

Franz Kafka's literary reception in Romania

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1. Franz Kafka's literary reception in translations and volumes of short prose

I as a researcher in literature, regard literature as a social phenomenon of utmost importance. The most appealing issue in this context remains doubtlessly that of intercultural exchange, specifically that of the direct impact of Franz Kafka's short prose writings on the Romanian literary scene. The comparative method put forth here via a pattern of deconstruction of the critical Romanian input to Kafka's oeuvre serves to highlight the major critical contributions to Kafka's writings during modernity. My preoccupation with Kafka criticism is mainly analytical. In the aftermath of the research undertaken we can safely state that, in what the Romanian readers and critics are concerned Franz Kafka remains a representative writer, or, to put it differently, a writer who had a long-lasting impact on the Romanian literary scene. The amount of works by Kafka translated into Romanian was considerable, his literary output being translated into Romanian almost entirely by Mircea Ivănescu. Mircea Isbăşescu and Radu Gabriel Pârvu provided a similar contribution in this sense. Given the fact that his work was received widely with much interest and appreciation, one could conclude that he is one of the most widely read writers in Romania. His widely known novellas "The Metamorphosis" and "Before the Law" brought about a long-lasting literary echo in the receptive sphere across Romania. This degree of literary success also meant a challenge for the reader, and the degree of perplexity and bafflement produced by direct contact with Kafka's texts was one of the main reasons for the choice of his written literary material. In my approach I found of great help the critical editions of Franz Kafka, as for instance: "Drucke zu Lebzeiten" (Published Works during Lifetime), "Drucke aus dem Nachlass I" (Posthumous Published Works I), "Drucke aus dem Nachlass II" (Posthumous Published Works II).

The theory of literary reception has gone through a series of major developments lately. The historical context in which Kafka wrote was a very turbulent one, a period of social turmoil and utmost disorder, with the onset of the Habsburg monarchy leaving its mark both on Kafka's personality and on the freedom of expression of the Jewish writer in the Czech capital, Prague. The Romanian literary context in which Kafka's literary reception took place was a writer-friendly context, although it was a period in which the communist regime

favoured the proliferation of the so-called “proletcultism”, a cultural movement based on the idea of a pure proletarian culture that rejects the existing cultural heritage.¹ The Romanian readership could thus form a far-reaching image of the writer’s ideological universe by resorting to the available translations of Kafka.

The questions raised by the research are mainly of an ethical nature. How do we interpret a writing that engages several heterogeneous manners of interpretations and still resists the test of time? Which features of its influence are the ones that matter more to us? Which of its dimensions are more highlighted and emphasized in the critical exegeses produced by reputed Kafka critics? How do they resonate with the ongoing flow of literary theory? These questions are of an ethical nature because they question the moral dimension of the writer’s works.

My aim is to show how in the context of today’s literary criticism we might reconsider literary principles and critical attitudes which need to be rethought and thus made part of a new context and literary paradigm. The consideration of the artistic milieu of the writer, Prague in Kafka’s case, is of the utmost importance here. Several distorted points of view were opposed to the positively biased acts of criticism in order to shed new light on Kafka’s work. Thus, what became the main focus was the shifting dynamics of cultural paradigms, which presented a challenge and a motive to research the circumstances that stood behind them. Franz Kafka’s short-essay oeuvres presented manifold topics² and a special attitude to life’s conundrums that filled and nurtured my curiosity to find a pertinent answer to life’s contradictions, perplexities and to the difficulties of spotting a valid key of interpretation. It was the reading through autochthonic lenses that proved most thought provoking and attractive. The twofold dynamics of the shifting perspectives brought about by Franz Kafka’s short prose became of interest. Thus, the magic, mystery and power of expression of the writer became another powerful reason to embark upon this demanding task.

The translated novels of Kafka appeared in a new edition in Romania in 1998 and 2007 “The Trial” (transl. by Gellu Naum) published by RAO Publishing House and “The Castle” in 2003 (RAO Publishing House) edited by Radu Gabriel Pârvu and translated by Mariana Șora.

“America” appeared in 2006 and was translated by Erika Voiculescu and Simion Pop published by the same RAO Publishing House.

