



Liliana-Anemona Patrulescu

Remythisation and Demythisation in D. R. Popescu's Novels

ABSTRACT

The epic situations bear the imprint of mythical thinking, but also the mark of the contemporary epoch of the writer. Modern humanity deforms the myths, unable to recognize sacredness and universality and preserves only a few instances of the archetypal patterns without involving the presence of the *hierophany*. D. R. Popescu changes the biblical and the Greek myth into a means of fictionalizing his age, desecrating them and mystifying ordinary events. The myths are thus distorted, deformed by means of parody and magical ritual, which upset superstitious practice, false prophecies, organic disorders, collective psychosis. The mythical scenes are ridiculous. If Hell is the place of the torture, Heaven is described as a brothel. The myth of the labyrinth is an aspiration for liberty, but a clear condemnation of moral monstrosity. Remythisation and demythisation are performed with the Bible on the writer's table. D. R. Popescu vacillates between the Genesis and Revelation. Even the prayers to God are distorted; the atheism takes grotesque forms in a world without any moral support. The author turns to mythology to offer a representation of a *sick* world, convinced that recognition of all errors can save a nation from destruction.

KEYWORDS

D. R. Popescu; Myth; Mythical Characters; Archetype; Remythisation; Communist Imagination.

LILIANA-ANEMONA PĂTRULESCU

"1 Decembrie 1918" University, Alba Iulia, Romania
anemona_matei@yahoo.com

Originally *mythos* meant *true word*, not with the meaning of fair thoughtfulness but as concrete reality, related to what is revealed, so that it clearly differs from any other context or enunciation. It is far beyond any truth or lie, far from any proofs or denials. It is well known that the MYTH is a story which can be placed in ancient times, in a sacred time, which is nonlinear, reversible, spherical, an instance of eternal present, often accessible through rites.

The myths of a nation include *cosmogonic* stories or myths, the ones which refer to the beginning and the evolution of the Universe, humans and gods, or to the original history of that nation; *theogonic* myths which refer to the history and the genealogy of spiritual forces, to the relationships between Being and Nothingness, science and magic, and *mythological* stories, the most spread and well-known, which can be found under a wide range of literary, folkloric and artistic forms. "The great mystery is that the sacredness manifests itself, so it becomes limited, it becomes history, and so it limits itself and ceases to be absolute"¹.

Nowadays, the myth is considered a cultural marker which facilitates, on the symbolic level, the comprehension of contradictions, tensions or utopias of the societies we live in, in other words, the myth



carries the mark of that epoch. Myths are distorted by the modern man's consciousness, which is no longer capable of inferring the sacredness, the universality so he preserves only instances from archetypal patterns without the support of the *hierophany*. "The myth acquires a synchronous structure because it is an eternal re-start of a new cosmogony, and therefore a remedy against time and death, since it contains a principle of defence and conservation which is communicated to the rite"².

On the background of the establishment of the communist era, many of the Romanian post-war writers used the myth as a means of fictionalisation of the epoch. In D. R. Popescu's novels the myth is a strategy which compromises even the mythic structure, secondary to the ideological discourse in the *F* novel series. The inspiration resources are those related to biblical and Greek mythology.

Although the classical theme of the literature of all times has been the *Nostalgia for Paradise* and one of the functions myths have is the openness towards the Great Time, towards finding the Primordial Time by discrediting the present, the historic moment, still D. R. Popescu uses the myth as an ambiguous formula and as a dissimulation strategy, based on the force of the re-symbolisation of the reality, relating the myth to the political context. The mythological space is a timeless constancy in the development of the world. "D. R. Popescu believes in the multiple functionality of the myth in contemporary society. This is because the world itself, at the limit of a mandatory fantasy, is in a continuous mythological atmosphere (...) perennial myths bring reality (...)"³. The political parables published by D. R. Popescu build their meanings at the interference of the mythology created by the writer with that false mythology imposed by the political power as a

means of symbolic self-legitimacy. As the symbolic territory of the *rejected man*, D. R. Popescu's novels deconstruct, often resorting to strategies specific to dystopia, the representative episodes of the *new sacred history* whose figures and scenarios are involved into a process "of deformation, revealing occult elements in the original speech"⁴.

D. R. Popescu desecrates the myths and mystifies ordinary realities out of the need for invention of the contemporary society: "So it happens that the myths as the absolute value, as well as the reality as an absolute banality, are rejected by the author. The means are surprisingly simple: the desacralisation of the myths and the sacralisation of the ordinary reality"⁵. Using the Bible as a mythical reference leads to the distortion and inversion of the original significations, and the way in which communism as an occult mythology deforms the sense of the paradisiacal chronotope is obvious in the novels through the dissolving of some symbolic structures. The epic situations bear the imprint of mythical thinking: initiation, death, rebirth, also the characters are built using the technique of the archetypal foreshadowing, the heroic and symbolic amplification of their features, through spatial and temporal coordinates which disclose the functionality of a reiteration pattern. We also witness a process of inventing mythical scenarios.

