

From Words to Images — “Falsification” of Sense

Mihaela Gabriela Păun

Abstract—The study “From words to images—‘falsification’ of sense” is an application of literature field, literature and film in particular. It analyses the short story “The snake”, by Mircea Eliade, in the film adaptation of Viorel Sergovici, Romanian director. In an era which prefers image to the written text, the transfer of it in images implies a high difficulty. Mircea Eliade is better known internationally as a historic of religions, more than as a writer of fantastic literature. The study focuses on “sense” and uses semiotic analysis and semantics as methods. The result is that even if fantasy, or better said fantastic, is fully developed in the written text, in filmography is rather redefined, because Mythology is born and lives through written words, but dies in image.

Index Terms—Film adaptation, image, message, literary text.

I. INTRODUCTION

What is a film adaptation for real? To what extent it can be made into a literary text, in which the symbol and myth are defining for it? Concerning the subject, Brian McFarlane in "Novel to the film: an introduction to the theory" [1] considers that a film adaptation is not an offshoot of the literary text, it is the operator of certain content and a set of values of its own. In other words, the theorist James Naremore considers in the "Film Adaptation" that the transposition of a text written in images can be carried out successfully only by retelling, “remake” [2]. To what extent can we put a line between text and film? About the way in which the public and the critics would have to approach the adaptations of short stories, drama, nonfiction, there are many things to be told. But "the transfer of the novel/ short story/ play into the film through screenplay is not just an act of technical processing of a literary text, but it constitutes an act of interpretation which can be found in even the most unimportant film adaptations - in other words, includes what just retelling involves, reading itself as an act of interpretation. In a film adaptation I see a dialogue of the film maker with the text itself, a road to the image, which is undergoing an abbreviation, taking the shape of a scenario. Beyond it, there is another step that it is made by the director and just by him.

The title of this short story and also of the film adaptation is "The Snake". We make a quick glimpse in Universal and Romanian Mythology to find out more about the symbolism of snake:

a) *The Symbolism of Snake in Universal Mythology:*

Mentioned in each of the world's mythologies, snake has impressed by the power of its regeneration, becoming a

symbol of immortality, of eternal youth, of the miraculous healing, of life and death. Thus, in Epic of Gilgamesh, the immortality of the snake is the result of theft and consumption of a miraculous plant. This is the oldest known legend and shows the slyness of snake. For Sumerians and Akkadians, the paired snakes symbolized the world axis. Marduk would create Heaven and Earth from a monster, Tiamat, that was living in salty waters. If the Persians believed Azhi Dakata was master of all elements and creator of the planets, the Phoenicians basilisk is the murderous snake with a deadly glance. For Egyptians, the Snake is associated with the Supreme God Horus and Ra, with Death and Life. Thus, in Egyptian mythology there is a wide existential variety: Nehebeku or Seth, the one devouring the souls of sinners was half-man, half-crocodile. In the Book of Deads is said that the world's end and chaos will be installed through the dark side of the God Atum. Also, at the beginning of Life in Egyptian Cosmogony the primordial egg featuring the bird of light was guarded by a snake. Another reptile in the Egyptian Mythology is Apep, who tries to swallow a Solar Ark. For Hebrews, The Snake is Angel and Demon, a symbol of wisdom and deceit. A bronze snake is invoked by Moses in whose eyes the Hebrews looked so to heal themselves of poisonous bites. Also, the word "Seraphim" translates to "snake in fire". However, in Christianity the snake symbolizes slyness and deception, since the fall of the first human beings and death came through the devilish snake. According to the Gnostics, it symbolizes the light which is captive by substance in genesis. The Greeks had certain reptilian gods, related to fertility rituals. The best known is Python, the guard of Delphi oracle, whose shelter is in the center of the Earth. In the Nordic myths, the snake Jormugand surrounds Earth and fights with Thor. Also, Odin, after initiation in the art of poetry, releases himself from the captivity of the cave by transforming into a snake. Also, the Indians have Kundalini as a symbol of life and Uroboros, the snake that bites its own tail, as a symbol of duration and cyclicity of life. Native Americans kept the bird-snake myth of Quetzalcoatl, and the establishment of human from the blood of the murdered snake. The Greco-Romans snake is correlated with the idea of death and reincarnation. In Dante's "Inferno" it appears as a justice representative. In the 9th century, the Romantics will associate the symbol with nocturnal spectrum, with mystery and life. In all the mythologies, snake is a primordial god, an embodiment of the Great Snake, invisible, timeless, an archetype of the human soul [3]-[5].