1.1 Literary approaches in translations

The first translations of Franz Kafka’s work in Romanian appeared in 1947 (“Vor dem Gesetz”) in *Secolul XX* 287-288 in the translation of Paul Celan (edited by Paul Solomon). It was in 1966 when M. Märkel and Vasile Știrbu published “The Country Doctor” (“Ein Landarzt”).

In 1966 Mihai Izbășescu translated the famous collection (at Fisher publishing house) of nine

¹ At the transfer from writer to reader the extent of indeterminacy increases (although several purely personal alternatives are lost altogether) and eventually the information content increases.

² Kafka (În fața legii) trans. Sașa Pană. In: *Secolul XX*, p.97.

short stories: 1. "Das Urteil", 2. "Die Verwandlung", 3. "Ein Landarzt", 4. "Auf der Galerie" 5. "Zur Frage der Gesetze", 6. "Elf Söhne", 7. "Bericht für eine Akademie", 8. "In der Strafkolonie" 9. "Ein Hungerkünstler".

The same year Petre Forna translated an "Eine kaiserliche Botschaft" and Ion Potopin translated the poem "Kühl und hart ist der heutige Tag". In 1968 the reader was offered other translations which added new denotations and perspectives of interpretation for the Romanian reader. The first was "Die Heimkehr" followed by "Die Brücke", "Prometheus", "Der Steuermann" translated by Dumitru Tepeneag.

The next stories to come were "Erstes Leid" and "Zerstreutes Hinausschaun" in the translation of Denis Negoescu. In: *Amfiteatru*, No. 26, 1968, p.43.

In 1972 Peter Motzan and Aurel Sorobetea translated "Der Schlag ans Hoftor", "Der Nachhauseweg" und "Aphorismen". In: *Steaua*, No.25, 1972, p.16-17.

Fragments of the journal were translated by Mihaela Diaconu.

In 1983 Mircea Ivănescu translated "Schlag ans Hoftor", "Eine kaiserliche Botschaft", "Die Bäume", "Wunsch Indianer zu werden", "Die Vorüberlaufenden" etc. In: *Transilvania*.

In 1984 Paul Celan's translations "Eine kaiserliche Botschaft", "Die Vorüberlaufenden", "Der Ausflug", "Zur Frage der Gesetze" appeared in *Secolul XX*, No.11-12, 1984, p.100-102.

In 1991 Vasiliu Scraba Isabela translated "Give it up "Gib's auf" in *Contemporanul. Ideea Europeană*, No.32 (69), 9 August 1991, p.510.

In 1996 we are offered the translation "Zur Frage der Gesetze" by Paul Celan. In: *Apostrof*, nr.11, 1996, p.3.

In 2001 Dumitru Tepeneag translated "Zerstreutes Hinausschauen" ("Te duci într-o doara pe fereastră", in: *Apostrof*, No. 1, 2001, p.13).

In 2004 Grete Tartler translated "Kleine Fabel" (Mica fabula, in: *Luceafarul*, No.38, 2004).

Therefore we have two variants of "Zur Frage der Gesetze" and three of "Eine kaiserliche Botschaft". The other works are just variants of his most well known short prose writings.

The writing "A Trip by Tram" ("Der Fahrgast") appears with a changed title as for instance "Travelling by tram". Mircea Ivanescu made some changes to his first translation of 1983.

"Vagonul se apropie de o statie, o fata langa o scara , se pregateste sa urce. O vad atat de limpede, de parca as putea s-o ating intinzandu-mi mana."³

Paul Celan had a contribution to "Those Running Passers-by" ("Die Vorüberlaufenden"):

Cand ne plimbam noaptea pe o strada si deodata un om, vizibil inca de departe –caci strada ne urca in fata si e luna plina-vine in fuga spre noi, atunci nu-l apucam de brat ca sa-l oprim, chiar daca e istovit si cu hainele in dezordine, chiar daca dupe el vine cineva in fuga si strigand, ci il lasam sa fuga mai departe.

³ see Pavel Campeanu's comment. In: *Secolul XX* 12, (1967), p.90-96.

