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DOCTORAL THESIS

TRAVEL, A CULTURAL EXPERIENCE

ROMANIAN HUMANIST, ENLIGHTENED AND ROMANTIC TRAVELERS IN EUROPE

SCIENTIFIC COORDINATOR:

PROF. UNIV. DR. SORIN MITU

PH.D CANDIDATE:

MĂRCUŞ CORNEL DĂNUŢ

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KEY WORDS

Travels, travel diaries, itineraries, means of transport, the image of others, the image of nature, the image of historical events, Humanism, Enlightenment, Romanticism.

ABSTRACT

The main purpose of this PhD thesis is the study of cultural journeys, made by the Romanians in Europe, from the period of humanistic culture on Romanian territories to Enlightenment and Romanticism culture.

I studied the literature written on the Romanian travels and I concluded that it particularly focuses on travel writings as a literary genre, considered from an aesthetic point of view. Therefore, our prospective was founded on emphasizing some milestones of cultural and imagological history of travels. Consequently, we took into consideration the following aspects:

- The theoretical approaches of the travel field, materialized in several typologies of travels, of travel literature and the reason behind them.
- A diachronic analysis of the material aspects of travel, on experiences when crossing the borders, on itineraries and means of transportation, on the dangers during the travels and also on the clothing and nutrition during the travels.
- An imagological analysis of the other travellers, of peoples and states encountered during the travels, the nature and the historical events, considering the presence of these elements in the writings of our travellers.

- An emphasis on the cultural experiences of the travellers, based on their own perceptions and activities, structured in four travel categories: travels for studies, to achieve knowledge, to take part in events and for scientific research. At this point we focused on a comparative approach of the experiences lived by the Romanian and European travellers reflected in their writings.

All the following aspects are connected to the chapters presented in our research, grouped in four main sections:

- Typologies of travel
- Material experiences of travel
- Images of travel
- Cultural experiences of travel

The chapter referring to the prospective of research underlines the main contributions that deal with the travel field, connected to Literary History, to Cultural History and Human Geography.

The forms of cultural travels are generated by a specific reason: travels for studies, to achieve knowledge, to take part in events and for scientific research. This classification helped us in the last major section of the study, where we included the selected Romanian travellers.

In the chapter referring to the travel writings, we identified their evolution beginning with itineraries, travel descriptions and guides and continuing with travel diaries and memoirs and travel books. The 29 travel books published by Romanians from 1826 to 1887 belong to travellers that undertake knowledge and event travels.

The main contribution of the chapter about itineraries and means of transport underlines the connections between the new routes and the development of the steam-based means of transport, starting with steamships and ending with railways.

In the chapters concerning to the dangers of travel, clothing and nutrition brings together the mentions founds in travel literature, quite a few about the clothing and much more in the case of nutrition.

In the next chapter, about the image of other travellers, Romanians or foreigners, we distinguish between stereotypical images and personal considerations of the travellers.

The imagological analysis is diversified in the chapter referring to the image of the other peoples, where we grouped the information about each nation, in order to follow similarities and stereotypes in this case as well.

We note that these images change according to the author's cultural and political affinities and that they evolve over time. The most numerous references we have about the peoples around us, because the contacts with them were more numerous. A privileged place in the imagological accounts is the peoples who attract the political sympathies of the Romanians, such as the French and the Swiss.

In the chapter on the image of historical events we have grouped the numerous references to historical events and historical personalities, in which we emphasize the links between the perception of the past and the cultural conceptions specific to the era in which the traveller writes.

The chapter that approaches the image of nature analyses the evolution of perceptions on nature, from the contemplation of a man-made scenery, in an Enlightenment spirit, to the romantic images on the greatness of nature.

The last section of the paper, the most consistent, comprises four chapters, corresponding to the four forms of the cultural travel: travels for study, for knowledge, for scientific research and to take part in events.

Most travellers belong to the study travels, but in this case we encounter the fewest published travel reports, therefore the analysed information is less.

The following are, by number, travellers who participate in events and travel for knowledge, who give the most consistent travel stories, most in the form of travel books and the least numerous are those who travel for scientific research.

We follow, in the case of each traveller, the cultural practices of the trip (the activities they do on the trips) and the intellectual attitudes (the manner they interpret what they see).

For these reasons, we sought to identify similar or identical images in European travel books, in order to understand whether there are takeovers or imitations in the ideas of Romanian travellers.

In the conclusions of the thesis, we made theoretical considerations regarding:

- the similarities between the images in European and Romanian travel books
- the connection to the dominant ideas and currents of an era

- the interest of travellers for the new, for progress
- the importance of travel in the development of Romanian culture, through the cultural acquisitions made by travellers
- the importance of travel in the development of political ideas
- the low impact of some Romanian travel books on the cultural development at home.

We highlight the fact that almost all these aspects pursued in this study represent new perspectives in the field of analysis of cultural journeys made by Romanians. Some of these aspects are found in the syntheses made by foreign authors about travels from other cultural spaces.

We consider that the chapters regarding the images of our travellers about other travellers, the image of historical events in travel writings, the evolution of itineraries in correlation with the evolution of means of transport, are the most valuable contributions that this work makes in the field of study of travel.

Also, the comparative analysis of the images present in the works of our travellers with those of the works of European travellers, has the merit of identifying common cultural influences and values.