In the mythical sphere, D. R. Popescu introduces everything that is sublime: the heroism, the fantastic, the obsession, the sacrificial spirit, the death, the glory of creation, the mystery, the dream. We notice that the author's sources of inspiration in writing his novels are Shakespeare, Aeschylus, as well as I. L. Caragiale, asserting that *Cei șapte contra Tebei* (*The Seven Against Thebes*) is a model for the novel *Cei doi din dreptul Tebei* (*The Two from Tebea*). The myth is deformed by means of the parody.



Desacralisation, demystification, deformation, dissimulation are specific to this writer. The messianic utopia of the so called *Golden Age* crystallizes around some symbolic cores, a new meaning being given through a process of demythisation and remythisation. The political imaginary of the communist era cannot be completely understood in the absence of a reference to the structures of the imaginary of the novel and to its relationship to the psycho-historical context. "The totalitarianism betrays clearly than ever its membership to the utopian logic (...) the totalitarian society being a logomachical world, in which facts can be defeated only by resorting to a mimetic and utopian speech. So we can talk about a real logocracy: there is a split between reality and surreality"⁶.

In the novel *Cei doi din dreptul Țebeii* (*The Two from Țebea*) the demythisation is replaced by the desacralisation, a degradation of the models. The theme of this novel takes back the old motif of the unhappy love between Ilie and Ilonca, who belong to hostile communities. The author deals with the tragic myth from the Greek mythology. Just like Eteocles and Polynices, Ilie and Tibor are the victims of the fatidic hatred. The action takes place at Țebea, a sacred place which allows the access to the Paradise, only the church which disappears on Țebea hill symbolises the withdrawal of the sacred from this world. The Christian myth is part of a total mockery. Tibi, the young Hungarian who crucified two priests after introducing air in their stomachs with a bike pump, pays the gypsies to make fun of Ciungu, a schoolteacher and a singer in the village. The men put a crown made out of nettles on Ciungu's head, then they tied him with a rope on a donkey: "So they took Ciungu on the donkey towards the place where the two priests had been taken, like Jesus Christ, in disgrace, asking him if he could give them the repentance chalice"⁷.

Ciungu, also called the woodcutter, because he carves coffins and crosses and, more than that, he has a wooden leg, faces the mockery and instead of getting angry he makes a speech: "Gentlemen, you are real angels! Indeed, some naughty angels, innocent and as pure as a lily. And how could you be guilty of something, if you do not have brains, the angels do not have heads, they have only wings and their head is with God. And good for you! You are God's angels!"⁸.

Ilie and Ilonca save themselves in the woods, because they are afraid of Tibor, Ilonca's brother. Here they meet the old Gălățioan who, pretending to be a priest, blesses their wedding by putting his hands on their heads and saying: "May God bless your fair union and wedding night and send you pure and peaceful love"⁹. Tibor and Ilie both die tied on a willow tree and covered by mud at the soldiers' attacks and, therefore, Ilonca becomes insane as Ophelia used to be once. She lives alone in the forests nursing a little deer. Consequently, the murder of the crucified priests, the disappearance of the church, the pagan wedding ritual are nothing but the signs of a terrible time when everything collapses, including faith.

D. R. Popescu does not resort to superhuman *mythos*, which implies irrationality. He uses instead different aspects – with historical and social significances – from Christian mythology, thus conveying the manifestations of the pathology specific to the faith in the so called *new world* or *new life*. These aspects refer to magical rituals, annoying superstitions, false prophesies, organic disorders, collective psychosis.

Death is *The Great Initiation*, but for the modern world, Death is deprived of its religious meaning and is related to the Void in front of which man is helpless. The fifth chapter from *Vânătoarea regală* (*The Royal*



Hunting) starts with some Bible verses referring to the vanity of life: "Which glory on Earth remains unchanged, which being, which elevation? And which delight is no sorrow? All are more helpless than the shadow, all more insidious than dreams ... A moment, only a moment and death grabs them all ..." ¹⁰.

The rite of passage in a world without faith is no more performed by a priest but by a woman called Bița. She utters the prayers for the dead: "Dumnezeule mare, tu care ai călcat moartea și pe diavol ai surpat, odihnește sufletul răposatului tău, Crăișoru Ion în loc luminat, în loc străluminat, în loc tihnit și îndulcit, în loc cu verdeață de unde au fugit durerea, de unde au fugit întristarea și suspinarea" ¹¹. Ironically, the men answer to the woman parodying the Cantor's prayers "Doamne miluiește, popa prinde pește" ¹².

The myth of death in the absence of any religious connotations becomes a funny game. In the night of Maria's death watch, a scene from *F* novel, the things unfold as in a tragicomedy. The ancient rites are strongly parodied. Two drunken women mourn by mistake the woman who is sleeping in the other room, then they trip over the doorstep and break the wine demijohn. All these are scenes of low comedy. At the funeral, all the people gathered prove to be indolent, discussing unhindered about their everyday problems. Their banal chatter is definitely not a sign of fearing death, because they all consider themselves out of time "indolent people, hit by no pain, touched by no sadness, with a cool flesh and senseless souls, having no feelings, not fearing death - not even their mother's or grandmother's death which they take as a simple soup (...)" ¹³.