Cand ne plimba noaptea pe o strada si deodata un om, vizibil inca de departe –caci strada se deschide in fata noastra si e luna plina-vine in fuga spre noi, atunci noi nu-l apucam de brat sa-l oprim, chiar daca pare epuizat si cu hainele in dezordine, chiar daca dupa el vine cineva in fuga ...⁴

The short story “An imperial message” (“Eine kaiserliche Botschaft”) was translated seven times and presents several variants:

Imparatul asa se spune – ti-a trimis tie singuraticului, lamentabilului sau supus umbrei marunte care a fugit pana in cea mai indepartata departare din fata soarelui imparatesc,tocmai tie ti-a trimis imparatul de pe patul sau de moarte un mesaj.

Se spune ca împăratul ti-a trimis tie simplului individ, jalnicului sau supus, umbrei infime fugita din fata soarelui imparatul pana in cele mai indepartate departari tocmai tie ti-a trimis cu limba de moarte solie imparatul.⁵

Eventually we can compare two versions of “Little Fable” (“Kleine Fabel”): The first appeared in 1964 among the first translations to his work and the second in 2004 translated by Grete Tartler:

La inceput era atat de larg, incat mi-era frica, alergam inainte si eram fericit cand descopeream in fine la dreapta la stanga ziduri in departare; dar zidurile astea lungi grabesc unul spre altul atat de tare, ca am ajuns deja in ultima odaie si acolo in colt e capcana in care o sa nimeresc. Trebuie numai sa schimbi directia, zise pisica si-l inghiti.⁶

The second translation uses modern language. Expressions like “zidurile acestea veneau unul spre altul atat de repede” are replaced with “grabesc unul spre altul”. Thus, the second translation sound more poetic.

The story “Odradek” (“Die Sorge des Hausvaters”) resembles the story “At the Crossroads” (“Eine Kreuzung”) as the main character is a uncommon being that startles by its strange appearance.

2. The reception of Franz Kafka in literary criticism

Kafka’s literary personality is to be understood as a highly representative instance of German and international literature. Attention is given to him in Romania starting with highschool which was becoming real in the frame of well-known theatre productions. As his shortprose

⁴ see Kafka, Opera antumă, trans. Mihai Izbășescu, p.162.

⁵ ibid.

⁶ see Kafka, Opere complete vol. 1, Proza scurtă, trans. Mircea Ivănescu, p.138.

works were received with much interest and pleasure it could be stated that he is part of the group of most loved writers in Romania. The really important interest which is rendered by his short-story "The Metamorphosis" and to a great extent by the other less known stories was a reason for me to embark on a literary journey and confront myself closer with the literary effect of his work in Romania. The first reference to the literary epoch, more exactly literary mainstream with which I came into contact during the teaching classes presented Kafka as an existentialist. His widely known problematics about the uselessness of the world integrated him among representatives of existentialism: Camus (the absurdity), Jaspers (the nausea of Dasein), Kierkegaard (hopelessness), Sartre (the feeling of nothingness) and not in the last instance, Heidegger (the philosophy of existence). Besides it was on one side the original weaving between the real and the fantastic in Kafkas shortprose which had left special interest on me. Kafka's shortprose is characterized from the very beginning by philosophical effects and structural particularities. The theme of striving is common to the author that envisaged "absurdity" as a part of daily life and the effect is complex.

Anyhow the situations elicit the perplexity of the reader. As a second point, it is obvious that the main characters are influenced by external actions. The absurdity springs out of the split consciousness of the human. It springs often unseen and can thus appear in the common places of the evoked reality and in daily situations. The "thread" that binds the already known reality with the absurdity is fine and flexible. That is why the border between the absurdity and the real is relatively fluid, so that the imagined events call for justification the real "performed" stories. As a third point of the problematics of the field of research is the request of the young generation of solutions and answers to the expectations of the reader of certain literary writings.

The horizon of expectation comes to life within the framework of a literary history. The task of the research is made of the effort, to observe the degree to which the researched literary writings turn out to be "informative sources", respectively the virtually, "inherent" reader reflects himself directly or indirectly in it. Based on the rhetoric and theme choice, the premises of culture respectively the whole communicative strategy of the entire work, in which the public thought reflects itself as an intention of effect should be striven for.

