

**UNIVERSITY „BABEȘ-BOLYAI” CLUJ-NAPOCA
EUROPEANS STUDIES**

**THE CONTRIBUTION OF PROFESSOR LORENZO
RENZI TO THE UNDERSTANDING OF ROMANIAN
FOLKLORE**

PH. D. THESIS

COORDINATOR:

Prof. univ. dr. Ion Cuceu

PH.D. CANDIDATE:

POP (INDIG) DELIA SIMONA

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KEY WORDS

About Romanian Folk Songs, Three Sheets for the Reception of Romanian Ethnography and Folklore in Italy, 'Interpretive Variants' in Romanian Traditional Narrative Songs, The Metamorphosis and Permanence of 'Miorița', with the articles: The Oldest Versions of 'Miorița' Final Considerations on 'Miorița', An Unpredictable Encounter: 'Miorița' and 'Cavalla storna'

The contribution of Professor Lorenzo Renzi to the understanding of Romanian folklore

SUMMARY

This study aims to review Professor Lorenzo Renzi's research on Romanian folklore as it is reflected in his works that deal with Romanian folklore. The purpose of this study is to highlight the interest shown by Italian professors, especially by Professor Renzi, for the study of Romanian literature in general, and applying them to living forms of Romanian oral literature, i.e. folklore. Being a friend of the Romanian literary culture, the professor has drawn several Italian publishers into programs of publishing the jewels of Romanian thinking throughout his career. Nowadays, more and more Italian publishers publish fragments of true Romanian culture translated into Italian: Adelphi, Il Veltro, Orso, Jaca Booc, Il Mulino. Professor Lorenzo Renzi's contribution to the Italian research on Romanian folklore is of an unparalleled value.

Lorenzo Renzi, professor at the University of Padua, is one of the leading professors of Romance philology in Italy.

Regarding his relationship with the Romanian language, Lorenzo Renzi says in an autobiographical essay that he began to study Romanian and to familiarize himself with the culture of this space, thanks to Professor Alexandru Niculescu, in 1963, when he was a visiting professor of Romanian Linguistics at the Institute of Romance Studies at the University of Vienna. Alexandru Niculescu became then "one of the great friends of my life, perhaps the greatest", whom "I owe the decisive impulse to deal with linguistics" as he himself confesses, adding further: "I have developed a sensitivity to the Romanian language that I only have for French, but have not acquired in the case of other languages that I have studied and know: German, English and Spanish. Knowing foreign languages is, for a linguist and philologist, of an

unquestionable professional importance in itself. But for him, as for anybody, it is also a life experience that brings him close to people and peoples that would otherwise remain tightly closed or almost closed. This happened to me in the case of all the languages I have dealt with, but mostly in the case of Romanian, which allowed me not only to have human contact, but also to have political and social experiences that are not given to everyone. Not even a linguist is authorized to see something in a language that has value only in itself and for itself.”

Romanian Language and Literature studies at the University of Padua are part of an important, seventy year-old tradition. Its beginnings are linked to Professor Ramiro Ortiz who, from 1933 until 1947, held annually a Romanian Literature lecture within the Romance Philology course. We emphasize that Ramiro Ortiz is, as Lorenzo Renzi defines him, “a rare case of a professor who divided his life and teaching activities between two countries, Romania and Italy”¹: he taught Italian literature at the University of Bucharest for twenty-three years, from 1909 until 1932, and Romance Philology at the University of Padua from 1933 until 1947, the year of his disappearance, a period during which he held, as already mentioned, an annual lecture of Romanian Literature within the Romance Philology course². The Romanian lectorate was

¹ Lorenzo Renzi, *Ramiro Ortiz tra Italia e Romania*, in *Le piccole strutture. Linguistica, poetica, letteratura*, Bologna, Il Mulino, 2009, edited by Alvisse Andreose, Alvaro Barbieri, Dan Octavian Cefruga, p. 529. The text can also be accessed on the site of the Italian Association of Romanian Studies Lorenzo Renzi, Ramiro Ortiz, in “Padova e il suo territorio”, 113 (2005), p. 45-46. <http://cisadu2.let.uniroma1.it/air/interventi.htm>.

