

NARRATIVENESS AND TEMPORALITY IMAGERY IN THE ROMANIAN INTERBELLUM NOVEL

Marius Nica, Assistant Professor, PhD, Petroleum-Gas University of Ploiești

Abstract: The study aims at depicting the specific narrative techniques of the Romanian novel from the interbellum period. We identify both the imagery and the linguistic level sustaining the new temporal approach on fiction at the beginning of the 20th century and later. In these one can hear the echoes of Henri Bergson's philosophical ideas as they were filtered through Marcel Proust's literary work. The Romanian novel was much influenced in the first decades of the last century by the French literature and thus much of the literary discourse techniques were not copied but "borrowed" – because they served as starting point in rethinking the traditional novel and its temporal structures. Thus, Romanian writers understood that time is not a simple narrative function but is the essential element of a new perception of the world and of the fiction itself.

Keywords: literary imagery, temporality, consciousness, involuntary memory.

One of the most conscience-related issues of the modern times and one of the most intriguing philosophical aspects – as well as scientific – has been the problem of *time*. This has taken different shapes and aspects: psychological duration, physical or mathematical time, biological or historical time.

As long as in the scientific research the functions of conscience were considered mere replicas of the universe (in the sense of mirroring it), time was a fact that contradicted daily experiences. It was perceived as homogeneous, continuous, bearing one singular and linear direction, indefinite whereas the experience would notice its discontinuity. Therefore, in the scientific theories of the early modern times, time was defined as the *measurement of succession*. Yet, the measurement of succession is cannot be time, but only space. In order to obtain a minimal determination of time, in the measurement of succession one should introduce the reference to the three fundamental moments: past, present and future. And this cannot be generated by the simple perception of succession, but the structure of human conscience which allows the update of memory data. Due to memory, facts of succession can be differentiated according to time order. This does not totally explain the idea of time. It is still debatable whether time is a reality external to the things happening in a certain succession, or it is just a ratio between these things. In both cases, the explanation is full of contradictions.

At the end of the 19th century, a new direction appears in the study of time and this is due to the French philosopher Henri Bergson. In his works (*Time and Free Will, Matter and Memory, Duration and Simultaneity*) he opens the way to a new interpretation which will be much influenced by psychological researches. One starting point is the clear distinction Bergson makes between *outside* and *inside* or, psychologically speaking, the distinction between introspective and non-introspective. It is, in fact, the difference of spirit within itself or the conservation of self identity within difference. Beyond the play of words, Bergson brings back the metaphysical reflection on time and space, connecting the concept of time

with that of duration, respectively the concept of movement with the idea of mobility. In his endeavour to clarify the ratios between the individual and the object of his cognition, Bergson raises the following question: in his permanent contact with reality and real objects, doesn't the individual borrow something from the outside world and assimilates it into his thinking structure, reaching therefore to a self-cognition as something exterior, as a "compromise", keeping thus the individual in a state of perpetual object-dependence? And, trying to understand individual and his environment by "erasing" the fingerprints of the outside world will determine in bergsonian philosophy the premise of an introspective method which will develop into a theory of intuition.

As for the time-space ratio, Bergson uses Kant's theory which states that space has an existence independent of his content and considers it isolatable of anything related to individual. By tracing back the manner in which this theory was interpreted, the French philosopher brings forward the judging errors, developing at the same time the *theory of multiple states of conscience*. At the beginning of his *Time and Free Will*, Bergson settles that states of conscience are not measures, but intensities, qualities and therefore immeasurable, yet perceptible. And any attempt to measure them would eventually lead to a measurement of external causes (as these are measurable because they are in space and space has the attribute of quantity). Moreover, considering space as being measurable, it will be defined as a homogenous environment allowing clear distinctions, counting, abstractization and even the act of speech. Starting from this, two different realities are identified: one which is heterogeneous (of the sensitive qualities) and another one which is homogenous – that is space. At this point of demonstration, the philosopher realizes that time is also homogenous and feels the necessity to introduce a new concept to better explain facts of conscience: *duration*. Conscience includes the past, all anterior experiences in a unity which cannot be spatially represented.

La durée, however, is the foundation of our being and is, as we feel, the very substance of the world in which we live. Associating his view of Real Time with the reality of change, he points out that nothing is more resistant or more substantial than *la durée*, for our *durée* is not merely one instant replacing another – if it were there would never be anything but the present, no prolonging of the past into the actual, no growth of personality, and no evolution of the universe. *La durée* is the continuous progress of the past which gnaws into the future and which swells as it advances, leaving on all things its bite, or the mark of its tooth. This being so, consciousness cannot go through the same state twice; history does never really repeat itself. Our personality is being built up each instant with its accumulated experience; it shoots, grows, and ripens without ceasing [Gunn, 98].