During the search one should relate text and public to one another and to regard with a sharp eye the writings that are open to reception. The mostly translated writings should be stressed out and at certain textual spots certain particularities respectively parsimonious extent of the correspondence and equivalence in a certain context of the reception observed and stressed out. The public effectiveness is not a constant dimension of the literary work. There are public indifferent and public efficient literary works. Thus, the effect could be split into two categories: those that are embracing the public (that reach nearer to the needs of the reader) or those that provoke the public (while the effect on the reader is neglected). Therefore and case dependent, there develops a relation of the reader with the work which develops dialectically. The special thing at it is the intercultural exchange and the direct effect that was produced at the literary reception of the short prose. The research of the

reception brought with it enlightening and revelatory results as an effect of the direct or indirect contact with important researchers and valuable language experts. These results could be brought to light, more exactly that Kafka was received the first time in Romania in the journal "Klingsor" in 1925 shortly after his death by Otto Basil. The contribution of the German minority rebuilds a unifying harmony between the Romanian and Hungarian reception. This means to analyze the work of the writer based on different reception models. The result consists in the expression of a multi-ethnic perspective that was conditioned on the side by the economical and political premises and on the other by the different, linguistic and cultural premises. It is important to stress out, thus various interdisciplinary contacts.

The theory of reception underwent recently an important development, so that one could reach general enlightening impressions: Various literary critics are of the opinion that at the transfer from the writer to the reader the measure of uncertainty increases (although some personal alternatives get lost eternally) and thus the information content of the text. In spite of that, it became obvious that the reception of the public in some instance was limited to the aesthetic and ideological dimension while the information content became scarce and led to a controversial problematical matter in the research of reception. Therefore, one should take into consideration not only the history of the text but also that of the public, as some critics consider.

The history of literature confronted itself with the unmediated art and technique of the literary creation, i.e. with the mimesis and various style typologies that led to the creation of the literary work. The inversed effect respectively the effect that literature had on society was less explored. The fact that romanticism influenced the manner of perceiving the landscape and several to them connected feelings of the people, is today beyond debate. Thus, what remains is only to research to what an extent the tragic, the humoristic, idyllic and dreamlike could be recognized in the literary influenced cultural society in Romania from the receptive, aesthetic point of view. The authentic media for the establishing of the extent to which daily patterns of thinking and lifestyle, respectively linguistic habits were influenced by the short prose of Franz Kafka are delivered by the literary sociology. Referring to the relation of the reader to the read material is Umberto Eco's concept of the "literary topos". According to him to define a situation as typically Kafkaesque means to elicit a certain cultural and informed sensibility.

Therefore, pondering on the aforementioned reception models the researcher is left with the possibility to consult openly the aesthetic dimension of the entire work aiming thus at finding the real reflections of the literary characters in the reader. Thus an empirical research should be undertaken in the surrounding milieu to discover as many results as possible.

2.1. The Literary Reception in Anthologies and Books

The monographs on Brecht and Kafka, Kafka and Wilde, Kafka and Dostoyevsky offered new perspectives and enlightening approaches to the writer's life and work. Thus, the differences were stressed all along with the similarities between major works. What remains the core of this presentation is the importance Kafka rendered to the role of language (poetic) as he chose to write in an adopted language.

Petras Irina translated an article by Peter Roth in which the latter focussed more on the major events and love stories Kafka experienced all throughout the writing of his renowned diary.

They both wrote in a very new, unconventional style, their major approach to fiction writing being the improvement of the means of expression. I propose to focus to what an extent his writings are "open ended". Then I analyze the new perspectives that the translation brought to the original and the degree at which they became original creations. The diachronically going approach offers a bird's eye view of the entire body of translated work, the remaining proof of the endurance in time of Kafka's work. The most accomplished translation will be given special attention.

The narrative technique shall be offered special attention especially with regard to the degree of subjectivity and the rendering of the narrative point of view. Thus the discourse and its unfolding are the main objectives to be followed when embarking on the task to describe how the narrative technique managed to render the artistic experience and the ideated horizon of Kafka as a experienced writer at the beginning of the twentieth century. The function of the discourse has a great impact on the way we perceive the major themes that haunted Kafka's world: the problem of fear, guilt and toward the end of his life the fascination with death.