² Ramiro Ortiz was born in Chieti, in Abruzzo, on July 1, 1879. He graduated from the University of Naples with a diploma work in Romance Philology, published in the magazine “Atti della Reale Accademia di Archeologia, Lettere e Belle Arti di Napoli”. He won a scholarship offered by the Institute of Higher Education in Florence, where his professors include Guido Mazzoni, Ernesto Parodi and Pio Rajna. Back in Naples, he teaches at the “Vittorio Emanuele” High School, and in 1908 he marries his cousin, Bice Ortiz, only to leave for Romania one year later, being sent by the Italian Minister of Education, to teach Italian Language and Literature. Between 1909 and 1913 he teaches at the “Matei Basarab” High School, collaborating in magazines such as “Noua Revistă Română”, “Ideea Europeană”, “Convorbiri Literare”, introducing writers such as Fogazzaro, Pascoli, Graf, Papini, Prezzolini to the Romanian public. On December 17, 1913, Ortiz is appointed tenure at the Italian Language and Literature Department at the University of Bucharest. In 1916, he publishes the essay *Per la storia della cultura italiana in Rumania*, and in the following years he edits the introduction to George Coșbuc’s (1925-1932) translation of *Divina Comedia*. He liked to spend his days at the Library of the Romanian Academy, to look for – as he himself said – “the traces” that “the Italic civilization has left in the life, literature and art” of the Romanian people. These studies formed the basis of his essays on Petrarch’s and Alfieri’s literary presence in Romania. In 1928, Ortiz translated into Italian the poems of Mihai Eminescu. With the outbreak of World War I in 1916, he leaves Romania, where he returns three years later. In 1921, he founds the magazine “Roma”, that appears until 1933. He is the one who establishes the Italian Cultural Institute in Bucharest, opened on April 7, 1924 and turned into an institution of the Italian state on April 2, 1933. For his scientific merits, Ortiz is appointed honorary member of the Romanian Academy. He remains in Romania until the summer of 1933, when the University of Padova calls him to take the

inaugurated in the 1937-1938 academic year, the first “lecturer” being professor Nina Façon³, the founder of the Romanian School of Italian Studies. She was a professor at the University of Bucharest, teaching also at the University of Bari, besides, as already mentioned, the University of Padua. In the 1947-1948 academic year, professor Carlo Tagliavini⁴ held the Romanian Language and Literature lecture, followed by professor Alexandrina Mititelu, from 1948 until 1964 (the year of her disappearance), who was Ortiz’s assistant from 1938.

Then, based on the Bilateral Cultural Agreement between Italy and Romania, the Romanian Department had the following professors: Prof. Alexandru Niculescu (1965-1971)⁵, Prof. Sorin Stati (1971-1976), Prof. Cicerone Poghiric (1976-1979), Prof. Ion Neață (1979-1984).

position of the Latin language and literature professor Vincenzo Crescina. His successor at the Department of Italian in Bucharest was Alexandru Marcu. Ramiro Ortiz passes away on July 29, 1947, in Padua.

³ The bilingual volume *Expedito: Ramiro Ortiz, destinatar: Nina Façon*, Bucharest: Jurnalul Literar, 2007, coordinated by prof. Doina Condrea Derer, containing letters, so far unpublished, that Ramiro Ortiz sent his former student, collaborator and assistant at the University of Padua, Nina Façon. The letters, handed over to Doina Derer (Nina Façon’s student) by dr. Enrich Façon after his sister's death and donated by Doina Derer Romanian Academy Library, contain interesting information about Italian and Romanian cultural life before the Second World War. It was published with the contribution of the “Vito Grasso” Italian Cultural Institute in Bucharest and contains sixty letters, in original and in Romanian, with comments, bio-bibliographical notes on the correspondents, an introduction and the essay of Carlo Tagliavini about Ortiz from 1948.

⁴ Professor Carlo Tagliavini taught successively at the universities of Bologna, Nijmegen, Budapest, and from 1935 at the University of Padua, which he led from 1947 to 1952. Member of several cultural academies, director of the “Studi Rumeni” journal from 1927 until 1933 and contributor to various magazines, with articles of disclosure about language problems, he received the Gold Medal of Merit for School, Culture and Art in 1963. In 1930, he edited a Latin-Romanian-Hungarian dictionary that dated from around 1700, known as the *Marsilian Lexicon*.

