archaic Ontology and Christian Anthropology*, is dedicated to the pastoral myth in our culture, and it also has a large area of spreading, especially on the Romanian territory. A masterpiece of the Romanian popular creation, Miorița raised the interest of many researchers, but the works of some cult authors are not to be neglected either, the ballad itself being a text that is still open to new interpretations, its multiple meanings never having been completely known. There are a multitude of similarities between the popular ballad *Miorița* and the novel *Baltagul*, belonging to Mihail Sadoveanu, but their interference cannot be a complete one, as Sadoveanu's influence is apparent in the novel; what he does is take the epic thread of the ballad to which he gives his erudition, in an original way, through his reference to those aspects that make *Baltagul* a social and monographic novel, as it presents a world in its totality, an aspect neglected by the anonymous collective author of *Miorița*, which does not mean that Sadoveanu's work is devoid of mythological aspects. Valeriu Anania's *Miorița* is a work in which death leads to life, through love, in which Miorița evolved to being a human being, but

also a work which focuses on the pastoral existence of the Romanians in different historic areas, the theologian's poem and of the writer turned into a metropolitan in Cluj-Napoca, treating thoroughly identity issues of the Romanian people and of life, in general, through working with the narrative thread of the anonymous popular ballad, but also influencing it in a personal way, which will set it indefinitely among the illustrative creations that complete the set of the works born from Alecsandri's *Miorița*.

The chapter called: *The Myth of the Flyer. The Manifesting of the Transforming Eroticism* is dedicated to the erotic myth, and not randomly, in drawing up this chapter, did I refer to a larger number of texts than in previous chapters, as this myth talks about the first manifestations of the erotic feeling, general-human feelings that are experienced by every person in its turn. If the three myths, dealt with so far, regarded feelings as being of a second hand, lower rank, this one professes the supremacy of the feeling in the literary works it is reflected. Although it is imposed in our culture in the work of Ion Heliade Rădulescu, called *Zburătorul*, it has its origins in the folklore, as the one that served as origins for the myth regarding *Miorița* and for the aesthetic one. The vision that Alecsandri gives to the myth of the flyer is a playful one and it is exposed through the game to which the girls silently consent, making the two young people witnesses of their dialogue. Cezar Bolliac's work is an edifying one in exploiting the myth of the flyer, precisely because it suggests a lucid vision on the erotic manifestations, but one that makes these manifestations to be treated with maximum responsibility, but which do not cause alienation, through their excessive dramatization and they are not laughed at either, being recognized their status of fundamental experiences of the human existence, with all the longing that the Flyer causes. Being perhaps, Eminescu's creation in which the myth of the flyer is exploited in the most obvious way possible, the poem called: *Călin (file din poveste)* is the work of which the ending brings a paradigm change, in the meaning that love does not cause suffering, alienation and pain anymore, but it leads to fulfillment, even though it is not obtained without sacrifices. In *Cezara*, beyond the humanization of the flyer, which makes him act accordingly, he is not only a shallow character, who limits himself to just living and, perhaps, to physical satisfactions. He also feels that he experiments with all his being, that is why he becomes capable of loving, and his reward arrives accordingly: possessing his own world, together with one he gives himself to, renouncing thus, his condition. In *Luceafărul*, the fact that Eminescu resorts to a demonic appearance of eroticism must not necessarily be considered as an out of the ordinary aspect, as the demonic appearance that the eros acquires in the context of this vast poem, refers to the temptation that it represents. Therefore, the demonic is not the aspect of the being per se, but

its capacity to represent, for the person that he possesses, the distancing from the ordinary, through the existential changes that it produces, exactly as the flyer manifests itself in previous works, especially in Heliade's ballad. Arghezi's perspective on the myth of the flyer in *Buna vestire*, is a new one as it argues in favour of the detachment of the erotic sentiment from the dramatic lamentations encountered previously and makes a lucid victim out of the one whom the manifestations are reflected on, a victim that does not dramatize its existence, but remains with the hope, that of a full union between her and the one causing her to feel that way, or of giving birth, which would appease her longing. Finally, in Ion Barbu's case, the eros is not manifested only through the material temptation, which actually does not lead to fulfillment.

The sixth and last chapter of the thesis: *The Desacralization of the Myth. Reinterpretations and Actualizations*, is a synthesis one, in which the literary works experience a full influence of the fundamental myths in the analysed texts, but this phenomenon is not as present, in the sense that the myth is masked, implicit, its presence is no longer obvious, regardless of the fact that not even the titles of the works to which I dedicated a subchapter in this last part of the thesis, no longer refer directly to myths. There are also literary works in which the fundamental myths have a discrete presence, rather than a sub-textual one, being somehow masked or filtered through diverse narrative techniques or through "stories" that take away the text from the narrative thread of the literary work that generates the myth, even if this thing happens, sometimes, only apparently, in essence the development of events takes place following, to some extent, the same stages like in the texts they come from. Seen as a whole, the volume: *Nunțile necesare* by Dumitry Țepeneag, does not represent a rewriting of the myth regarding Miorița, but its actualization, through the fact that, beyond the narrative thread that obviously came from the ballad, the text is fully provided with elements that not only keep the reader always present in the local area, but make him/her come to reality, but to a different dimension. That is the reason why, the myth regarding Miorița appears here in a textualist manner, as Eugen Simion called this version of *Miorița*, but beyond this, the way the economical pastoral problems are transposed into a conflict belonging to the XX century is also important, a conflict which is barely explained, his source could not be nothing but intuited. In the play called: *Moartea unui artist*, Horia Lovinescu offers a new vision on the myth of the sacrifice for creation, as the artist's drama is not solely generated by external factors, but also by internal ones. Beside the broken relationship with his sons, and with his acquaintances, Manole Crudu is eaten up by disease, and being aware of the fact that its evolution will prevent him from creating anymore,

generates an interior drama that causes him as an artist to become insignificant against the destructive power of the disease. Unlike other bearers of this name Manole, from the texts we analysed in the chapter where we dealt with this myth, the present character does not sacrifice himself voluntarily, but he is forced to do it by the disease that torments him and which did not let him finish his last great project. Thus, he leaves his work unfinished, unlike his predecessors. The novel: *Dumnezeu s-a născut în exil* by Vintilă Horia, reveals another face of the myth of ethnogenesis: its development from a subjective perspective, without its main purpose being this one, the poet's telling of his exile experiences and his discovering God. A fact that shows however, that the purpose assumed by the author, the peaceful settling of a people and of a language, is invested by a divine sign, comes to light from the same seed with the new religion.

Judging our research work in its entirety, we consider that the research objectives have been reached, as it can be noticed, especially through the analysis of the selected texts, that the way in which the fundamental local myths are reflected in those texts, that there are connections between myths and even interfering of a lot of them within the same text, but also the fact that myths, although they maintain their core, transformed through time and that each creator of literature exerted his influence on them.

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