Thus, it seems only appropriate to analyze each translation for itself and ponder upon the impact it had on the way it modified the reader's perspective of receiving Kafka's short prose writing.

Klaus Hemsdorf tried to capture some coordinates that are dominating in Kafka's prose writing. The composition of the novels and of the stories is marked by a sense of irregularity, disorder that is sometimes pushed towards incoherence. The character and the irregularity of the composition are a reflection of the contradictory and chaotical realities.

It is not the rationalities of artistic composition that allow the reciprocal substitution of some particular chapters but the substantial structure of the artistic reality, the circular time and the unarticulated space that governs it. The fragmentary character of many of the writer's creations is not due to some accidental exterior causes (as the author's premature death) but it is the intrinsic inherent, consubstantial to his artistic view.

In a disparaged reality everything must remain unraveled unresolved, incomplete and in suspense. The world can not offer any responses to the problems and therefore these remain unsolved. Hence, the solution offered is violent, arbitrary destructive, more precisely the examination vital and the association spiritual. The fragments possess a real epic

independence not a relative one as any classical novel nevertheless. Directly from its components and peculiarities some of the most important common features that his masterpieces share are the open ending that leads to the perplexity of the reader and to a so called absurd feeling of existence.

Radu Enescu is one of the most reputed exegetes of Franz Kafka's work. The definitions that he finds for Kafka's writing and his signaling of the false approaches to his novels and short stories present Kafka's creation in a whole new light from a different angle.

Each work of Kafka is only an element of a unique cycle in the tradition of "chanson de geste" of Andre Breton.

Albert Camus stated that the greatness of his work resides in the fact that his work offers everything and confirms nothing, a statement that confirmed itself in the process of reading, too.

The biographical research of the monographs of Wagenbach, Richter and Emrich. Thus, the most important offered new perspectives in the decoding of the symbols encountered all through his short prose writing. The most difficult task is reserved to the problem of the symbol decoding in Kafka's work. Being considered to be more intuitive and artistic than Kierkegaard, Kafka's writing demands a philosophical approach besides the aesthetic one. His place can be traced somewhere between the almost uncontrolled fantasy and the abstract concept filtered through a metamorphosis in a significant encoding. The similarity with Kierkegaard could reside in the fact that both oscillate somewhere between the art of metaphor and the attempt to justify the human condition.

The conversations with Gustav Janouch should be mentioned here. The hermeneutic approach proves thus to be the most appropriate in the decoding of Kafka's work. It is true that we won't read the aesthetic joy of reality unless we go without vanity through a moral experience. The ghostly vision of the Prague capital is common to the non-Tschechian Prague literature starting with Longfellow, Apollinaire, and continuing with Wilhelm Raabe to Gustav Meyrink.

In the renowned volume "Collected stories" Gabriel Josipovich offers an English version of Kafka's complete short-prose writings. The volume contains the published prose writing during his lifetime altogether with the posthumously published short stories. The apparently common detail is isolated from its context, attains a special signification and represents totality. That is why the lack of detail can thus provoke immeasurable effects if not fatal ones.

The epic creation is therefore a summing up of many details with the aim of pointing out the complex nature of reality, thus possessing an autonomous status. The detail is being thus captured in all its variants to stress out human nature in its general posture.

The microscopic photographing of a minimal object, the minimizing of giant things, the contradiction and the short circuit that capture the latent comic dimension in the tragic reality and the tragic depth in the hilarious detail are several procedures of the indictment of this epic writing that presents everything deformed, awkward, nevertheless in a real current form.

The category of the fragmentary is not methodical any more temporarily, annullable any time by the play of irony but existential, structural. The fragment becomes for Kafka an ontological gift. He does not search for the fragmentary as his own being was shattered in a tragic manner. Kafka did not strive towards totality and infinity because he knew that these categories are not to be found anymore in the same way they were present in the view of romanticism.

He possessed a deep conscience of the limits and searched all his life for the indestructible element. He knew that this element is an indestructible category.

He knew that he could find it only in the form of a subjective experience projected outwardly under the guise of images, as a virtual reality. Faithful to himself he permanently placed himself to a risk. His life and his creation were a process in search of the indestructible. He kept the faith rather without detecting it. He remained anchored in the fragment his only consistency and limit.