For the promiscuous humanity, death loses its sacred values. Man can no longer escape from the earthy burden, thus making the ontological sin, the Fall, become

relative. The communion with Christ is not possible, the peaceful moment before the Great Passage is annihilated. Because of the promiscuous man's behaviour, the death is perceived in grotesque forms, terrifying ones, and the evil reaches the archetype. The cult of the dead is as useless as the defence of any moral values.

The two characters from *Vânătoarea regală* (*The Royal Hunting*), the nurse, Florentina Firulescu, and the doctor, Dănilă, embody the myth of Artemis and Actaeon. The miserable hunter Actaeon, driven by a primary psycho-physiological impulse, dishonours the divine being of the goddess, so she transforms him into a creature, an animal. Florentina resembles the Greek goddess, she commits atrocious gestures towards Dănilă, the civilizing hero. Therefore, the doctor's desperate efforts to have a sentimental relationship with Florentina end in a criminal hunting, transforming him into a *scapegoat*. For the ruthless Florentina, Dănilă is nothing but a simple intruder in the village where she lives, so she decides to kill him with the same cruelty she puts in killing the dogs suspected of rabies.

The novel suggests the hysteria of a human community in a disturbed historical time, developing a social ghost with effects of collective schizophrenia. Remarkable in the novel is the suggestion of complicity between murder, madness and superstition. We also encounter in these novels the idea of collective terror as a result of destroying old totems, the myth of the snake as a symbol of death, that of the turtle as a *moving tomb*, as well as the motif of the curse. The superstitions are in fact the remains of old myths, of pagan beliefs which, as we can see, are still working even in a communist society. Here is the curse that old Sevastița utters in order to heal the disease, in order to send the devil away from Iolanda's body, this being the only means of communication between the two worlds:



Du-te, teme-te, pleacă, necurate, spurcate, ieși din sângele ei și n-o mai chinui, pleacă din țâțana ușilor, să nu i se urască de zile, n-o mai munci cu unghiile tale cât secerile, cu mâinile cât prăjinile, ieși din pântece, din inimă, ucigașule, crăpi, carnea nu-i înjunghia, fața nu i-o îngâlbeni, puterea nu i-o slăbi, n-o lăsa cu chip de mort, adâncule, înșelătorule, ieși de oriunde ești, cel de desubt, țapule, leule, văzut pentru nemila și căinoșenia ta.¹⁴

It seems that the curse uttered by Calagherovici's mother, after her son's death, also destroys Lilica's life:

Blestemul să te ajungă pe iarbă, de treci prin câmp dimineața pe rouă, tălpile tale să se umple cu bube și ca mușcata de șarpe să te doară, canta în care duci apă să-ți ruginească și să curgă, cârpătorul pe care pui pâinea să ia foc, de ai capre să moară în ele iezii și să fete viermi, de te împreună cu el în burta ta să crească o bufniță turbată, de te vei așeza pe scaun apa să-ți intre în casă până la gât plină de broaște, de vei pune mâna pe lingură să o bagi în ciorbă să învieze sângele în carnea tocată și să strige cu glas înjunghiat în tine (...) pentru că te-ai lepădat de bărbatul tău, de băiatul meu, și l-ai luat pe Moise, toate blestemele să te ardă și să se împlinescă¹⁵.

Therefore, organic disorders, collective psychosis partly calmed by finding a scapegoat are masked by the suggestion of changing life and death into a carnival.

The shift between the reality and the mythical plan of the events is suggested through the portrayal of the character named Moise. In this way the author uses a classical myth, that of the Promised Land, projecting it into other temporal dimensions

and offering another interpretation according to the social and historical context.

The Moses from the Bible retains in D. R. Popescu's novels only the symbolic connotation. In *Vânătoarea regală* (*The Royal Hunting*) the author refers to the Moses from the *Bible*:

They left Egypt, where the Pharaohs had killed their children, torturing and humiliating them, led by Moses. (His name means "drew out of the water"). He was put in a basket made out of bulrushes, daubed with bitumen and pitched, on the Nile in order not to be killed, as an infant, by the Egyptians. The Pharaoh's daughter found him (...). Moses, who raised his rod over the Red Sea and opened it in two finding a path, a truth, and an escape for the Jews, was as stuttering as Petrache Lupu from Maglavid¹⁶.

Moise, the main character of the novel series called *F*, borrows from the biblical hero from the *Old Testament* the name but also the will to persist in error, the obsession to change people's destiny. He is a man adapted to the historical conditions in which he acts and lives, influenced by communist beliefs. He proves to be cruel; he is cynical, disposing on people's lives. He believes in his own goal and his ways of acting, he thinks he is a social and spiritual reformer. His madness causes destruction and crimes.

