

D **death and irony in Marin Sorescu's** **work**

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Abstract

Marin Sorescu was one of the most famous Romanian writers known abroad. His works were translated into more than 20 countries, and the total number of his books that were published abroad rises up to 60 books. Irony is the key of all his poetry, as the author himself recognized. On his poetry, Sorescu said, with characteristic irony: "Just as I can't give up smoking because I don't smoke, I can't give up writing because I have no talent". His specific irony was also used in poems dealing with death. Death is a topic that most of us avoid it, and from those who approach it, Marin Sorescu approached this theme in a completely different way. In Marin Sorescu's work death is banalized, caricatured, outlining a strong sense of absurdity. His irony has made it possible to publish freely and frequently and this is the reason he has remained one of the most important neomodernist writers.

Keywords: death, humor, irony, parody, wisdom.

1. Introduction

Marin Sorescu is one of the representatives of the 60th generation, along with writers such as: Nichita Stănescu, Geo Dumitrescu, Ștefan Augustin Doinaș, Cezar Baltag, Ana Blandiana, Adrian Păunescu or Leonid Dimov. All of them have fought for the liberation of lyricism under the authority of dictatorial dogmatism, claiming for a prolific modernism, which they have been able to accomplish through the works they have published, renewing the poetry and lifting it on untouched

peaks. The indisputable merit of non-modernists is the rehabilitation of freedom of expression, aesthetic autonomy after more than a decade of ideological dogmatism and depreciation of literary creations.

Marin Sorescu was also a poet, playwright, novelist, prose writer, essayist, but also Minister of Culture. He was known throughout his life on almost all continents, his works being translated abroad in more than twenty countries. His plays also enjoyed an exceptional reception, being translated and presented on scenes from across the European continent. He was not only concerned with literary but also with painting, having numerous exhibitions both in the country and abroad. So, we are dealing with a multilaterally developed personality.

Marin Sorescu's work is characterized by: irony, parody instinct, myth, subtle metaphors, artistic imagery, philosophical reflections. Considered by Eugen Simion a "thin ironist", he often surprised us with his amazing verbal invention. This feature seems native, triggered by a simple element, evident in its entire creation, regardless of the type approached.

As a playwright, he approaches the poetic-parabolic theater, but also the historical theater or comedies of a bitter irony: *Cold*, *Cousin Shakespeare*. His debut was marked by the Iona drama drama, integrated into the Salt Mountain Salt trilogy, alongside *Matca* and *Paracliserul*. The volume of parody *Singur printre poezi*, and the 23 volumes that followed, turned him into an emblematic figure of contemporary Romanian literature.

2.1. Death - recurrent theme in Sorescian work

Death, said the Spanish author Carlos Saavedra Weise, is the last irony of life. The same can be said by any irony. Ever since ancient times, this phenomenon has long been discussed, dissected, and various theories have been published on this subject.

Death is a recurring theme in Marin Sorescu's work, but has been treated differently over the time. Thus, it can be noticed that at the beginning of the writer's career the author treated this subject ironically, detached, while the poems written before his death are of a raging tragedy and can enter into the most demanding anthology of poetry about death from universal lyrics.

In the study *Scriitori români de azi*, Eugen Simion places Marin Sorescu in the category of irony and fantasy. So, we are dealing with a poet whose simple poetic language involves parody, humor. Irony is also a constant in the work of the author, whether he has gotten used to it in moving from one work to another, or from a literary genre to another. All his works include serious themes such as: life, death, human condition, destiny, but these are treated in an ironic way. What draws attention to his work is precisely his ironic way, detached from dealing with such a serious problem as death. This does not give us creeps, and that is why we can say that the author shows wisdom, being reconciled with the idea that in our life will come the moment in which we will take pride in the perennial space.

Marin Sorescu approached this relatively delicate subject of death in other works. For example, the grave and disturbing feeling of the time that passes very fast and of imminent death does not give the poet a sad sadness in the poem *Contabilitate*. On the contrary, the lyrical ego lives in a wise and musical way, genuinely popular and ironically detached: "*There comes a time / When we should draw under us / A black line / And reckoning, / A few moments when we were almost happy / Some moments when we were almost beautiful / A few moments when we were almost genius*" (Sorescu, 2006: 38). That's what this poem sounds like, in which our author realizes the tragedy of the human being, that he never tastes the taste of the absolute feeling of happiness, beauty or genius.