What should be clearly stated in regard to Bergson's theory is that duration of inner self is not immediately accessible to conscience. The individual has to break out from the mechanical habits of social routine in order to grasp it; and when it does he is confronted not with a succession or a continuous flow, but with an outburst of present determined by the pressure of past. Continuing this theory, Bergson states that any phenomenon that appears to conscience has duration. Considering as real succession the mental synthesis of external changes, the French philosopher introduces the idea of projecting duration in space: "we project time in space, express duration as length and succession takes the shape of a continuous line" [Bergson, 1998, 77]. This is the mathematical time – just a line, the physical time – measurable by the trajectory of a mobile object but they both cannot identify the *real time*. In Mathematics or Physics, when time is of the issue, space is the only possible answer. And this is not the movement which *takes place*, but the movement which *had already taken*

place. Bergson's perspective upon time and its projection in space makes clear the distinction between *process* and *result* – and this will guide his entire philosophical system. The mathematical time does not capture but few aspects, namely the spatial ones, measurable in trajectory. In physical research, time is just a trace a something that happened.

If Bergson's philosophy is one of duration, then the access to duration is given by the *intuition* of it. In his opinion there are only two ways of getting to know an object: a relative knowledge which implies a "gyration" around the object, and an absolute knowledge when the object is "penetrated". And the latter is done by intuition – any other gesture is just simple measurement. For Bergson, intuition means that kind of intellectual sympathy by means of which the individual is transposed in the interior of an object in order to realize its uniqueness and inexplicability. On the other hand, analyzing it would mean expressing the object in terms of "it is not". From this point forward the theory brings into discussion the concept of *intuition of duration*, as thinking intuitively – as Bergson said – means to think / be in duration. Intuition is also a kind of thinking, but one directed towards time, an exploration and perception of time different than placing it into space.

It is true that no image can reproduce exactly the original feeling I have of the flow of my own conscious life. But it is not even necessary that I should attempt to render it. If a man is incapable of getting for himself the intuition of the constitutive duration of his own being, nothing will ever give it to him, concepts no more than images. Here the single aim of the philosopher should be to promote a certain effort, which in most men is usually fettered by habits of mind more useful to life. Now the image has at least this advantage that it keeps us in the concrete. No image can replace the intuition of duration, but many diverse images, borrowed from very different orders of things, may, by the convergence of their action, direct, consciousness to the precise point where there is a certain intuition to be seized [Bergson, 1999, 5].

Reflection upon the conscience of time determines for Bergson a science of the spirit. Thus, the spirituality of time is fulfilled by overpassing the historical time and grasping the very essence of inner duration.

In modern era, finding elements that belong to intuition of time is often quite different from the methods of ancient philosophy. This was much inclined to understand time by observing physical movements (when myths were not enough). In last centuries philosophy spirit is separated from matter and time loses the connection with the material movement. Modern thinkers have found in time either a law of the divine universe or an a priori form of human conscience, culminating in the identification of real psychological time with inner duration. Intuition of time leaves behind the material features imposed by some divine laws and embraces the ethereal characters of spiritual dynamism.

Starting from philosophical theories or scientific research, writers from the beginning the 20th century understand that fictional structures have to develop in the same rhythm with the modern era. And maybe one of the most important changes (and achievements) was re-thinking the temporal levels of the novel. If Henri Bergson is the philosopher who stated clearly that there is a duration which is different from the historical, homogenous time, then Marcel Proust is the writer who understood that literary character must obey the same temporal laws as real individuals did. In his masterpiece *In Search of Lost Time (À la recherche du temps perdu)* the writer builds up a sort of temporal journey at the end of which, Time, which seemed "lost", highlights its very subjective essence. In real life, one can notice that any kind of time once it is lived, it perishes, with no possibility of being recovered. And

the traditional novel (which obeys the time of the real life) creates such a narration, repeating the structure of real time. Thus, Marcel Proust is the first novel writer who not only makes time the subject and content of his work, but also states the autonomy of narrative time as compared to the real one. This characteristic is only depicted at the end of the reading, the author allowing the novel to create for some time an identity between the fictional time and the real time. As the reading takes place, the imaginary fictional temporality stresses out its features, eventually becoming a character in Proust's novel. Nostalgia for the past is one of the main characteristics of the novel, as in every page there is a certain hope that lost time may and can be recovered, relived. Evoking past moments does not mean a simple return in the past. Even though the almost obsessing usage of the "eternal" imperfect (as Proust himself used to call it) creates a strange sensation of reliving the past, this is a sui-generis narrative structure in which present and past borders are often indistinct. What is interesting is that there is no clear distinction between the different moments of the past: between *long time ago* and *not long ago*. Temporality becomes therefore in Proust's novel a synthesis of the human experience.

