

**“GEORGE EMIL PALADE” UNIVERSITY OF MEDICINE, PHARMACY,
SCIENCES AND TECHNOLOGY OF TÂRGU MUREŞ
DOCTORAL SCHOOL IN LETTERS, HUMANISTIC AND APPLIED SCIENCES
FIELD: PHILOLOGY**

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**FEMALE TYPOLOGIES IN THE ROMANIAN
PROSE OF THE 2000S**

ABSTRACT

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FEMALE TYPOLOGIES IN THE ROMANIAN PROSE OF THE 2000S

In literature, characters are constructed in order to portray a fictional, auto fictional or metafictional world that encompasses the multitude of traits that characterise them. By exploring the social and ideological equations throughout the evolution of the literary field, we discover how a character, who sums up the general characteristic aspects of a category fits into a certain typology, being an exponent of it, both in terms of the qualities and defects attributed to him, and in terms of the author's overall construction of himself.

The approach to the female literary character in various works of the epic genre is all the more interesting as the ineffable of femininity is explored in order to discover or analyze the evolution of female identities, exemplified by various typologies, from classical characters to those of the 2000s, the 2000 generation being the subject of this thesis. Our aim in this study is to recapitulate the role of the female character in literature and, at the same time, to distinguish associations and dissociations, convergences and divergences between characters, where they exist, in order to be able to deepen to a certain extent the female typologies of Romanian prose.

Taking into account the stages, the ages that have marked the relief of Romanian literature, we considered it necessary to begin with an approach to the idea of literary generation in a socio-cultural context, followed by an analysis of femininity and, to a lesser extent, of feminism (given that feminism is not the subject of our thesis), in order to understand the changes that have occurred in the structuring of the female literary character up to the present day. In this sense, we finally undertook an investigation of the feminine typologies of some works belonging to the epic genre of the 2000s, again related to the socio-cultural context. The relevance of this study is to demonstrate both the continuity of the defining features of the female character - features that constitute various typologies - and the emergence of new features in relation to the socio-cultural influences of this period.

The object of the research was various works of the 2000s, carefully selected and examined with interest and attention to detail, to illustrate the expansion of female identities and to complete the palette of attributes that constitute the female typology.

In order to circumscribe the dominant character of the construction of female typology within the 2000 literary phenomenon, we have structured our study in three chapters (subsequently divided into sub-chapters) and conclusions, linking in a comparative grid the past with the present and anchoring the theoretical and practical perspective in studies of great importance and strictly necessary to this thesis.

Thus, the theoretical dimension of the literary moment entitled *douămiism* is based on the analysis of the notion of generation. We have made a parallel between the recessive and the catalytic generations, identifying the characteristics of the 2000s prose that contributed to the regaining of the audience with reference to fictional and auto fictional prose, also mentioning the paradigmatic mutation in Romanian literature of the 2000 generation. All these theoretical aspects are explored through some highly relevant studies by sociologists (K. Mannheim, Lucian Năstasă, Pierre Nora, Julius Petersen), distinguished critics and literary historians (Nicolae Manolescu, Eugen Simion, Adrian Marino, Eugen Negrici, Florina Pârjol, Marian Papahagi, Ovidiu Pecican, Gheorghe Perian, Octavian Soviany, Andrei Terian, Iulian Boldea, Paul Cernat, Sanda Cordoș, Aliona Grati, Mihai Iovănel etc.). The epistemological foundation is also strengthened with the help of ideological suggestions from other researchers of newer generations such as Adina Dinițoiu, Alex Goldiș, Adriana Stan and others.

The analysis of the concepts underlying the construction of female identity and the approach to representative typologies in Romanian literary works, from „*Pașoptism*” to „*postdecemberism*”, is based on the ideas, researches and theses of valuable researchers and literary critics such as Lucian Boia, Sultana Craia, Ovid S. Crohmălniceanu, Françoise Dolto, Aurora Martin, Ioana Pârvulescu, Sanda Radian, Laura Ududec, Elena Zaharia Filipaș, etc. When approaching and illustrating certain female characters of the different works according to the period, we were helped by some articles and texts belonging to specialists such as Sonia Elvireanu, Liviu Malița, Valentin Gheonea, Rebeca Ignat, etc.

The literary texts - the novels - that form the basis of the examples of female typologies of the prose of the 2000s belong to writers who made their debut around this time and who represented a new literary generation: Doina Ruști, Cezar Paul-Bădescu, Ioana Bradea, Cătălin Dorian Florescu, Andrei Mălaicu Hondrari, Dan Lungu, Ioana Nicolaie, Cecilia Ștefănescu.

All these texts represent a considerable contribution in terms of the theme proposed to the research, the picture of female typologies in Romanian prose of the 2000s being compiled in such a way that the connection between the three thematic dimensions - the 2000 generation, female representations before 2000 and female identities in the prose of the 2000s - is clear and relevant from the perspective of our research.