The first person character is not always in a process of metamorphosis as it happens in the case of Josephine, the singer and the narration do not possess an "absolute character": "On the Avenue" („Der Aufbruch"), "The Confessions of the Country teacher" ("Der Dorfschullehrer"), "The Sudden Walk" ("Plötzlicher Spaziergang"), "Decision" ("Entscheidung"), "Excursion in the Mountains" ("Der Ausflug ins Gebirge"), "Bad Luck" ("Unglücklichsein"), "The Salesman" ("Der Kaufmann"), "Distracted Glare on the Window" ("Zerstreutes Hinausschaun").

Kafka's work was translated almost entirely into Romanian and his work possesses an impressive homogeneousness in spite of its antinomies:

Ich bin der älteste Schakal, weit und breit. Ich bin glücklich, dich noch hier begrüßen zu können. Ich hatte schon die Hoffnung fast aufgegeben, denn wir warten unendlich lange auf dich; meine Mutter hat gewartet und ihre Mutter und weiter alle ihre Mütter bis hinauf zur Mutter aller Schakale. Glaube es!⁷

Sînt cel mai bătrîn șacal de pe tot cuprinsul. Sînt fericit că am apucat să salut prezența ta aici. Aproape că pierdusem speranța, căci te așteptam de o groază de timp; au așteptat mama mea și mama ei și toate mamele din veac, pînă la mama tuturor șacalilor. Crede-mă!⁸

What remains to be translated are some short prose writings that were overlooked by his most devoted translators. The stories "The Student" ("Der Student"), "An Ancient Sword" ("Ein altes Schwert"), "A Chinese Puzzle" ("Es war einmal ein Geduldsspiel"), "Proclamation" ("Der Aufruf").

⁷ see Kafka, Drucke zu Lebzeiten, p.201.

⁸ see Kafka, Opera antumă, trans. Mihai Izbășescu, p.173.

2.2. Narrative perspectives switching continuously

Thus, the Kafka character is present all along and the relating thread to the other character's perspective is rendered by his confessions or by another tertiary. Kafka had a so to speak bleaker view of women. He regarded women as frail and weak but he could in the end maintain a stable relationship of 6 months with Dora Diamant.

Some kind of a centrifugal force projects the characters ceaselessly all the time to the brink of the sphere of the absurd, possessing the tendency to proceed beyond its limits. Characters like Joseph K., the measurer K. or Karl Rossmann in the "Stoker" ("Der Heizer") impose through their offensive spirit.

It is not the judges that pursue Joseph K. but Joseph K., who pursues them, expressing on first encounter despise and mistrust in their laws. The castle rejects K. whom it hired but K proceeds in getting to the castle and when he experiences a first contact with its feared representatives, he intimidates them by his refusal to succumb to their bizarre hierarchy. Young Rossmann struggles with anxiety and ingenuity in order to find the way to a wonderful America, a symbol of a new world and he is firmly decided upon finding it no matter the cost. In "The Castle" and "America" we do not see failure or its relentlessness. Human condition dominates people almost to the point of crushing them. In the short prose and especially in "America" it is the characters that try to determine their own condition. This is nevertheless not only an unaccomplished impulse but a tireless impulse, whose presence, no matter how shabby it is, modifies the sense of human existence. Kafka's prose is profoundly philosophical not only by its implications, but also through some structural particularities. In order to adapt to the absurd situation, or to get out of it or even to modify it, the heroes carry on with a simple, ingenious, sparkling thinking. The virtues are characteristic not only of human heroes, but animal heroes, too: bugs, monkeys, dogs, mice, moles, jackals etc. Some hundred pages of his creation describe nothing else than the feverish race of a critical mind, capable of construing the most unexpected hypothesis, to refute them and to continue this tantalizing agony all over again. On the other hand we have the hostility towards "discursive writing". The concept of search launches the Kafkaian creation, it gives it at the same time an impulse and a clear argument, sends a vital tonus, his main philosophical structural and even literary stylistic cause being exactly the special role of the active rationality in the make up of the artistic image. The irrationality of the human being becomes the irrationality of mankind. In this aspect there are more differences than similarities. Therefore Kafka's short prose writing might be considered "sui generis" in itself.