In the novel *O bere pentru calul meu* (*One Beer for my Horse*), Moise buys a horse with the intention of searching Horia Dunărințu, who disappeared without trace, wanting to prove that he had no connection with a possible murder. Mișu is a talking horse, and the people from Pătârlagele and the villages around pray to the horse. One woman kisses the horse's hooves, puts dust on her head screaming that she is so

miserable and a sinner. Another woman undresses herself and puts her clothes in front of the horse, considering Mișu a sacred animal, with healing powers. What the horse has to say can be understood only by the old Sevastița and in this way we find more information about the occult history of the village: the disappearances, the crimes, the betrayals, Moise's criminal actions. He kills in the name of a hidden belief; he is decided to destroy every hope, every faith. He is the devil's tool, being sent by malefic forces and his ageing causes him a hideous look: "humiliated by his flaccid skin and old body he was singing a foolish song hoping they would not find him ill of tuberculosis"¹⁷.

Moise's life is a complicated one, showing in a way how a man reaches to self-destruction. He is similar to that snake that comes to eat its own tail. He is a depiction of Mistriceanu, the young man cursed by his mother to be swallowed by the snake or he is a correspondent of Ouroboros "a guy who devours himself, like a snake, endlessly, without any hope"¹⁸.

D. R. Popescu's character has an exceptional destiny, re-constructing step by step, but in a ridiculous way, the mythical scenario. The path he uses to guide the humanity is not towards spiritual ascension, but to degradation, to abjection: "Moise (...) has thousands faces, you can not know when he tells the truth or when he lies. Look at his face: he is like the Sphinx"¹⁹. His death corresponds to the way in which the biblical hero gives up his shoes in order to climb the heights of Mount Sinai. The separation of the soul from the body burden might bring him the purification. His death is symbolic, but in a negative way. It happens on Plopilor Mount, in a lonely space, in the snow, a sign of his reintegration in a frozen matrix. Moise resembles to the unicorn and to Jesus through the sacrificial

death but overturned to ridiculous situations:

...the defeat of the unicorn man would be a salvation not only for her (for Lilica), for the dead and for their memory but also for those dead as Ghenadie or for the coward ones, his death was as necessary as a cleaning water, as a triumph of honour, as a proof that humanity is not a single bird among shots and paid beaters²⁰.

Moise's destiny and his ending are very well described in one of the author's monographs: "Moise can be at the same time the Minotaur, the Sphinx, Mephistopheles, the Devil, an Ossian character from the Balkans, a modern Moses who, after preaching on the promised land, remained outside, he was not given the chance to enter it"²¹.

In the novel *Împăratul norilor* (*The Clouds' Emperor*) we find the symbol of the woman who sacrifices her body in order to revenge her man. She offers herself to the enemy. The symbol can be found in the Bible as well as in the ancient tragedy. Lilica, the female character, does not have the epic dimensions of a tragic symbol, but she is a *special character* in the novel. She is not only the emblem of revenge, but also a fate's toy. She accepts Moise, but she hates her weakness in front of the man. The disappearance of their daughter, Anita, and the suspicion that Moise, the father, can be the criminal change her into a murderer too.

Another biblical myth reconstructed by D. R. Popescu is that of Cain and Abel, related to guilt and expiation. The double complex, that of Cain and Abel, is presented almost in all the novels opposing the criminal and the victim, the innocent and the guilty, the executioner and the martyr, the prosecutor and the defender, the enemy brothers. The characters are individuals of



an historic time, in an epoch that created such representatives: “the victims and the criminals, the strong and the weak, the narrators and the characters, those who tell and those who predict, the witnesses and the investigators – all the masks the characters have are outlined in the perspective of acquiring knowledge and proving the liberty (...) everyone creates his own world, his own history, which include the history of all times”²².

The hatred between the two brothers, Costică and Liviu Țeavălungă from the novel *O bere pentru calul meu (One Beer for my Horse)*, but especially their actions remind us about the Cain and Abel myth, a myth that is parodied taking into account the type of existence the people from Pătârlagele village have, in those *sick times*. Costică goes to jail because of his twin brother, and then when he is out he kills him with a sickle. Then we find out that the killer is in fact the other twin, who pretends to be Costică. In other words, Cain becomes Abel, a brother takes the other one's identity. The same distorted myth is used in presenting Moise and Horia Dunărințu, the criminal and the victim, and then Celce and Păun, Stroe Papavă and Albișoru Constantin and the examples can go on. The author himself admits that the events have no importance, it only matters what people believe about them:

These are only simple events, they have no importance (...), such facts that Horia is there in a tomb, or that Costică Țeavălungă killed his brother with a sickle have no importance, it only matters what we think about them, if we forget or not, if we consider them good deeds or if we curse them, if we pit the dogs on doctors or not, if they are good or bad for us. Afterwards the man is just flesh and bones²³.