b) *Snake Symbolism in Romanian Mythology:*

In Romanian mythology, Snake is considered, in fairy tales, ballads, chants, carols, an evil symbol that must be sacrificed by beheading, because the head is its "powers". However, there is belief in the protective snake of each house, which has been "tamed" by a ritual of fumigating of

all family members and by putting a piece of maize porridge to the root of a tree. The Snake of the House, as guard, defends family of fires, earthquakes, disease, quarrels and misfortunes. The positive symbolism of the Snake is kept in the local culture through wood carvings, in Oltenia, Maramures, two northern and southern regions from Romania. These are leavings from the Dacian cult, as the ancestors of Romanians had on their flag a representation with the Wolf's head and tail of a snake. Also the snake coiled on a goblet is a representation of the God Zamolxis as healer, as evidenced from one of Plato's dialogue in which Socrates recalls Zalmoxis as the Thracian God of medicine. Hippocrates also mentions that he was initiated into the secrets of Medicine by a disciple of Zamolxis, Gebeleizis (the document is preserved in the library of Sweden). As a defender of houses, the Geto-Dacians called it "skep-casas" as evidenced by the Thracian toponymy. The current name of this creature is "știma". It exists in Romanian folklore "știma of waters": a beautiful girl with fairy figure and snake tail, who makes young boys fall madly in love with her. Maybe that's why the Snake is considered the protector of love and it is invoked in all Romanian incantations of love and evil eye. It is seen as the protector of dead ones or of houses. Out of the Romanian ancestral mythology, with Thracian roots, there is an incantation of love which is important for our research, reproduced entirely in the regional dialect: "Tu șerpe-balaură,/ Cu solzi de aură,/ Cu nouă limbe împungătoare,/ Cu nouă cozi izbătoare/ Să te duci la (numele) și tu să o cauți/ Unde vei afla-o;/ De-oi afla-o în casă,/ De-i afla-o afară,/ De-i afla-o vorbind cu tată-său/ Sau cu maică-sa,/ Sau cu frate-său,/ Sau cu ibovnicul,/ Culcată/ Sau sculată,/ Tu să nu o lași/ pân ce ia cu mine s-a întâlni/ Și n-a vorbi!" [6]

When refers to his text, Mircea Eliade says: "The Snake is my only book written without a plan, without knowing how the action will carry out and without knowing the end. It is undoubtedly the product of pure imagination. I did know one thing, that a cluster of people from Bucharest, without knowing anything about fantastic, they went to spend the night near a monastery and that an unknown, Andronic, whom they had met along the way, he would say at one time: Please don't be afraid, but there is here, very close to us, a snake." [7]

As regarding the presence and manifestation of fantasy in this narration, Eliade argues: "The mistery discovers gradually, imperceptibly, and (...) naturally; nothing extraordinary had placed, no supernatural element interfered up to that point so as to abolish that familiar world for my characters, [2] (...) an after midnight world in which fantasy, thanks to Andronic, was exactly as it was every day -with the only difference that it was revealed now its full existence, inaccessible to the profane human being. It was as if all the world would camouflage a hidden dimension that revealed, opens the door for the entire significance of Cosmos and his authentic way of being; perfect way of blithesome spontaneity, which is neither the irresponsibility of animalic existence, nor the angelical beatitude.