The irrepressible resort to rationalizing in the creation of the Prague writer implies the following: 1.) The idea about the human beings's impossibility to exist without rationalizing, although this activity is useless; 2.) The "defacto" maintaining of the faith that human reaction to the inhuman condition starts with the act of thinking. The Kafkaian character revolves around the margin of rationality with the intention of enlarging its limits; The request of knowledge gaining takes place by rejecting with consequence its main means:

rationality, language. The conceptual system of thought is replaced by an imagistic thinking whose object is not spiritual life anymore, but the sub-spiritual one. The subtlety is transformed into feeble instability. In Kafka's case there is a certain discrepancy between the imposed norm and the behavior towards it, although this behavior is restricted to the rejection of that particular norm. However the latter is expressed by a complete refusal. One of the most valuable dimensions of the Kafkaesque vision is the primordial rejection of conformism, cliché, inertia and encysted thinking that is transformed into a mechanical process. Kafka rejects this horrible evidence disguised underneath the appearance of authentic rationalism, in the name of authentic rationalism. This shift from the tragic to comic brings Kafka nearer to writers such as Brecht, Dürrenmatt, Frisch. Some researchers consider Karl Rossman a predecessor of Chaplin. Mankind never was that near to the most terrible real or potential cataclysms, it was never that advanced on the way towards transformation and so conscious of its own condition. Hence, it is the inability of the hero to adapt to the situation that leads to its destruction and therefore it is this absurd reality that tends to crush the main character. Though the character renders the whole absurd situation a great deal of thought, the data offered by the latter makes his thinking inefficient. Thus, we encounter with him and many contemporary writers a kind of hypertrophy of the place that the artistic thinking occupies in the creation that is doubled by an influence of the active part, by a need to control their feelings that sometimes lapse toward scarcity, dryness, and even aridity. The comic attitude towards a tragic condition represents the sole possibility to gain distance in relation to this condition. The tragic-comic vision denies a reality over which he does not possess the power to change. In the artistic transposition of this vision Kafka is the only one that discovered the unshakable power of an alienation that lacks any grandeur. In this sense it is the short prose writing "Metamorphosis" that stands as a solid proof. The great metaphysical objects are immediately expressed by relating to the facts and objects of every day life. These mediating factors amplify to the point of paroxysm the emotional tension of the image. The degree of reflexivity and the direct impact with the writing remain overwhelming when reading Franz Kafka's short prose. Though vaguely Karl Rossmann hopes to break the gates of iron of the absurd world. This kind of hope is actually the fundamental theme of America. His searches do not lead to a solution but the perseverance of its continuous repetition remains.

The comparison with Kafka's "Burrow" ("Der Bau") remains a symbol of utter originality and strength in his literary style and taxonomy of writing:

Aber in Freien bin ich eigentlich nicht, zwar drücke ich mich nicht mehr durch die Gänge, sondern jage in offenen Wald, fühle in meinem Körper neue Kräfte, für die im Bau gewissermaßen kein Raum ist, nicht einmal auf dem Burgplatz und wäre er zehn mal größer. (Kafka, 57)⁹

⁹ "Dar in libertate nu sunt cu toate acestea la drept vorbind, chiar dacă nu mai trebuie să mă strecur, prin ganguri, ci gonesc în pădurea deschisă îmi simt în trup puteri noi pentru care în vizuină nu e ca să zic așa destul

3. The reception of Franz Kafka in artistic and literary creations

The predilection towards tragic comedy relies in the contrast between lucid rationality and the scarcity of action. The artist sees the monstrosity of the world but not the possibility to change it. He is strong enough not to adapt to it, but too weak to change in resonance with his human demands. The situation is at the same time tragic and comic too, as the artist is dominated on the level of reality by what he tends to determine on the ideal one. It is because of that that he feels the need to detach himself from his own condition by distancing himself and to reconsider it with a relentless lucidity.