The Christian myth is also used in the novel *Cei doi din dreptul Țebeii (The Two from Țebea)*. Tibor, a young Hungarian, crucifies an Orthodox priest, Dumitru, and a Catholic priest tying them with ropes on the cross, and then he introduces air in their stomachs by using a bicycle pump, as stated above. The priests faint and finally die. Tibor and the other torturers commit the crime out of the desire to see people dying, because they saw in their lives only dead bodies: “I did not have the opportunity to see people struggling to die, as the priests Dumitru and Aladar were struggling, and it looks that death is now nothing else but this nervous flounder, this fear of not seeing your own body in abjection”²⁴. Histories of all kinds are meant to suggest the collective madness, the chaos of the villagers from Pătârlagele. In the novel *O bere pentru calul meu (One Beer for my Horse)*, Patriciu's wife pretends that she gave birth to Jesus, some peasants have the same nightmares and, digging at a house foundation, they find five live dogs, the nightmare coming true. Pitulicea, Fruntelată's wife hangs the holly icons of some saints, and then she throws them into the water. Mișu, the horse, is considered to be Jesus, the gypsies steal the hair of the horse, considered to be sacred and sell it.

In the 15th chapter of the same novel there are many distorted biblical allusions: “I am not going to make Fruntelată a traitor and give him thirty pieces of silver” or “This is my body, take and *drink*”²⁵. Mișu, the talking horse, used to utter truths that upset, therefore he is tortured in the same way the Saviour was. Some of the peasants wanted to hang him, others to burn him. They make him a cross with two poles, put them on his back, keeping the horse in the mud until hundreds of leeches stick on him. They even put him a crown on the forehead. Mișu's mockery goes at the same time with

the biblical one. The beginning of the sixteenth chapter describes a rural image of Eden, where both Mișu and old Sevastița can transcend. “Old Sevastița goes to Heaven or Hell whenever she wants; she barely puts her head on the pillow and she is there, in the other world, trying to know everything, even what is beyond death. Maybe it is because of her that the Heaven and the Hell are similar to the market or the park for us”²⁶. Here is a brief description of the Paradise in her vision:

The dead rested in peace and a few women were giving alms; there was so much light and peace everywhere, and the smell of hyacinths and violets reminded of spring, although I could see it was snowing on the right and the sun was shining on the left and in front the stars were in the sky: it was simultaneously summer, winter, spring, day and night and everybody could choose where to stay and what to do²⁷.

In the *F* novel, the Heaven becomes in a ridiculous way a brothel and Ileana, Ică’s daughter and Celce’s wife is the Empress:

The villagers called her the Empress, maybe because her father, as the people noticed, often talked about a place where all people should be emperors, not Gods: a man’s Eden situated on Earth, a real one. (...) the people could see how in this garden of Eden the old ones become young again and the young become adults. (...) they called her in fact not the Empress of love but of that part of the body which makes the man feel like an emperor²⁸.

Sevastița also describes the Hell, presenting all the tortures Moise’s henchmen are subjected to: “Grigore Bondoc put them

steal some wood from the forest and at night to light the fire because it was very cold, almost freezing in Hell, according to the Devil’s mood. And Calagerovici took a piece of wood...”²⁹, for which he was hit, kicked with the boots until his bones were broken. The opposition Heaven-Hell, antithetically presented in this novel, comes to prove the evil on Earth.

The bestiary has an important role at the epic level. The animals, the birds coexist heavenly with those marked by the gift of prophecy. The wolf pups, as a symbol of innocence, are raised by Eftimie, but Dolângă, in a fit of bestiality, rubs their eyes: “Eftimie remained the same and it seemed he did not want anything else but what he had already had. Hens and chicks were scratching in the dust and the ducks were splashing the water in the gutter near the fountain”³⁰. The animals get the value of moral emblems. The bull and the cow become the effigies of a world in dissolution, the horse called Herod killed by Patriciu suggests the anarchic force, and the rats the symbol of moral misery and abuse.

The animals become violent, borrowing human characteristics. It is the case of Gălătioan’s dog, Celce’s mice sent to eat Păun’s body, of Florentina Firulescu’s dogs which force Dănilă to enter in the Danube’s water. Through the behaviour of these animals the humanity’s demonic side in a period of total confusion is underlined.

The restoration of Greek mythology is achieved through a reevaluation of the myth of the labyrinth. In his novels, the author is preoccupied by: “the labyrinth of life as the absolute truth, in which the negation and affirmation face and complement each other”³¹. The labyrinth as that tortuous space located in the shadow of darkness has always been the author’s obsession.

The writer’s claims are embodied in the novels *F* and *Împăratul norilor* (*The Clouds’ Emperor*). *F* is a labyrinthine novel.