II. THE POLYVALENT SPEECH OF THE FILM ADAPTATION

"The Snake" was filmed in 1996, directed by Viorel

Sergovici and it was awarded at the UNITER Gala edition with Dionysios trophy for best TV drama show in the same year, an event reported in the chronicle of Septimiu Sărățeanu [8]. For the film adaptation, the director worked with Adriana Rogovschi and the soundtrack is signed by Adrian Enache. Distribution of roles is Sergiu Andronic (man-reptile) - Claudiu Bleonț; Dorina - Iilca Goia; Stere Dinică Solomon Gheorghe Dinică; Jorj - Mitică Popescu; Liza - Cătălina Mustață; Aglo - Victoria Cociaș; Stamate - Tomi Cristian; Dorina voice - Maria Ploae.

From the very beginning, a trained eye can see two secondments from the original of this remake, which allows Viorel Sergovici to change the perspective of perception to the written text that begins with an incantation of love (the one mentioned by us above!) The movie begins with an excerpt from "Myth and reality": "In the long incursion on myths about the end of the world I wanted to emphasize that the essential [...] is not the very fact of the end, but the certainty that there will be a new beginning." [9] In other words, the director gives up to suggest the magical condition (spell) that characters fit into "cosmic" state seduced by magnetism of the reptile look invoked by Andronicus at the monastery of Căldărușani to suggest a new beginning (selected text fragment).

In this sense, the film begins with preparation of tourists' group for a three days trip to the monastery, focusing on the way (out of profane space). The text characters are already installed on the host in Fierbinti area. The original screenplay respects the reunification of primordial pair and oscillate between dream and reality, between sacred and profane, through play. Thus, the three timelines: "the tourists, enslaved to the present moment, Dorina living maybe l'éternel retour of events and Andronicus, perhaps timeless, eternal. First two timelines are profane, the other two are forms of the sacred." [10] are also present in the film. But if the text passage from dream to reality is smaller, the adaptation clearly defines the final scene where Dorina met Andronicus on the road to the monastery. In the final frame, Andronicus serves as a "guide" because the girl admits that she is lost. Symbolically, rain can isolate, is a natural phenomenon of induction with highly potential of fantastic. Her presence refers to the biblical text of Genesis, Noah's flood, two profane spaces that through isolation and purification become sacred; two beginnings in human history. This final scene of the film is the premise of a new beginning, so it emphasizes that in the obvious context all events run until meeting the two men were held only in the girl's reveling dream, in order to be initiated. The central idea of the film: The love between a man and a woman can pass the profanity to the sacred space, and takes place in cosmic integration. In mythical register: They are the only ones who are saved from the daily humdrum, even though they all had the chance. Everyone started out on the road (from the inner self), went to the monastery (sacred space) where they had a chance to start (the game clock). Because they cannot detach the banality of life, others indulge in daily profane (games, books, music, wine, feast) and ignore the signs abandoning to sensations in the game (Luiza – Stamate; Vladimir - Mrs. Stamate) and remain superficial, as mere extras.

Returning to the game of time initiated by Andronicus -

this is important in both film and novel: He is the Great Director who allows his characters to confront their own existence as reflections of conscience and to live freely, through a series of acts and scenes.

Without any apparent purpose, "Andronicus wants to return freedom to these people, giving them the opportunity to express themselves spontaneously as nature insiders. Stamate and Luiza, Manuilă and Dorina, Vladimir and Mrs. Solomon live a spell that is created by themselves, flirting with suppressed diurnal temptation in nocturnal time. Not knowing how to analyse what they feel, they make Andronicus responsible for it, and women began to desire him, wanting, in fact, Love." [11]. Another game initiation takes place in the confined space of the cellar. Here Andronicus "recovers" his memory and tells the story of Arghira "the beautiful girl of milk" and a monk lost into temptation, which gives the audience the opportunity to recover through love and for everyone to find their own language so as to access the harmony of beginnings. But they refuse the specific signs and remain captive daily.