⁵ Regarding his human and professional trajectory in Italy, Alexandru Niculescu confesses in an interview: “In 1956, I had the opportunity to accompany professor Rosetti and professor Iordan in Italy, to the Congress of Romance Linguistic Congress in Florence. I was 28 years old. In those times it was customary for a professor to be accompanied by a younger teacher at Congresses, and Iordan has proposed me. We set out following the trails of Dinicu Golescu, through Buda, Viena, to Beci and then to Roma. We participated in the Congress, in Milano we met Rosa del Conte, the interpreter of Eminescu’s work, prof. Teodor Onciulescu in Rome, and thus, we entered the ‘Italian world’. After a year, I was a lecturer for about three months at ‘Humboldt Universität’, in a Berlin that was under the total pressure of soviet communism, then I was sent to Vienna, where my students included Max Demeter Peyfuss and Lorenzo Renzi, both of whom have become professors, and, at last, in Padua, together with Florica and our son, Adrian, where I can say that I was happy, both in terms of studies, and of the environment. I came back to Romania in 1971 and stayed until 1980, when I was offered a position at Sorbonne. [...] In the January of 1985, I applied for a tenure (not like at Sorbonne, where I had to revise my contract every year) at the University of Udine, where I was appointed in the November of 1986”. (Interview published in „Formula As”, nr. 340, 1998, for Sanda Anghelescu) We add, to complete the picture, that professor Niculescu spent a long and fruitful period of teaching Romanian language and literature, and in 2001 he became professor emeritus. At the Friulian Athenaeum, Alexandru Niculescu has established an appreciated school of Romanian Studies through an intense, generous and rigorous teaching and research activity.

The researcher Lorenzo Renzi, a true master of philology, gave fundamental contributions characterized by a broad vision, in which each subject of analysis is linked to other contexts and cultural traditions, where Romanian culture has always held a privileged place. We quote in this respect, from the volume *Le piccole strutture. Linguistica, poetica, letteratura*, Bologna, Il Mulino, 2009, edited by Alvisè Andreose, Alvaro Barbieri, Dan Octavian Cepraga, which brings together the most important studies - published over time in various journals, documents of various conferences or in miscellaneous volumes - studies covering all his research activity, the following sections: *Sui canti popolari romeni (About Romanian Folk Songs)*, which includes: *Tre schede per la ricezione dell'etnografia e del folclore romeno in Italia (Three Sheets for the Reception of Romanian Ethnography and Folklore in Italy)*, *'Varianti d'interprete' nei canti tradizionali narrativi romeni ('Interpretive Variants' in Romanian Traditional Narrative Songs)*, as well as the series *Metamorfosi e permanenza di 'Miorița' (The Metamorphosis and Permanence of 'Miorița')*, with the articles: *Le più antiche versioni della 'Miorița' (The Oldest Versions of 'Miorița')*, *Ultime sulla 'Miorița' (Final Considerations on 'Miorița')*, *Un incontro imprevedibile: 'Miorița' e la 'Cavalla storna' di Giovanni Pascoli (An Unpredictable Encounter: 'Miorița' and 'Cavalla storna' by Giovanni Pascoli)*.

Although he was a linguist by formation, and therefore researched Romanian folk poetry from a formal linguistic point of view, Renzi published the volume *Canti Narrativi Tradizionali Romeni. Studio e testi*, Firenze: Olschki, in 1969, a collection of studies focused on two directions of study. If the first part of the book is represented by a metrio-rhetorical study on the traditional style and on the repertoire of archaic formulas, the second part focuses on the interpretation of various types of reading of some representative texts of Romanian folklore.

One of the most important contributions in this regard are the pages dedicated to the ballad *Miorita*, where, in true philological spirit, the professor analyzes, with methodological precision, the variants collected by A. Fochi, in an attempt to reconstruct the original text in its baselines. Renzi, the philologist, tries to identify the genuine folk testimonies of the ballad, those which present the most archaic state. Another, more recent study by Professor Renzi on this issue can be found in *Le piu antiche version della Miorita*, published in Italian in the journal *Letterature di Frontiera/ Litteratues Frontalieres*, 7(1997): 165-183 and in Romanian in *Cele mai vechi versiuni ale Mioritei*, in the journal *Dacoromania*, 1-2(1994-1995): 87-102 and in the review that he does on the books of G. Caracostea⁶, *Poezia traditională română*, review

⁶ G. Caracostea, *Poezia traditională română*, 2 vol., Bucharest: Editura pentru Literatură, 1969

published in the journal *Cultura neolatină* 30(1970): 203-207. Another two contributions of Professor Lorenzo Renzi to the research of Romanian folklore are the study on *Colinda Cerbilor*⁷, written in collaboration with A. Bratu, and the comparative-style article centered on the theme of asynchrony, of phase delaying between the world above and the one below, a motif that plays a part in the construction of the myth of the underworld journey foreshadowed in the fairytales of Western and Eastern Europe. The afterword that the professor writes to the monograph of D. O. Cepraga⁸, *Graiurile Domnului, Colinda creștină tradițională*, Cluj-Napoca, Clusium, 1995, 255-256, as well as his study on the activity of the ethnographer Constantin Brăiloiu⁹, assure us of the same love for Romanian translations.

Case Study

MIORIȚA IN PADOVA (Miorița a Padova)

The Italian researcher's interest for Romanian folk literature showed a special attention towards the “national” ballad *Miorița*, in several studies, up to one of the latest interventions that we propose below.