“The mythical motif of the labyrinth is here an aspiration to liberty and at the same time a conviction of moral monstrosity, of versatile characters (like Moise)³². *F* is in fact a debate-novel dedicated to people’s consciousness, to those serious moral processes about responsibility, errors, cowardice or dignity, about sentencing or rehabilitation of destinies, developing the crucial issues of life and death: “Knowing how to live with dignity and keeping the testimony of those who once existed become the leitmotifs of the novel. An elegiac and solemn leitmotif on behalf of the respect for the lost generations or for those called to die with dignity”³³.

The chapter “Cele șapte ferestre ale labirintului” (“The Seven Windows of the Labyrinth”) develops the theme of man as a labyrinth. Such an individual is Nicolae, a fellow villager of the prosecutor Tică Dunărințu. He assumes the killing of Moise, although he knows that is not true. After the investigation, Tică is convinced that Nicolae is innocent and in a short dialogue with Vasile, another character of the same novel, he concludes:

I knew he was convinced and he was going to repeat that every man is a labyrinth and that trying to understand Nicolae was useless, we wouldn’t find anything, he couldn’t even understand himself or find a solution, there was no escape from that labyrinth. Vasile’s words were so twisted and so simple at the same time: the man is a labyrinth that is looking for himself and cannot find him and certainly he does not know who he is, what he wants, what he has done. He is a stranger to himself unable to understand himself. Not only the social environment is like a maze, but also life in itself, as well as the individuals. Nicolae was trying in vain to get out of this maze, to run away, the

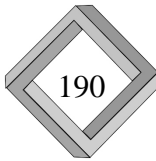
labyrinth was inside him³⁴.

D. R. Popescu deals with the meanings myths have in a classical way and he makes explicit reference to the Minotaur and Theseus from Greek literature, but in the same time he develops some ideas about the labyrinth related to the man from the Renaissance. One of the characters of the novel *Împăratul norilor* (*The Clouds’ Emperor*) says:

I believe strength lies in the darkness of the labyrinth, the dense darkness which cannot be entered, this is not clear; and this is because Daedalus, from a royal order, built this endless darkness for the monster, half bull, half man, this dark labyrinth where people should always be sacrificed for the large stomach of the monster, of the Minotaur. Rows of young girls and men in the insatiable belly of the Minotaur and those who tried to defeat the darkness by sword, all of them ended broken on the wheel and eaten by crows³⁵.

The greatest problem of all times was the question of how man could get out, escape from the labyrinth since darkness is endless:

In the darkness and the shadows of the labyrinth, many had tried, before Theseus’ attempt, to kill the Minotaur, but killing the monster and not coming back, without finding the way back to the light meant that they liked the darkness, becoming the princes of the darkness, or in other words becoming the Minotaur, murderers who felt the same need for blood. The conclusion is obvious: the one who forgets where he left from, forgets the way back to the



light and becomes power-hungry³⁶.

One case in the novels is Moise who in his greed for power, lost his reason, destroyed everything, not only his enemies but his friends too, his family arriving to self-destruction: “for Moise power is nothing else but a dark labyrinth in which even finishing as a winner, in order to survive implies destroying everything, first his enemies, then his friends and finally the relatives, his family”³⁷.

Ilarion, Moise’s son from an earlier relationship, believes that the labyrinth is inside his father and he cannot get out of it. The son is quite different from the father, having no sense of complicity in history. He wants to live freely, away from the dark labyrinth in which the father lives. Moise’s destiny proves that the way through the labyrinth of lies does not lead to liberty. The truth cannot be discovered by those living through lies. The solution for getting out of the maze was found by Ariadne, the woman who loved Theseus: “we might say that the solution came from her heart, out of love, and that only love escaped him and us from the Minotaur. Only the love for our fellows, with whom we share the ground, the water, our daily bread can make us think clearly and master our own lives”³⁸.

Moise, D. R. Popescu’s character, is a ridiculous correspondent of the spiritual father from the *Old Testament*. Moses from the *Bible* died before entering the Promised Land while Moise “the school teacher from Pătârlagele village is a disciple of lies and his punishment is the inability to get out of the labyrinth inside him. His family is cursed to perish, and he himself will not cross the Jordan River, in other words, he will not receive people’s forgiveness”³⁹. By using this myth of the labyrinth, D. R. Popescu wants to suggest nothing else but the communist dystopia.

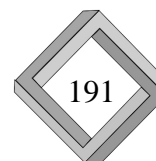
The process of remythisation and demythisation used by the author, in other words, the process of constructing and deconstructing in the novels is done “with the *Bible* on the table, I mean wiggling back and forth between Genesis and Revelation”⁴⁰, so having both the Bible and “Evenimentul zilei”⁴¹ (*The Daily Event*) on the table.

The people in the novels seem to be prisoners in a visceral universe, without faith, rejecting God. The demythisation corresponds to an intense mythical pole, a nucleus for the configuration of the reality in the writers’ latest novels such as *Dumnezeu în bucatărie, Paolo și Francesca și al treisprezecelea apostol* (*God is in the Kitchen, Paolo and Francesca and the Thirteenth Disciple*).