In order to mark boundaries of the female typologies over time, but also in the prose of the 2000s, we considered it necessary to establish as a starting point the historical context of the evolution of literature at the beginning of the twenty-first century. Thus, we aimed at

revealing, as a first objective, the distinction between recessive generations and catalyst generations in Romanian literature and to record expressly the belonging of the 2000 generation to the catalyst generation, having as theoretical support numerous texts of the studied authors. Another objective is to explore the socio-cultural context of the different creative generations, including the 2000 generation, and to address the distinctive ideologies that edify the 2000 generation.

Referring to the typologies of the 2000s prose, we proposed to analyze in the theoretical study on this period the fictional prose (represented by Dan Lungu, Florina Ilis, Lucian Dan Teodorovici, Răzvan Rădulescu, Bogdan Suceavă) and autofictional prose (with writers who are "against memory", such as Adrian Șchiop, Lavinia Braniște, Ioana Baetica, Alexandru Vakulovski, Cezar Paul Bădescu, Cecilia Ștefănescu, Ionuț Chiva, Ioana Bradea). The examination of the prose of "memory" is also carried out by clarifying some recent stages of Romanian history, such as the debate novel, in which Dan Lungu's *communist old woman* can be identified as a representative model of a certain category of people - a significant component of today's society.

We also want to construct an analysis of the influences and models of this literature by recording theoretical works in which the 2000 generation is perceived as a generation of revolt, radicalism and opposition.

Another objective we have set ourselves is to analyse the concept of woman in the *Pașoptist* literature, and later in the *inter-war* literature, up to the modern woman - all these stages being followed in order to understand the idea of the evolution of feminine typologies, so that after examining certain works of the 2000s we can update the "classic" typologies or outline the idea of new typologies.

In order to highlight the so-called aesthetic mutations specific to the literature of the 2000s, we intend to interpret the trajectory of the profile of the female character from the *pașoptism* period to the end of the 20th century, followed by the interwar, post-war and then the communist periods, and finally to analyse in detail the prose of the 2000s.

The studies dedicated to the analysis of the construction of the female character underline a boom of its metamorphosis in the period following '89. As such, an important objective is the analysis of all these characteristics in the third chapter, in which we aim to make the connection between what the woman once represented in literature and what she signifies in the literature of the 2000s, associations of this kind having the role of pointing out old typologies in new characters, but also new typologies that almost radically alter the vision of the woman.

Having as constitutive elements of the construction of the characters of literature 2000 the different ways of mirroring reality, the aim of our research is to approach through an analytical point of view the various features of these characters, in order to highlight in detail the structural novelty in the female typologies that we create as a result of our study: from the young woman in love with a man, or a woman, to the maternal figure, from the young woman with vision and purpose to the nostalgic on the verge of senescence. The present work aims to establish the female identities in the literature of the 2000s, starting from a thorough research and exploitation of theoretical studies, completed with a highlighting of the aesthetic, ethical and ideological dimensions of the works of the various writers and continued with the representation of effective delimitations of female typologies.

The research methodology implies an interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary approach through references to other areas of knowledge, in order to facilitate the identification of necessary connections and analogies, through the prism of several systems of knowledge, such as, for example, that of sociology, because society and the social factor are an important aspect, literature being permanently connected to the entire socio-cultural context.

Based on all the theoretical aspects, we managed to outline the literary configuration of the prose of the 2000s, relating to a series of cultural interconnections at national and international level, even if there is a gap between events, cultural positions, ideologies, literary trends in relation to the West (in the Romanian cultural context, an example being the emergence of *postmodernism*, ten years later). The identification of the dominant features in the 2000s prose contributes to its demarcation into different typologies: fictional, auto fictional, metafictional prose. In my PhD thesis, I have highlighted the universe of fictional and auto fictional prose with examples of writers of various typological dimensions (Dan Lungu, Doina Ruști, Ioana Bradea, Cezar Paul-Bădescu, etc.), in order to then highlight the "rehabilitation of fiction" and the boom that autofiction has conquered in Romanian literature.

The paradigmatic mutation in the literature of the 2000s consists in the interconnection of the dominant particularities that are imposed in the writings of the 2000s: l'extimité, the social sample, the reality. The delineation of emblematic female hypostases is initially achieved through an analysis of archetypes, followed by an analysis of the image of woman in the real context of existence and the projection of the female figure as a character in prose. The characteristics of femininity underlying characters in literary works are gradually revealed, from definition to redefinition in the literary approach, with each generation identifying classic female characters in new or totally changed clothes, as is the case of the maternal figure, the beloved/spouse, the angelic or demonic figure, the common woman, the

emancipated woman, etc. The feminine identity on the literary scene remains shrouded in mystery, it does not betray its eternal feminine, whether it belongs to the *Pașoptism*, the *inter-war*, the communist, the *postdecembrist* or the 2000s period.