In *Iona*, the author gives us a model to follow as to how we should think, "*Why do people waste their time with things that do not use after death?*" (Sorescu, 2003: 13). So the author urges us to meditate, to balance things and to realize what things we really need to cherish in life.

In the *Boala* poem, Marin Sorescu merges with the whole universe, being himself the universe in its entirety. Although he tried to treat himself with various medications, the writer made a painful finding at the end of the poem: "*I think I got sick from death one day when I was born*" (Sorescu, 2006: 98). So he realizes with irony that death is inevitable, that we were born with it, and that any method we try is inevitable to stop it from its natural course. Even the fact that he was good and beautiful, hated, loved or taught did not relieve him of this "disease" because "all of this had no effect".

In the *Şah* poem, the author approaches the most common everyday reality with the help of irony and parodic instinct: "*I move a white day / He moves a black day / I forward a dream, / He takes it to war. / He's attacking my lungs, / I think a year at the hospital, / I make a brilliant combination / And I win a black day*" (Sorescu, 2006: 134). The text, as we can deduce from the title, portrays human destiny through a seemingly trivial chess game. There are many events on the "billboard" of life, from the struggle with the evil that wants to take hold of us, to the struggle with the vices, passions or addictions to which we submit or not, this aspect differs from individual to individual. The poet, who is actually the average man, feels constantly threatened: "I will give you chess and you will lose your optimism." The same thing happens in everyday life, because death is omnipresent and at any moment it can take hold of us. However, the author concludes the text with an optimistic message, to cope with all the vicissitudes: "*I light a cigarette / I continue the game*" (Sorescu, 2006: 134). So, Marin Sorescu urges us to be optimistic and to fight endlessly against the vicissitudes of life

A poem that tells us when we must get out of our dear beings is *Plecare*. Here, the author confesses how he sees this moment: "*I turn my face / To the wall / And I tell my friends / Grieving: / I'm coming back quickly*" (Sorescu, 2006: 213). Obviously, the message is marked by irony, because in reality death is irreversible and does not offer us the opportunity to return to our loved ones.

Thus, the texts of Marin Sorescu are often impregnated by the grave and disturbing sense of death, from the debut texts to those written on his deathbed. Just as death in youth is taken in jest, so too our author treats this theme superficially in the years of youth, and in the last volumes emerging as a deeply original poetic individuality.

2.2. Iona's Suicide - a triumphant gesture

Starting from Nicolae Manolescu's statement that the end of the Iona play is interpreted as a "triumph", we will deal with this problem of the suicide of the main character in the drama of Marin Sorescu.

Drama as a literary species appears in romanticism, but the play of Marin Sorescu does not respect the traditional conventions, not having acts and scenes, but only four paintings, being underlined as *Tragedie în patru tablouri* due to the suicidal gesture of the character. Both Iona and

the other two parts of the trilogy *Setea muntelui de sare* are parables on the subject of human destiny, paraphrasing three fundamental myths: the myth of Biblical (Iona), the myth of Manole (Paracliserul) and the myth of the flood (Matca). At the same time, the three dramas have as a common theme the theme of the absolute thirst for the superior man, because, as George Prunteanu notes, "*Sorescu's plays are poems and represent a superior form of organization. If we deepen the lines, we will see Sorescu's poetry also in his spiritual theater*" (Prunteanu, 1975: 19).

From an aesthetic point of view, Iona is a parabolic drama, embracing in a metaphorical language the meditation on the theme of human destiny. We can identify numerous contacts with the absurd theater of Beckett or Eugene Ionesco, such as: human revolt against the absurd circumstances that determine its existence, treating the existential absurdity in a parodic, ironic manner, the stylization of the conflict, the demising language.