Before Marcel Proust's writings there had been no clear disparity between the time of the narrator and the time of the real life. Events took place in a chronological order with no interference of subjective temporality, of feelings or fluctuations of human emotions. *In Search of Lost Time* brings a new dimension and measure of time. It becomes sometimes a static time, flowing hard, and sometimes rushes up creating crises of temporality and of the individual as he has to confront himself. Time is no longer meant to be measured by the objective hands of the clock, but by the very inner self of the characters, by their emotions and pulsations. As Proust himself said, novel writers are stupid to count time in days and hours; days may be equal for a clock but not for a human being. If science elaborated an abstract and uniform concept of time, the French writer catches its living pulsation. It is this type of time that can be "lost" and then "found". "The lost time" belongs to the individual, as it is the time of the inner soul and its loss means to be aware of it and to have a clear conscience of its presence.

Time is the ford in which all events flow, in which characters appear and exist. This is a condition which even the narrator obeys, but, due to an extreme lucidity, he turns it into an act of knowledge. Passing existence, the idea of *panta rhei* induces the nostalgia of time and consequently, the illusion of "everlasting". Experiences such as that with the madeleine or slipping in the court of Guermantes, the memory of the church towers from Martinville are all fragments of an esthetic emotion. The novel becomes therefore an *ars poetica* which reveals its object in the meditation upon time. What is eventually discovered is interior time – also put into theory by the sciences of the beginning of the 20th century. The reader is introduced to the conscience of temporality and, even more, to the intention of acknowledging its nature. Thus, Time becomes the criteria for all events and characters presented with all their details within the same implacable truth.

Because the narration does not follow the chronological thread of life but the lived time – brought into present by memory – one can identify a double value of time: on one hand it is the condensation of it to the ecstatic value of the moment and, on the other hand, it is the neglecting of some periods of time, the so called "narrative blanks". The reader witnesses the stop and the speeding up of time flow. Walter Biemel states that, usually, the time leap is preceded by a very detailed description of some moments, in other words an arrest or condensation of time. This way, Marcel Proust succeeds in taking the reader's conscience into the depths of narrative flow. Condensation (the arrest of the flow of events) and the blank (the narrative leap) are two fundamental possibilities of realizing the fictional time – and these anticipate future narrative techniques [Biemel, 245].

Proust's work tries to catch a glimpse of the mysterious action of time beyond events – that is to find the cause of them. And this depends neither on the individual nor on his actions, but it is contained by existence itself. Time seems therefore to be not only a theoretical issue but a force which all characters and even the narrator depend on. And this is what the novel implies: that, by fiction, the author may intervene even for just a moment upon time flow.

The European novel of the 20th century is revolutionized by Marcel Proust with the help of a special narrative technique – that of the *involuntary memory*. It determines what Henri Bergson called *interior duration*: a lived time, as concrete as conscience, opposed to an abstract one, conventional determined by the hands of clock. If the former is subordinated to imaginary and irrationality, the latter is perceived as a listing of perfect measurable units, equal and identical one with another. The inner time is in relation to intimate life of the unconscious and it is impossible to be measured with an exterior unity. This “duration” is immeasurable. As

...it is every time different, according to each individual conscience, being in each aspect determined, modified by all the others which preceded it, and with which it makes up a whole. In its conditions there are frequent «speed shifts» which Proust observed in Falubert's work [...] due to which one can feel a single moment from the time of the clocks as an eternity in terms of duration, or, on the contrary, tens of years of the same intellectual and abstract time can be felt as one second of inner life. [Mavrodin, 20, transl. M. N.]

These temporal expansions and condensations which obey only the laws of inner experience are defining that *psychological realism* of which Proust has been many times accused of.