On October 9, 2007 in a parish of Padua, a funeral was held for a thirty year-old young woman, named Camilla, attended by many people and there was great pain due to the extraordinary circumstances in which she died, killed by her own father.

The “Il Padova” newspaper from October 10 mentioned that her funeral was celebrated “as if it were her wedding day”. The title of the article is “Nuptial Songs and Subpoenas. As if on

⁷ *Il Meraviglioso nel Folklore Rumeno. La Colinda de Cervi* , in *Il Meraviglioso e il verosimile tra Antichità e Medioevo*, D. Lanza and O. Longo, Florenta Olschki, 1989: 275-290.

⁸ *Graiurile Domnului* , *Colinda creștină tradițională*, Cluj-Napoca, Clusium, 1995, 255-256

⁹ We also mention this study by Professor Lorenzo Renzi with the regret of not having bibliographic information due to the difficulty of obtaining foreign materials that cannot be found in the libraries of Cluj. However, the existence of this study was attested in a conversation with the professor, via internet, in the spring of 2011.

the wedding day”. Subtitle: “Bells in Celebration”. “More than a funeral, it seems the moment of her wedding to us”, said priest Giancarlo Zamengo, during mass. A wedding that goes beyond life. “Today the Lord has called and chosen you, Camilla”, father Zamengo went on. Typical to a wedding were a few signs during celebration, for instance the bells whose tolling announced a celebration and not a funeral, and the first reading from the Song of Songs, usually chosen for wedding ceremonies.

This cannot surprise anyone who has read the Romanian *Miorița* and knows the ethnologic interpretation, which was given to it in the 30s and 40s by Ion Mușlea, Henri H. Stahl and Constantin Brăiloiu. In Alecsandri’s and many other (even if not all) versions, the shepherd, resigned to accept death caused by his two companions, asks the ewe that has miraculous powers not to tell her mother that he has died, but that he got married. In the folk song, what follows is the representation of the shepherd’s wedding in nature.

Ethnologists have noted that the death of an unmarried young man is indeed represented as a wedding in the old traditions of various peoples of the Balkans, by the Chinese, Arabs or other peoples. There is an explanation for this ritual. In the archaic concept, the deceased, in order to detach from the living, face a long difficult journey.¹⁰ The living, to facilitate the departure, put food, a cane, a cloak, and often a coin next to the lifeless body that will accompany the deceased to the other world. But the deceased could return. Especially those who have unfinished business with the living, for instance, an unmarried young man. The Revenant might ask the living what he did not receive while alive. Thus, trying to give him what he lacked as a young man, the living celebrate his wedding, often in the same time with the funeral. They organize, as don Zamengo, a funeral that seems a wedding.

Could this archaic usage be known by the priest from Padua? asks professor Rezi. Could it be possible that the priest knows the Romanian *Miorița* and its ethnographic interpretation? It seems hard to believe. The explanation should be something else. As Mircea Eliade argued, archaic archetypes that represent key milestones in traditional society do not disappear once it is gone. Archetypes lose certainly their central role in the modern world, but they remain latent and, in some circumstances, they may be reborn. This happened in the parish of Padua, in the

¹⁰ Brânda, Nicolae, *Mituri și antropocentrismul românesc I. Miorița*, Bucharest: Cartea Românească Press, 1991;

opinion of Professor Renzi. Under the effect of a strong emotional impulse, the pastor will rediscover in himself the old ritual of *Miorița*, proposing it in a whole choreography. We mention again that poor Camilla had a tragic death, being murdered, as the shepherd in *Miorița*, moreover, murdered by her own father. The reasons, if one can speak of such a thing in the case of such a terrible murder, remain unknown. There is no crime more horrible than this. And the funeral as a wedding could give, at least for the moment, the illusion – the priest could have thought - that the existence of the girl continues, through the wedding that takes place under the circumstances of life and tradition. But who would Camilla be married to? There was no reference made to any fiancé. In reality, as it often happens in Christian representations of primitive archetypes, there is a new element in the ritual of Padua. In the priest's view, the young woman is in heaven, where Jesus, having chosen her, is waiting for her. Camilla's wedding is, like for other mystical Christians, with Christ. Thus, in our increasingly secularized modern existence, in Arcella district of Padua, pre-Christian and Christian archetypes come alive for a moment. A parish priest reinvented them.

Conclusion

Professor Lorenzo Renzi has fructified, over four decades, from teaching positions to international congresses, through studies published in journals of wide circulation and books of reference, all the main ways of introducing Romanian spiritual values into the European circulation.

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