The diversification of female figures in the works proposed for analysis leads to a development of human typologies, with multiple different maternal figures within the same typology in the same period of creation, such as the maternal figure in Ioana Nicolaie's diary, *Cerul din burtă*, compared to the maternal figure Letiția in *Fetița care se juca de-a Dumnezeu*. The analysis of these representative works of Romanian prose of the 2000s reveals the renewal of language and the promotion of the parameters that define the literary generation, the identity of the literary character and automatically, the typology of the female character.

The present research is structured in three chapters. The first chapter, *The 2000 - a new literary wave*, brings to the fore, from a theoretical perspective, a definition of the term generation, followed by the classification of the generations of writers from the post-war period to the 2000s into recessive and catalytic. In this chapter, we attempt not only to approach and characterize the different generations that progressed during these years, but also to delimit the characteristics of the 2000s prose, in order to highlight the vehement changes in literature that took place through the catalyst generation of the 2000s, changes that are based on social factors.

In order to highlight the impact that this factor has on the Romanian prose of the beginning of the twenty-first century, we turn our attention to the dominant influences and forms of each generation from the *Obsessive Decade* to the present. The types of prose we have referred to are fictional and auto fictional prose, treated individually in the sub-chapter *Typologies of the 2000s Prose*.

Last but not least, I found it necessary to mention a few features that are more important to highlight the paradigmatic mutation in Romanian literature of the 2000 generation, within the last subchapter. Thus, *Fracturism*, *l'extimité*, *the social sample* and *the reality* - an essential feature of the prose - are the most important aspects that the 2000 prose brings to the fore.

The second chapter, entitled *Female Representations in Romanian Prose before the 2000*, deals with female identity, trying first of all, through theoretical studies, to define it. The feminine typologies pursued start from the classical ones, which I mentioned in the second sub-chapter, in which we took as a starting point the Pașoptist period, precisely to signal the moment when the feminine figure appeared on the literary scene. Therefore, the

sub-chapter entitled *Woman in 19th-20th century prose - from the Pașoptism to the interwar period*, points out the typologies of independent woman, woman in love, devoted wife, mother, arriviste woman, victim woman and capitalist-businesswoman, typologies representative of the social context of this period.

The sub-chapter *Female Characters in the Interwar Novel* continues the path of the typologies identified in the previous sub-chapter, the perceptions of the female character in literature aiming at a new classification of several typologies, either existing or new, thus wishing to exemplify some of them, referring to the great interwar novels that revived literature. Such typologies include the *virilised woman, the mother, the woman-mirage, the intellectual, the common woman, the courtesan, the adulteress, the angel and the demon, the emancipated woman, the woman - victim of prejudice*, a classification proposed by Laura Ududec in a convincing study.

The sub-chapter *Perspectives imposed by communism* deals with the typologies specific to this literary period, marked by a political regime that left its mark dramatically on culture until post-communism when one still easily remembers the period symbolized by an oppressive regime.

From what will be seen, the categories of female identity of this period capture such hypostases as *the housewife, the educator, the artist, the driver, the peasant, the woman of the everyday, the woman as flower*, at the basis of which is the desire to have the common woman of previous literary periods. The typologies of women in the literature of these years are similar to the old typologies, except that they are dressed in the clothes of communist society, from the simple peasant woman to the emancipated, intellectual woman, from the housewife to the woman also involved in collective or social activities, constrained by the ideological context of the oppressive regime.

The third chapter, *Feminine Identities in the 2000s Prose*, is an analytical study of ten novels by authors from the 2000s literary wave, with the aim of recording and analysing the feminine typologies that mark the 2000s literary scene, adding up familiar features that the reader is accustomed to or new features that shock. Following the selection and interpretation, we proposed a title corresponding to the profile of each character, according to the analysis that identifies the typology of the female character in question: A new perspective on the maternal figure - *Cerul din Burtă*, by Ioana Nicolai; *Mother-Daughter Relationship*, the emigrant mother figure and *Buna - Fetița care se juca de-a Dumnezeu*, by Dan Lungu; *Social issues - Bătrâna nostalgică după comunism - Sînt o babă comunistă!*, by Dan Lungu; From *La femme-crampon* - the woman victim of an infirmity, to *the boss woman, Luminița, mon*

amour, by Cezar Paul Bădescu; Sapphism - a sick connection? - the bovaric student couple, Alex and Kiki, from *Legături bolnăvicioase*, by Cecilia Ștefănescu; The little bird learning to fly - *O pasăre pe sîrmă*, by Ioana Nicolaie; A new approach to femininity - A night bird. Andreea from the novel *Băgău*, by Ioana Bradea; *Zaira* - un pitic în țara Gulliver-ilor, by Cătălin Dorian Florescu; *Apropierea* - Marin Mălaicu-Hondrari; Female figures in a man's life. *Mămica la două albăstrele*, by Doina Ruști.