Voluntary memory operates with chronological time, in a logic and will-driven manner. Involuntary memory has a spontaneous character, and does not answer to will but to the unconscious because of the relations it realizes with most obscure intuitions of inner conscience. Past becomes as “real” as present, as it is recreated by the accidental meeting of two sensations: one from present moment and the other one from a more or less remote past existence. Acknowledging the past (in other words re-living affectively the past moments) changes it into something much more real and much more significant than the present itself. Past has more reality because due to conscience and involuntary memory and later through a voluntary intellectual effort the individual perceives it as truth.

Marcel Proust described many times (starting with *Swan*) the *involuntary memory* mechanism: a present sensation triggers in the individual – when it happens to be analogue with a past sensation – a short flashing state of real bliss same as the one triggered by love. This “unspeakable happiness” is given by an immediate knowledge followed by the analyses of intelligence. This second moment makes creation possible. This is what Proust wanted to highlight: that any individual can experience the revelation determined by the involuntary memory, but only the creator (the writer) is capable to save or to record in the work of art that valuable knowledge.

Proust's novel is constructed entirely on this new logic of subjective and relativizable vision (which was also put in theory by Freud, Bergson or Einstein) and this will govern the composition, characters, subject, intrigue etc. making a huge leap forward from the objective, traditional novel. There is a sort of interference of temporal levels due to the fluctuations of involuntary memory which drills deep into the past experiences and brings to surface all successive egos of the narrator. This is the typical time progression one can notice in Proust's work. Traditional epic texts use time and temporality as a channel in which all events take

place consequently, the latter being into focus. Such an epic model does not know any other perspective but the one towards future, towards the end of things. Proust suggests that there can be a dual perspective: past and future. Cyclic composition state an esthetic of temporality which encapsulates what is specific to epic art, the feeling of wholeness being provided by the “arrest” of time. This is what makes the narration so authentic, so much life-like experience.

Discovering motivation of life is what the author suggests and this is nothing else but discovering the Heidegger’s *being-in-time*. This is not reduced to the narrator, but it covers any individual who attempts to live in the perspective (hence the telescope metaphor, as a gesture of looking deep inside oneself). It is what Marcel Proust asserts: that the scope of the novel is to make the reader acknowledge his own being. The environment of the character does not have to obey him; everything that happens must be clearly revealed in order for the individual to understand what *being-in-time* means as dimension of his existence. In other words, the *past* event determines a better understanding of the *present* and at the same time projects a *future* possible experience. Therefore, time is no longer perceived as a fatality (as it was many times in the traditional novel).

Marcel Proust’s novel has imposed a method and a technique which acted as a model to many other European writers of the beginning of the 20th century. And, as any “small culture”, the Romanian culture felt the need of synchronization with the modern literature of Europe. This explains the great influence Bergson’s theories and, more important, Marcel Proust’s narrative techniques influenced so much the Romanian novel in the first decades of the last century.

Undermining the former rhetoric, the new novel imposes another one, everything being characterized by the flag of novelty. Shifting the conflict into consciences, subjectivization and multiplying perspectives, the presence of digressions, of numerous retrospective episodes, breaking up chronology and of the cause-effect principle, pulverization of character, first person narration lead to a more unconstrained narrative construction which looses the old rigidity of geometrical structures. [Călinescu, 43, transl. M. N.]

In Romanian interbellum cultural space, Proust’s work was greatly appreciated and has been a landmark to all modern writers of the 20th century. Most of them embraced the new narrative attempt to create authenticity in what time and temporality are concerned and developed theories of their own. In the 20s and 30s, Camil Petrescu, Anton Holban and Mihail Sebastian are at the same time authors of novels and theoreticians of the new narrative technique, engaged in an important conceptual dialogue.

The main novelty brought by Camil Petrescu can be seen in the change of views upon the scope of literature which is no longer called to “amuse” or delight, but to “impose revelation on reality”. To really understand the mutation Camil Petrescu caused in Romanian literature, one should appeal to his study *Noua structură și opera lui Marcel Proust* (The New Structure and the Work of Marcel Proust). He asserts from the beginning that for almost a century before, no other writer had troubled the literary conscience of the world as the author of *In Search of Lost Time*. Observing the anachronisms in the literary art (especially that of the novel), the Romanian writer feels of great necessity the synchronization with the evolution of science and philosophy. *Ultima noapte de dragoste, întâia noapte de război* (The Last Night of Love, the First Night of War) succeeded in shocking the expectations of critics familiar with the details of the traditional novel. First, it was the unusual structure of the novel – two parts of almost equal dimensions, disputing each half of the title – that made many

critics (Pompiliu Constantinescu, Perpessicius, G. Călinescu) to consider that, in essence, we were dealing with two separate novels, which might have been published independently. Even though the chronology is preserved during confessions, triggering romance novel inside the novel of war is a rupture caused by involuntary memory mechanism. As in the case of Marcel Proust's novel, a simple allusion is enough to bring the past experience into the present with utmost intensity. This phenomenon is described by the narrator himself: "often at night, in the mess, one word was enough to awaken disturbances and reinforce numb pain. It's terrible sometimes the power of a single sentence, during a normal conversation, to suddenly start grinding the soul, as if out of dozens of combinations with seven letters of a secret lock, only one opens inwards."

