

TYOLOGICAL RESEMBLANCES BETWEEN JOHN STEINBECK'S "GRAPES OF WRATH" AND THE LITERARY WORKS OF THE MOLDOVAN WRITERS

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Articolul de față abordează un studiu tipologic bazat pe asemănările tematice dintre opera vestitului scriitor american John Steinbeck și operele prozatorilor moldoveni. Condițiile istorice, sociale și psihologice, asemănătoare în cele două țări, au favorizat apariția similitudinilor tipologice din literatură, ceea ce ne atestă numeroasele tangențe literare între operele scriitorului american și cele ale scriitorilor din Republica Moldova.

It is a well-known fact that any artistic creation is the product of the author's imagination and sensibility, but it is also the product of his reception of some ideas taken from previous readings – both from the national literature, and from the foreign ones. As a common reader, the writer acts the same way in the process of the lecture, but in addition to that, he gets inspired for the creation of some other work, this time with a national coloring.

The typological study is based on the principle of searching for resemblances in literatures, that can't be explained through the direct and the indirect relations, – these are the typological resemblances, explained by the social-economical conditions, which generated these affinities in different periods of time. The similar occurrences and historical, social, or psychological conditions led to the appearance of some similitude in the literary works of the writers of different countries, even if they have never seen each other's works.

Thus, the use of the same themes and motifs in different literatures can be explained as a social and a literary phenomenon.

In the Moldovan post-war literature the American writers have been remarked by their typically American brutal realism (approached by E. Hemingway, Caldwell, J. Steinbeck) and taken over by our most conservative writers, who combined it with the typically Moldovan way of narration: gentle, quiet, advisable. On the whole, the author being sensitive to the metamorphoses generated by the modern world still can preserve the national coloring of the Moldovan prose.

John Steinbeck, a classic of the social novel, lived in the epoch of the economic and social reforms of the thirties in the twentieth century. He dwelled upon the problems and the doubts of the human nature and the development of the society.

His best novel "The Grapes of Wrath", for which he received the Pulitzer Prize, is based on a real problem of that time – the uproot of the free enterprising, same as the uproot of the man, of the farmer from his land. But what is particular to Steinbeck's style of writing is that this huge socio-historical problem is approached by the author indirectly, it is present in unclear and even naïve undertones, rendered by the plain form and language used in the work. Thus, the issue is reflected in the characters' thoughts and speech, therefore being closer to the understanding of the reader, who is the main target of the author's literary creation.

Steinbeck took his characters from life. He himself was raised in a modest family and had to work in order to earn a living. He had little education, for he preferred to learn from life and just like any other literary man of his generation, traveled a lot, combining physical work with the profession of journalist.

The main theme shown at John Steinbeck in "The Grapes of Wrath" is the theme of the **Society on the brink of urbanization**. Steinbeck's characters are mostly farmers – the Joad family, who are ruined and forced to look for work on their way to California, in order to survive. In his other work "To a God Unknown" the writer described California as being the cause of the main character's troubles. It was not a dreamland as the Joads from "The Grapes of Wrath" would like to think. Furthermore, it was portrayed in his novel "In Dubious Battle" as the place where the collectors of fruit, victims of social oppression and economical exploitation, struggled for their rights, and first of all, for the lowering of the prices.

Looking over these facts, one could come to the conclusion that the author had a reason to choose California as the destination of their journey. The Joads from "The Grapes of Wrath" were looking for a Utopia, because California wasn't ideal. It was submitted to the social and economical changes as much as the other American states.

Their odyssey consists not only in their physical movement to the West, on their way to the new jobs and a new home, but it is also in the way of losing illusions regarding main life issues.

The characters in John Steinbeck's works are mostly farmers – the Joad family, ruined and forced to look for work on their way to California, in order to survive, same as Ion Druță's character, who is the supporter of the idiom „The immortality was born in the countryside” (Veșnicia s-a născut la sat) – Cojocaru, Doinaru families, etc.

Both Steinbeck and Druță center the thread of the narration on a family, following in reality the crystallizing of the nature of a single character in relation to the other characters which is a typical Bildungsroman. In Druță's work the central character is Rusanda, who decides in the circumstances of her unshared love for Gheorghe Doinaru and by the incitement of her parents, to pursue her calling of a teacher. But the central idea of the novel is that the peasant is forced to face the problem of joining the social and scientific progress or to keep to his or her position of a man of the land. And the character that symbolizes the old habits is Gheorghe Doinaru. Rusanda accepts the development of the society and embraces a new way of life, different from that of her parents, whether for Gheorghe it was so hard that he couldn't do that, even for the sake of his personal happiness. As a result – Rusanda marries a schoolteacher, with whom she had more in common.

The same is seen in “The Grapes of Wrath” where Steinbeck describes both the inner and the outer fight of Tom Joad against the civilization, which he rejects because he doesn't want to accept the modernization: he doesn't want to work the land with tractors, preferring to leave the native place instead of submitting to the scientific development. Farmers like Tom admit only the direct connection with the land. But gradually, this emotional connection between them and the wheat they cultivate disappears: “Pământul naștea sub fier – și sub fier treptat murea; pentru că nu era iubit, nu era urât; lui nu i se rugau, și nu-l blestemau” [1, p.23].