The prose of the 2000s includes contributions from authors belonging to different creative generations, but the present study deals with writers who debuted around this time, the 2000s writers, who themselves are more diverse and classified differently within the same generation. Therefore, in the attempt to select the literary creations, we have taken into account the aspect of recurrence of the paradigms that trace the main directions in the prose of the 2000s authors and the evolution of the typologies of female characters in the works mentioned as illustrative examples in the second chapter, so that we can highlight in the chapter of analysis of the female character the old typologies adapted to the topicality, where appropriate, or features that represent elements of novelty.

The first two novels are representative of the maternal figure, an identity that has existed in every literary period, but which innovates in the 2000s period. Firstly, through Ioana Nicolaie's book, *Cerul din burtă*, a new perspective of the maternal figure is exposed that transcends the limit of experimental knowledge, the mother being a novel female character that step by step renders her connection with the still unborn child. Secondly, we find in Dan Lungu's book, *Fetița care se juca de-a Dumnezeu*, a narrative-sociological perspective, through which the typical maternal figure of the 1990s stands out, in which the issue of emigration breaks up families and the basic relationships between mother and child.

Since we highlighted the negative aspects of the communist regime in the sub-chapter dedicated to this period, especially through the analysis of the relationship between the character Sabina (from *O pasăre pe sîrmă*) and the pre-revolutionary period, we wanted, through the interpretation of the novel *Sînt o babă comunistă!*, to draw attention to another phenomenon, namely the feeling of nostalgia after the Golden Age. The nostalgia of the communist old woman, Emilia Apostoaie, for what she thinks was good in the Ceausescu regime, seems to be justified if we consider the memories of this woman who cannot adapt to the postdecembrist transformations and to the democratic reality.

When it comes to love, in the society of the 2000s, one can notice an evolution of the typology of *the woman in love*. From *the mirage woman* of yesteryear, in the autofictional novel *Luminița, mon amour, the femme-crampon* devoid of any feminine characteristics,

dependent on the constant support of her lover, through her journey of facing all her demons represented by countless fears, becomes *la femme boss*, who has the courage to take control of her own destiny. Alex and Kiki in *Legături bolnăvicioase* takes the reader on a journey with present-past leaps, through different types of relationships and the author approaches the homosexual relationships and highlights the disabused characters of a decaying society.

Among the young women who survive in the capital city and strive hard to have a professional status is student Sabina, the protagonist of the novel *O pasăre pe sîrmă*, and student Andreea, the protagonist of the novel *Băgău*. The two characters experience love and try to cope in a complex and complicated post-revolutionary world, but in a totally different way, as seen in this chapter.

The life experience of the fictional character Zaira, anchored in a time other than the 2000s, but constructed by an author making his debut in this period, Cătălin Dorian Florescu, highlights a tenacious character evolving in an era of totalitarianism. The elegance with which the author blends diverse typologies throughout this journey gives the reader access to details of disturbing events of the past, perceived in their temporal sequence.

The female figures in the novel *Apropierea* are scintillating, dynamic, paradoxical, with love relationships at the centre. Inner turmoil embodies the torment caused by love, the unhappy ending for each female character being a natural one that each embraces without lament. The final book, *Mămica la două albăstrele*, again focuses on various female typologies, the one that particularly stands out being the maternal one, but negatively this time, even diabolical.

The analysis of the 2000s female characters cannot, of course, be limited to these literary works proposed for analysis; these are examples that we have considered relevant to highlight the diversity of female typologies in the prose of the 2000s, prose belonging to writers who debuted around this period, and the present study could always be expanded.

The social, economic and political crisis of the 2000s reflects on the society as a whole, which is suffering from the post-revolutionary chaos marked by democracy and capitalism, and in literature this context has led to a scintillating revival, as this crisis is reflected on the characters in literary works and, of course, on the female character in prose.

The path of the female characters, from *pașoptism* to the 2000s prose, proves to be scintillating, paradoxical, winding, often difficult, depending on circumstances that are not always favourable. Thus, the tragedy of each woman is crowned by a state of suffering perpetuated from one female character to another, the typologies of femininity being marked by this illness. It can be observed how the lack of power and representation in the social space

has the gift of unbalancing conscience, how when she is allowed to intervene on the political scene, during the communist period, everything is promoted under the control of the regime and in its interest, without the female character being evaluated at her true capacity, how she makes efforts to reconsider her own existence which is often disregarded or devalued by an unfavourable social-historical context, which favours the experience of an altered image in Romanian society.