It is noticeable that in the novel whose theme is time the narrator is not only the starting point of the analysis of time passing, but also its ending; this is not only in Proust's writing, but also in the Romanian authors' who wrote in the period between the two World Wars. In this respect, it must be asserted that in Camil Petrescu's work also, the narrator is the central piece of the time aspects. The stream of consciousness has, therefore, in *Ultima noapte de dragoste întâia noapte de război* a cognitive role. The mind connexions are not random; they are selective and span over a short period of time. Gathering memory around a limited patch of life, *controlled by one desire*, contributes to the density of time and its challenges. The narrator's suffusion in the past is mostly owed to a number of suggestive associations made by real images. These images come from different areas such as clothing (the blue dress), food (the lunch at home, the meeting at the butcher's, the meal at Câmpulung), or art (the folk song, the paintings and sculptures). There are also comparisons of other people's stories.

The novel *Patul lui Procust* (The Bed of Procastes) was thought for a long time to be indebted to Proust's technique used in his *In Search of Lost*. What Camil Petrescu intended was to bring forward a new narrative technique that would allow him to depict not only the narrator's inner thoughts but the other characters' as well; all the while keeping the authenticity intact. The literary approach in *Patul lui Procust*, which is different than the one in the first novel, suggests a withdrawal from the palpable original time. Mrs. T's letters appear to be random confessions, lacking in literary flourishes – only the author's "help" is there to guide the reader. On the other hand, Fred Vasilescu's notebook takes a completely different path, in that it is a great achievement for the Romanian writing technique. It is a dense and seductive document whose action is taking place entirely on a torrid afternoon; when time itself is subdued with memories and digressions expanding or reducing it by some internal logic of consciousness. Thus, there cannot be a clear separation as far as time is concerned. Present and past overlap making the distinction between *now* and *then* almost impossible.

Fred Vasilescu has a predilection for observing the changes made by time. His whole being is vibrating with every transformation that happens in the world around him: "Whenever a new street opens I go there [...]. The passion and disquietude of change, of transition have lingered with me". Not only does he take notice of the changes in the weather, in the way Emilia acts and dresses, but he also observes the alteration of his own attitude, of his own inner life, as if all these details were weighing his existence, thus guiding him into adulthood. At the end of his notebook Fred writes with great awareness: "Gather the papers from the crumpled sheets. Under the sign of these creases, these *highs and lows* lie this August afternoon entirely." Thus, the fluid mechanism of involuntary memory is described: with highs and lows, with flows and ebbs of time. Similar to water that takes the form of its container consciousness finds its way to various corners of time and memory when triggered by different factors.

The author himself confesses at the end of the novel: “a confluent stream obeys the law of the river”. In this respect, Fred’s notebook and his memories will become in the hands of Mrs. T another way of sliding through Time, towards other worlds and other lives. Therefore, Mrs. T, the one who wrote the letters at the beginning of the novel, will also become familiar with the unconceivable length of time segments. She will most probably add to Emilia’s trivial comments her own recollections. The labyrinth of life will, thus, be supplemented with a new side where time slots intertwine and moments ebb and flow in a great whirl of details which determine the mystery of life.

Camil Petrescu is, due to both his theoretical studies and fictional texts, the most important author of the Romanian interbellum modern novel. His theories (in which he “announces” the new temporal perspective Marcel Proust brought into novel writing) acted as flagship for most of the writers of the period. Therefore, Mateiu Caragiale, Mihail Sebastian, Anton Holban, Hortensia-Papadat Bengescu tried to make use of the new theories and created texts which have been since then real landmarks for Romanian novel. They still are models of writing that, in some cases, could not have been surpassed by any other fictional attempt. For example, the novel of Mateiu Caragiale, *Craii de Curtea-Veche* (The Philanderers), has been acknowledged by Romanian literary critics as “the most important” in the development of contemporary literature.