Therefore, the **Love for the land** is a common theme at the American and Moldovan writers. Moldova, a predominantly agrarian country, created the same historical and social conditions for the Moldovan writers, from which comes the typological resemblance with the American literary works.

“The Grapes of Wrath” by Steinbeck and “Frunze de dor” by Druță describe both the inner and the outer fight of the main characters against the civilization, which they reject, because they don't want to accept the modernization, preferring to leave the native place instead of the submission to the scientific development. Both the American Tom and the Moldovan Gheorghe look for a refuge from the conflict: Gheorghe enrolls and goes to war as a volunteer in 1944 and Tom leaves for the distant California, the land of promises.

The members of the Joad family suffer the consequences of the modernization, the commutation to the city meaning the uprooting from the land, the braking from the traditions, theme characteristic to the classical American realism. The theme of the **Human Condition**, of the uprooted man estranged from his profession and from his country is essential in “The Grapes of Wrath” by John Steinbeck. In fact, none of the themes is closer to the Mioritic spirit of our people as this one. Here it is also outlined the image of the Shepherd (Farmer), who isn't estranged only from his sheep (like in our Mioritza), but also from his calling and from his native place.

The image of the outcast is fully explored in Ion Druță's “Toiagul Păstoriei”. The shepherd called “baci” also suffered the consequences of the estrangement from the modern society, which rejected him: “Ca și toți ciobanii coborâți din singurătatea dealurilor, chiar și atunci când se pomenea în mijlocul mulțimii, rămânea oarecum sub ocrotirea propriei sale singurătăți” [2, p.481].

People envied him, gossiped about him, beat him, and even misled the authorities, by telling that he was hiding sheep and that he didn't pay his taxes to the state, for which he was sent to Siberia, but he received all his misfortunes with calm and dignity. The paradox is that instead of admitting their mistake and helping him throughout a harsh and cold winter, because he had a lung disease as a result of working for years in the Siberian mines, the authorities didn't give him coal saying that he had enough sheep leather to get warmed up. And as a result, the shepherd died and the village, as a collective consciousness, groaned about his dying in winter, without being properly buried and mourned.

But, in spite of all, his mioritic heritage survived, symbolized by the soft and thick grass from his grave in early spring: “Era iarbă de munte, iarbă de pășune. [...] O fi purtat-o în sufletul, în inima lui, și, ca să vezi, până la urmă, a răsărit” [3, p.494].

The symbolism is also an important feature of “The Grapes of Wrath”. The image of the unborn baby of Tom's sister is extremely symbolic – it represents the growing hopes of the farmers for a better life, but along

with the ruin of their hopes, the baby is born dead, due to the dreadful life conditions. Nevertheless, the author leaves an important detail to show that there is still hope for this society: the sympathetic girl breastfeeds a dying man using the consequences of her unfulfilled motherhood.

Or, the image of Tom's brother in law leaving his pregnant wife in front of present and future difficulties, that is the typical character embodying cowardice and lack of responsibility for the future of his child. The symbolism is in the same attitude of the government, which also abandoned its children in the moment of crisis, without thinking about their future, and even leaving them to die of hunger on their way to California.

Symbolism also abounds in the Moldovan prose. Thus, in parallel with the thematic resemblances, there could be singled out the poplar tree in Haralambie Moraru's work "Ploi cu găleata în secolul XX", which symbolizes a villager's unity with the land: the main character Paraschiv had to cut it down because of the circumstances created, but being affected by his loss, he died of a heart attack, or the swifts in Vladimir Beșleagă's "Zbor Frânt" – the symbol of the family unity: "Nobody can reach them. If anybody tries to get to them, it's a real sight to see how they drive him away!" [4, p.12] The main character Isai, like the faithful birds, saved his younger brother and his son from the dangerous circumstances, although his "flight", his normal way of life, was interrupted.

The thematic similitude between "The Grapes of Wrath" and "Zbor Frânt" is based on the resemblance in Tom and Isai's lives: they both went to fight for their country and they both suffered the consequences of this action – when they came home the society gave them nothing but more problems and treated them with a hurtful indifference. As a result, Tom and Isai became the symbols of the lost illusions about a normal existence in the estranged society.

Therefore, the similitude in Steinbeck's and Beșleagă's conditions of existence and in the psychological act led to the resemblance in the symbolical expression. The use of the same themes and motives in different works can be explained as a social and a literary phenomenon. It is called the typological resemblance and it is caused by the similar occurrences in the historical, social, or psychological conditions that led to the appearance of some similitude in the literary works of the writers of the same, or even different countries, even if they have never seen each other's works.

All in all, the Moldovan writers impose themselves through the approach of the universal themes and especially through the use of the classical forms of the prose, belonging to such trends as the Romanticism (the motive of the rebel, of the outcast, the Bildungsroman, the following of the crystallizing of a character), the Realism (the stream of consciousness, the alternated time plans, the slide into the fantasy, into the dream), etc.

The themes that traverse the creation of the American prose writers had a considerable echo in the Moldavian literature. It is obvious that the Moldavian writers have read something from the work of the American prose classics, but the resemblance can be caused not only by the reflection of the American values into the Moldavian literary works, but also by the similar surroundings or similar social and historical conditions.

It was also ascertain the fact that many Moldavian literary figures have played an important role in the process of the reception of the American Literature: not only as translators and literary critics, but also as men of art – as authors of literary works of American inspiration.

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