Kafka was born in a period when the last remains of the political credibility of the Jewish community living in Böhmen were destroyed as a social unity in the course of the chauvinistic chase. The respect for oneself disappeared entirely, too. There was a real anti-Semitic feeling even among the Jewish people. The absurdity in Kafka's short-prose writing marks its way unobserved and results in being observed in the most common facts of everyday existence. The thread articulation that binds an already known reality with the imagined absurdity is very fine and flexible. That is precisely why the barrier between the absurd and the rational is so fluid and therefore the invented stories question the real ones, even those that are largely accepted. In Kafka's case the absurd world emerges out of reality, more exactly directly from its components. On the other hand and rather in an arbitrary mode, the absurdity emerges nevertheless out of the real world it imposes over.

In relation to the absurdity of the world, the main distinction among Kafka and the writers of the absurd consists in the attitude towards the concepts of the law. The Kafkaian hero that experiences to the verge of exhaustion the transformation of the discrete absurd laws into brutal ones is doing all human possible to reinstall justice in the world. He dreams about regaining a more real and breathable air. It is true that this impulse remains a wishful desideratum the way towards rationality remaining unknown. But this simple desideratum is even tougher than reality. Desperation keeps itself in spite of the failures that put an end to the tendencies of achieving that specific desideratum. Although eventually inefficient, the striven for road towards rationality and justice separates the vision of Kafka's world strictly from the world of the absurd.

This essential category is the most easy to be noticed by comparing the dimension of the two categories of characters. It is both in the prose of the Prague writer and in the "absurd" writing that we deal with tortured characters by a hostile world. These characters manifest a scaring capacity of adaptation to the most inhuman conditions of existence. But while the

loc, nici chiar în piața cetății chiar dacă ar fi de zece ori mai mare." (Ivănescu, 336)

"Nevertheless it is not freedom that surrounds me strictly speaking, although I do not need to crawl on pathways, but race through the open forest, I feel now powers in my body which there is not enough space for in the burrow not even in the square of the castle which is ten times bigger." (my translation, I.L.)

resignation of the characters is complete and for that reason their action limits itself to a sterile struggle in the rigorous sphere of the captivity, the Kafkaesque characters, especially main heroes as for instance Karl Rossman in "The Stoker" manifest a "disarming" lack of wonder or indignation while facing the absurdity of their own condition, spontaneous tireless energy in the search for a solution. Many Romanian writers tried to adapt Kafka's style and in doing this some were more creative and other less.

I mention thus:

- Norman Manea with "Octombrie ora opt" („October, eight o'clock", Cluj: Dacia Publishing House, 1981) and "Vizuina" ("The Lair", Iasi: Polirom Publishing House, 2009). The existence of the alienated protagonist that is in conflict with the world, of the lost humanity, dignity that is part of being resembles Kafka's characters among which the hunter Grachus is worth mentioning. The exotic feeling of "The Lair" is very much present in Kafka's "Burrow" too.
- Mircea Cărtărescu with "Nostalgia" (București: Humanitas, 2003.) that presents the act of writing as the "workings" of a spider.
- Vladimir Tismăneanu with "Vecinii lui Kafka: Romanul unei nevroze" (Iasi: Polirom 1998).
- Gabriel Chifu: "Maratonul învinșilor: Addenda la o nuvelă de Kafka" (București: Cartea Românească 1997).
- Dumitru Chioar wrote a collection of poems called "Noaptea din zi"(Polsib Publishing House), which contains drawings very much in Kafka's style and a poem concerned with a "deal" with an angel.
- Emil Cioran, the reputed philosopher might have been influenced in his writings: "Amurgul Gândurilor"("The Offset of the Thoughts") and "Pe Culmile Disperării" ("On the Peak of Despair").
- Paul Celan who translated Kafka brilliantly might also have been influenced in his poem "Niemandrose" by Franz Kafka's "Beschreibung eines Kampfes".

Conclusion

Sometimes we notice a disarming lack of wonder or indignation of the characters facing the absurdity of their own condition and a spontaneous tireless energy in the search of a solution is to be traced. Some kind of a centrifugal force projects them all the time towards the brink of the sphere of the absurd, thus enabling them to possess the tendency to pendulate between fantastic and real. Hence, they do not give up struggling, striving for their cause and keep their faith in a better future, although this is very blurred with Kafka. However, indestructibility remains the central element all throughout Kafka's work.

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