At the very beginning of the adaptation, the song in the background: "Your eyes charmed me" is a subtext, because Andronicus has "very sharp, burning eyes with pupils unusually high pupils." (Film) and "They were the eyes of a sparkling metal, gloomy dizzying "(in the text) [11]. Moreover, the character - inspired by Claudiu Bleonț - evolves into a calm registry, different from that of the text, which is the energetic type with sporty sunglasses. Differences between written text and film are visible in Dorina, too. If in the novel she is gentle, fearful, in the film adaptation, even if she is in the sacred space of the monastery, the girl is sensual (see here an erotic game).

The scene of snake's invocation, in Sergovici's vision, is devoid of drama, the characters are not afraid, but allow the intrusion of daylight into darkness and return in the end of the "spell". The focus is on light. Therefore, the idea of a bright snake is very well defined in the dream of Mrs. Solomon. Here, the presence of a white snake sends to mythical register and the idea of the white snake of the house. Also, the hand of Andronicus winds in the erotic dream of the woman. The only one who does not have an erotic dream with Andronicus is the Chosen One- the woman who catches the apple in the dream from the dream. In the text, Dorina lives fullness of primordial love with Andronicus in the sacred space of the island. As Mihai Eminescu's "Caesara", both are found embraced on the island, naked, stripped of any form, free from any individuality, reduced to archetypes" [12].

Keeping the idea of restoring the primordial pair, Sergovici imagines another end: in the adaptation, the youngsters met once again on the road in a rainy day. And only now begins the "fairytale" and the actual meeting takes place. This scene in the car does not appear in the text, but emphasises the director's vision - continuation of the love story in the film in a new beginning.

III. CONCLUSION

Both of them, the text of Mircea Eliade and the film directed by Viorel Sergovici provides readers / viewers what Eugen Simion called it "a beautiful story in which eros,

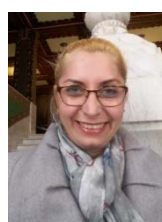
magic, symbol, faerie meet due to good techniques to organize surprise." [13]. In other words, as our semiotic analysis showed, falsification of mythology in a film adaptation is imminent. But, also, we live in a society which looks for easy words and translating the remains of the full ones in images can be the only solution to save the senses, the myths and the stories which enriches our souls.

The present study didn't take it to an iconic analysis itself, as we focused on some key scenes. Maybe a shot-to-shot analysis would take the whole concept to another level, but we tried to value what we consider it philosophical, in the terms of Eliade's text – from the love spell to the time game in the forest.

For those viewers who see the film after they read the book, the meanings are transferred from the text. For those who see only the film, the sense of ideas can be completely rotated to 180 degrees. And this, in conclusion, it is what we call falsification.

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Mihaela-Gabriela Păun is a PhD candidate at University of Bucharest, Doctoral School of Letters. She works too, as a Romanian language teacher at Secondary School Nr. 1, Balș (Olt).

She graduated from the College of Orthodox Theology within the University from Craiova, 2002. In 2008 she obtained the master diploma-postgraduate. In 2015 she won the excellence award for high recognition of her academic research in the project "Multidisciplinary PhD research in European context" and a study scholarship at the University of Strasbourg in France.

She published 7 articles registered in International Data Base (4 of them have already been quoted, see Google Academic): in International Journal

of Education and Research (“The instructional design and didactic strategies of instruction”-2013) - Australia; in European Scientific Journal (“Changes in management as an instrument of educational intervention” - 2013) – Australia and Macedonia; in European Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences (“Journalistic construction of national identity of Romanians in 2006”-2013), United Kingdom; International Letters of Social and Humanistic Sciences (“Commitment of Journalistic Discourse in Construction of National Identity”-2014; “A diachronic view upon the Bals media”-2014), Poland. And more: She published 6 articles in Journal of Romanian Literary Studies, and 1 book (Camil Petrescu- colaje identitare)-2014; is coauthors in: Communication neutrosophic routes

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