In this universe without faith, people feel trapped with no chance to escape. In Frank’s view from the novel *Orașul îngerilor* (*The City of the Angels*) the space, the world is like a belly of a whale in which everybody is prisoner, having no chance to get out to the light. It is an allusion to any political system, and also to the human condition that causes eternal sorrow, infinite unhappiness.

Moral degradation, the rebellion against God is directly expressed by the characters that use a language full of hatred: “If You are here Lord, come and give me an answer: Get out! Otherwise I spit You in the face, I scratch Your eyes...as Cornel, this man... Lord, if You are here, have the courage to give me the answer”⁴². These phrases remind us of the sixth Psalm written by Tudor Arghezi⁴³, in which the psalmist claims something which can be seen or touched in order to believe: “I want to touch You and then scream: that’s true!”⁴⁴.

The unconscious renunciation to God, out of an infinite pride, is represented not only through discourse, but also through symbolic gestures. Blasphemy is done in a grotesque way and in a total denial:



They took him out and carried him on their shoulders together with the cross, up to the river bank, but when to cross him to the other side, because of the cold water, they gave up and decided to let him float among the ice floes, (...) so he passed through the whole city, floating on that cross with his eyes towards the sky (...) A wave of rust from the nails and tin factory or from the sulphuric acid factory covered his face and arms⁴⁵.

In the novel *Iepurele șchiop (The Lame Rabbit)* the atheism takes grotesque forms. The prostitutes influenced by Barbara Cioculescu storm the church, dress up in the holy clothes used by priests and sing what they could remember of Christmas carols and Easter songs.

The sacred ritual of the wedding is also distorted. In the novel *Dumnezeu în bucătărie (God is in the Kitchen)* we read about some wedding guests who push a Trabant car on the stubble. The bride sits on the car hood drinking and screaming. This pathetic outbreak suggests the promiscuity of the guests: "Here is how Catargul used to drink his wine: he sat on a small chair in the bathtub and put a funnel directly into his throat, then Mrs. Titirișcă was pouring the wine (...). The bride was singing *Internaționala* and Catargul *The tenth regiment passes...*"⁴⁶.

The baptism is no more a form of Christianization, of preparation for a life guided by faith. It is mocked, the mythical time is absent: "I was too old to be baptised when my mother took me to the priest to make me a Christian"⁴⁷.

The faith in God, even the prayers are distorted emphasizing people's atheism in grotesque forms in a world which has lost any moral support:

Our father who are in Heaven give us the love for women, our daily love, and

lead us into temptation, for ever and ever, Amen! Former communists, dissidents as many as leaves and grass, revolutionaries with bearer certificates, present anticommunists – enemies or friends walking among statues in the park recently mown... Our father who are in Heaven give us our daily wine, said Mircea worshiping God among statues, tripping over a stone nose from a statue and whistling...⁴⁸.

In *Paolo și Francesca și al treisprezecelea apostol (Paolo and Francesca and the Thirteenth Disciple)*, D. R. Popescu takes over and assimilates the mythologies, as well as the real events managing to write a complex novel, a representative novel for the image of the Romanian society at the beginning of the 21st century. One of our critics, Aureliu Goci, considers it the *total novel*.

This novel has two concentric plans that focus on the development of its basic meanings. Mirela Marin, another Romanian critic, considers that the novel has an allegorical meaning (it focuses on the process of literary creation), but also she notes the extra-meaning of the novel because in a way it is a mythical-philosophical novel which deals with capturing the human condition by revealing some important aspects such as love, friendship, death, art. The conclusion is dramatically emphasized. It seems that nothing can save the humanity from involution.

The novel has a complex structure, with fourteen epic cores which are highly mythical and doubled by the process of demythisation. The main hero, Mircea Zero Kopros, is Jesus' thirteenth disciple, although the *Bible* mentions only twelve. In the second epic core a first similarity between the character and Jesus is determined. Biblical references are everywhere in this novel: "Joseph and

Mary, Jesus' parents...What did they do when they found out that Herod was going to kill all the babies, under the age of two, in his desire to kill the Saviour of the world? They ran to Egypt to save the holy infant!"⁴⁹. In the fifth epic core, Mircea seems to be a real disciple, a version of the real Jesus: "the clay and the doubts in the Son of God?...Or Jesus himself was the thirteenth disciple, the one who believed the most, the one who doubted most, knowing what it was going to happen to him and his sacrifice?"⁵⁰.

The wedding that took place in the hermitage looks like a farce. Daniela considers herself Mary Magdalene who corrupted Jesus. The Last Supper and the Crucifixion are parodied. Mircea Zero Kopros wakes up from a dream, at the age of 35, on the streets of a burg "in a lively hell, in a hell remained on the earth's surface", and he feels as if he was crucified: "I turned on the cross, in other words I allowed those jerks to have fun and whisper behind my back... They had no idea that I could understand the world better from the cross"⁵¹. Then the character identifies himself with Jesus, takes his place on the cross and expresses his grief, his doubt before extinction:

I felt pity for the Son of God and I got him down from the cross with my sinful hands and told him to go away from that place, from Golgotha...then, dressed in His clothes, I took his place on the cross, and about the ninth hour I cried out in a loud voice saying „Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?" that is „My God, why have You forsaken me?" (...) and it was finished. At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two, the rocks were split and the graves opened. He could not die, he did not die, he just took me in his arms out of the grave so that people might believe Jesus has risen from the dead⁵².

