A Study on Romanian Historical Dramas*

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Abstract

Created in the early 20th century, almost all of Romanian historical dramas, were conceived under the influence of Al. Davila's drama Vlaicu-Vodă. Namely, writers such as Barbu Ștefănescu-Delavrancea, Mihail Sorbul, Nicolae Jorga -who is considered as the greatest Romanian historian-, Mircea Dem. Rădulescu, Victor Eftimiu and A. de Herz described in their works the conflict between a lord and the nobility, a symptomatic medieval theme.

Barbu Ștefănescu-Delavrancea published a trilogy: The sunset (Apus de soare, 1909), The snowstorm (Viforul, 1910) and Venus (Luceafărul, 1910). In addition, he created Irinel (1911) and Hagi-Tudose (1912) and The Second conscience (A doua conștiință). The first two works, were written on the basis of the short stories he wrote as a young writer, but they were not aesthetically well received by literary critics of the period.

Delavrancea wrote an historical trilogy as well. The first part, The sunset, was evaluated as his most successful literary work. This historical work has a strong romantic feature having as background the year of 1504, last year of reign of the glorious prince Stephen the Great, Ruler of Moldova. The sunset is an historical drama that connects three other Romanian historical dramas: Hasdeu's Răvan şi Vidra, Alexandri's Despot-Vodă and Davila's Vlaicu-Vodă.

The plot of Venus, the last part of Delavrancea's trilogy, is in progress at the beginning of Petru Rareş's reign, the lord of Principality of Moldova. The snowstorm is a romantic historical drama, composed of four chapters with the main character of this work being the lord of the Principality of Moldova. The main feature of Romanian historical drama, the constant tension between the lord and the nobles, is centered this time around the figure of Luca Arbore.

Mihail Sorbul's creation in drama contains 'dramatic sketches (schiţe dramatice)' and 'tragic comedy(comedii tragice)' centered on some real historical figures. Even though Mihail Sorbul, died at the age of 80 in 1966 he created a total of 20 dramas, but only three among them are considered successful literary works: The chronicles (Letopiseţi), Red Passion (Patima roşie) and The deserters (Dezertorul).

Sorbul's representative work, The chronicles, is a historical drama and it's made up a total of five chapters. In this work, we can also see the 'classic' conflict of Romanian historical drama between a lord and nobles.

Key words: romantic historical drama, classic conflict, lord, noble

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I. Introduction

In the Middle Age time many nations around current Romania invaded its three medieval principalities. Therefore, the history of medieval Romania is represented by numerous battles against the foreign forces. At that time, Romania was composed of Principality of Wallachia, Principality of Moldova and the province of Transylvania, which had its own political autonomy for a longer time than the other two.

The province Transylvania was under the influence of Hungary and the other principalities received a lot of invasion by Polish forces, but especially by the Turkish forces. Although never stately incorporated into the big Turkish empire, Romania was under a constant struggle with the Turkish forces since their tribes first landed in XV century until the year Romania won its own complete independence in 1877/1878.

Therefore, during this period, the lords of Romanian principalities, “the voievodes” in order to escape the influence of the Turkish Empire, had to fight many grueling battles.

The relation with the foreign invasion, as another form of social pressure, next to the constant struggle between princes and nobles, the main focus of this paper, is well described too in the Romanian historical dramas. Almost all of Romanian historical dramas created in the early 20th century took, as a literary model, Al. Davila's drama *Vlaicu-Vodă*. Playwriters such as Barbu Ștefănescu-Delavrancea, Mihail Sorbul, Nicolae Iorga evaluated as the greatest Romanian genius historian, Mircea Dem. Rădulescu, Victor Eftimiu and A. de Herz have described in their works the conflict between a lord and the nobility as a model of the drama *Vlaicu-Vodă*.

Among the writers mentioned above, my paper will focus on 3 writer's life and works; Alexandru Davila, Barbu Ștefănescu-Delavrancea and Mihail Sorbu. Their contribution to this particular topic was well noticed by the literary critics of the time and constitutes one of the main cornerstones of Romanian historical drama.