Iona uses the soliloquy technique, which highlights many ideas about human existence and destiny, he expresses his own reflections, opinions and conceptions. The author himself states in the opening of the play this artistic way, stating: "*As any man alone, Iona speaks with himself, asks questions and answers, always behaves as if there were two characters in the scene*" (Sorescu, 2003: 2). Iona, being the only character, speaks to himself, the absence of an interlocutor validating the theme of loneliness, alienation.

Unlike other dramas where the dialogue prevails, in Iona's play, we find this monologue of the character with itself, through which our character finds that God himself is locked in the shell of his creations: "*kind people, the resurrection is delayed*" (Sorescu, 2003: 23). The character is surprised by the variety of his states: fear, anxious. Because of loneliness, he sends messages that he then reads. Iona cuts the fish's bellies with a knife, then with a fingernail, becoming a huge nail, a symbol of modern human trying to adapt to the vicissitudes of life. The statement: "*We started it well. But the way he did wrong. He had to take the other side*" (Sorescu, 2003: 24), he is aware of the tragedy of the human being. Finally, because reality and the outside do not offer solutions, he sucks by breaking his abdomen, a sign that salvation comes from within: "*we are somehow in the light*" (Sorescu, 2003: 24).

The repeated gesture of splitting fish bellies and splintering their own wound suggests that the hero rebels against existence in a limited space, and by this revolt takes its destiny, overcoming its condition. Our character is willing to try a regressive path, a return to the embryonic stage: "*Mother ... give birth to me again*" (Sorescu, 2003: 17), hoping that through these repeated births people will not repeat the mistakes of the past.

Iona revolts against destiny, refuses to accept his fate of a solitary being, and tries to save himself by rediscovering his identity. However, Iona's myth is just a pretext for a playwright who develops not an individual drama, but a general-human drama, born out of the anxieties of the human being in the face of his own destiny. Thus Iona signifies the human who aspires to freedom, aspiration and illusion, ideals symbolized by the sea that fascinate him, that he confesses: "*If I had the means, I would do nothing but a wooden bench in the middle of the sea*" (Sorescu, 2003: 11).

In post-war drama, characters are no longer individualities, but symbols, as the author himself states: all humanity is Iona. Not even returning to the myth of Iona is no longer a rescue. In an interview on the significance of drama, Marin Sorescu said, "Iona is the human in his human condition, in the face of life and in the face of death".

Marin Sorescu deals with serious problems of existence in an ironic, anecdotal manner. In one of his reflections, when he was amnesia, Iona wondered, "*What was that beautiful and beautiful, lovely and damn, crappy, year-old I've lived for? How did I call myself?*" (Sorescu, 2003: 24). Flexible yarns, meditating on existential problems such as death: "*Why do all men have to lie down at the end of their lives?*" (Sorescu, 2003: 9). The play of Marin Sorescu illustrates the tragic cry of the solitary individual, who makes desperate efforts to regain his identity and assume his own destiny, as well as the drama of the human condition stemming from the inability to communicate with society, suggesting the relationship between freedom and necessity, of sense and nonsense as an existential philosophical problem. This whole philosophy is highlighted with the help of metaphors, the song also has lyrical accents.

The gesture of suicide and the symbol of light in the end are an attempt of reconciliation between man and mankind, a rescue by self-knowledge as a purifying force of the spirit. Iona is not a human ideal, a

hero, as in the Greek tragedy, but an ordinary man who is under the sign of destiny but rebelled against it through a voluntary death.

So we can conclude that, as Nicolae Manolescu notices, Iona's suicidal gesture can be considered a triumphal gesture. This view is also supported by Traian Coșovei, who said that the character does not commit suicide (in the common sense of the word) but is released.

Conclusion

So, Marin Sorescu is a complex writer whose serious themes such as life, death, human condition, destiny, are treated in an ironic way. His poetry is one of undermining the idea of sacred and significant in the making of the world, of its great themes. Thus, in his work, we can see how sacred themes such as death and love are banalized, caricatured, unyielding and mysterious. His texts, along with a banal language, outline a strong sense of absurdity, comparable to Beckett's absurd theater or Eugene Ionesco's absurd theater.

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