Mateiu Caragiale’s novel strikes both in its symbolic content and structure. On the surface level, an inversion of the regular chronological order can be observed: the second chapter depicts events which precede the ones in the first chapter, as if there is a return to something forgotten. The narrator seems the need of justifying his experiences and thus, he uses a temporal feed-back in a considerably easy-going manner. The first two chapters can also be read in a reversed order, without influencing the narration in any way. Alexandru George notices that, unlike *Remember* (Mateiu Caragiale’s well-known short-story) where the epic follows the usual pattern (starting with the arrival of the protagonist and ending with his death), there is no *development* (typical expression of the action in the novel) here [George, 101]. This lack of *development* does not imply any confusion of the events, which remain easy to follow. In fact, the reader is deliberately misled: the concept of time is shown as not having the same importance it did in the traditional novel. “I had lost track of time”, the narrator confesses at the beginning of the novel. But this will turn out to be not only misguiding, but also deceiving. Time becomes a character in itself which determines in the end the very existence of the philanderers.

The characters do not seem to exist on the present-future time frame, but only in a perpetual relation with that Golden Age, somewhere far behind, in a sacred Past. “I knew that the specter of the past, he submerges passionately in, was the only thing able to move him. He spoke of the past with a mystical depth.” The concept of *far back in time* only exists as an effect of the consciousness of present time. The characters try to rid themselves of the present in order to retrieve from the past their real life. Therefore, it is imperative that the legendary and somewhat obscure roots of the characters are brought forward.

They [the characters] are burdened with heredity, with the space where a certain historical event happened; and they are either connected to it directly, when they recognize and take pride in pleasure, or indirectly, unconsciously, when they receive it more than once as a load or as a curse [George, 103].

The novel *Craii de Curtea-Veche* sets itself free from the limited time frame as suggested by any predictable piece of writing which follows the same pattern for creating a

beginning, middle and an ending. The action of the novel, therefore, under no circumstances is the short time passed between the winter of 1910 and the winter of 1911, when the events take place, but the vast time of infinity. Furthermore, the *ending* of the epic is not Pașadia's death or Pantazi's flee from the country, but the eternity of the dream in the last pages of the novel. The obvious originality of the novel determined the literary critics to find similarities between Mateiu Caragiale's style and the one of the great novelists of the world. The most interesting resemblance (as far as the present study is concerned) seems to be the *Mateiu I. Caragiale* monograph written by Alexandru George. In his criticism he compares *Craii de Curtea-Veche* to Marcel Proust's novel of lost time. The Romanian critic notices that Mateiu Caragiale, the same as the French writer, focuses not on the past but on the rapport between present and past. The recollections narrated in *Craii de Curtea-Veche* are also based on the principle of involuntary memory (the stream of consciousness technique).

In the case of both writers, that which makes emotion complete and provides life with meaning is restoring in the present time of things lost. In Proust's writing proper knowledge is achieved through this restoration; in Mateiu Caragiale's work, on the other hand, the restoration brings forth a sort of poetic «vaporous» inebriation, whose effects reach the depths of his complex nature. The discussion here is not about the existent past of the historic novelists, but it is about that past which gives true meaning to the present. The «perspective» of the past and its effect in the present should be taken into consideration, even more than the concept of «past», when comparing both writers [George, 127-132].

What is to be understood is the fact that Romanian writers did not copy the methods Marcel Proust used in his work. They went beyond simple repetition and created texts that breathe such freshness that one can only make a comparison between their narrative techniques and the ones used in the novel *In Search of Lost Time* (but not a total identification). Moreover, Romanian writers created a theoretical background against which they developed their fictional universe. Their importance is unquestionable, as the Romanian contemporary literature still finds inspiration and model in the interbellum novel. Writers such as Augustin Buzura, Alexandru Ivăsiuc or Nicolae Breban use involuntary memory or multiplication of perspectives as main methods of creating authentic fiction.

Marcel Proust's influence on Romanian literature has been acknowledged and accepted long time ago. This study attempts to identify the path concepts like *duration* or *memory* took in order to become narrative techniques. Time and temporality sustain imagination and therefore they are bound to fiction, as the characters become images of the every-day individual with his present gestures, past memories and future thoughts. Temporal perception does not fluctuate according to only age or individual, but also according to different possible states of conscience.

The Romanian interbellum novel is, by excellence, a novel of Time and all its imaginary structures come to sustain this idea. It is not a response to French literature, but a gesture of existence within the European culture of the beginning of the 20th century, of adaptation and synchronization with science, philosophy and modern literature.

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