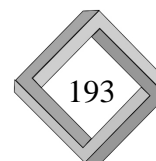
Towards the end of the novel, the author describes the scene of rejection of the biblical pair from Eden and its sending on the Earth:

If we replay the scene with the rejection of the two sinful pedestrians from Eden, we notice that they were sent to an evil place – the Earth itself! So God said to Adam: Because you listened to your wife and ate from the tree about which I commanded you: You must not eat from it! Cursed is the ground for you... It will produce thorns and thistles for you and you shall eat the plants of the field. This land without animals, birds, fish, and fruits is a place of exile⁵³.

In conclusion, we can state that the myths constructed and deconstructed in ridiculous attempts, even under grotesque forms, can be found in the entire work of this writer. "The key to understanding works of art is in reading myths"⁵⁴. D. R. Popescu turns to mythology in order to clarify various concepts concerning the problems of the modern society: liberty, heroism, the good, and the evil. So we notice that the author turns to the myth when the reality or the rational mechanisms of the world were distorted. The image of the degraded humanity is a major constancy of this author's work. The distorted vision is hard and it springs from the belief that only the acceptance and the recognition of the mistakes could save a nation whose politicians destroy everything.

Bibliography

- Danièle Chauvin, André Siganos, Philippe Walter (dir.), *Questions de mythocritique: dictionnaire*, Paris, Imago, 2005.
Gilbert Durand, *Figures mythiques et*



visages de l'œuvre. De la mythocritique à la mythanalyse, Paris, Berg International, 1979.

Gilbert Durand, *Structurile antropologice ale imaginarului*, Bucharest, Univers, 1977.

Gilbert Durand, *Aventurile imaginii. Imaginația simbolică. Imaginarul*, Bucharest, Nemira, 1999.

Gilbert Durand, *Introducere în mitologie. Mituri și societăți*, Cluj-Napoca, Dacia, 2004.

Mircea Eliade, *Mituri, vise și mistere*. Translated by Maria Ivănescu and Cezar Ivănescu, Bucharest, Univers, 1998.

Aureliu Goci, *Romane și Romancierii în secolul XX*, Bucharest, Fundația PRO, 2000.

Ioan Holban, *Profiluri epice contemporane*, Bucharest, Cartea Românească, 1987.

Marian Popa, *Dicționar de literatură română contemporană*, Bucharest, Albatros, 1977.

D. R., Popescu, *Cei doi din dreptul Țebeii*, Cluj-Napoca, Dacia, 1973.

D. R. Popescu, *O bere pentru calul meu*, Craiova, Scrisul Românesc, 1974.

D. R. Popescu, *Împăratul norilor*, Bucharest, Eminescu, 1976.

D. R. Popescu, *Vînătoarea regală*, Bucharest, Eminescu, 1976.

D. R. Popescu, *Ploile de dincolo de vreme*, Cluj-Napoca, Dacia, 1978.

D. R. Popescu, *Virgule*, Cluj-Napoca, Dacia 1978.

D. R. Popescu, *Viața și opera lui Tiron B. I - Iepurele șchiop*, Bucharest, Cartea Românească, 1980.

D. R. Popescu, *Viața și opera lui Tiron B. II - Podul de gheață*, Cluj-Napoca, Dacia, 1982.

D. R. Popescu, *Orașul îngerilor*, Bucharest, Cartea Românească, 1985.

D. R. Popescu, *F*, Bucharest, Cartea Românească 1986.

D. R. Popescu, *Dumnezeu în bucătărie*, Bucharest, Viitorul Românesc, 1994.

D. R. Popescu, *Paolo și Francesca și al*

treisprezecelea apostol, Bucharest, 100+1 Gramar, 1998.

Mirela Roznoveanu, *Dumitru Radu Popescu*, Bucharest, Albatros, 1981.

Eugen Simion, *Scritori români de azi*, vol IV, Bucharest, Cartea Românească, 1989.

Valentin Tașcu, *Dincoace și dincolo de F*, Cluj-Napoca, Dacia, 1981.

Ion Vlad, *Convergențe*, Cluj-Napoca, Dacia, 1972.

Jean-Jacques Wunenburger, *Utopia sau criza imaginarului*, Cluj-Napoca, Dacia, 2001.

Notes

¹ Mircea Eliade, *Mituri, vise și mistere*. Translated by Maria Ivănescu and Cezar Ivănescu, Bucharest, Univers, 1998, p. 135. The quote is translated from Romanian: „Marele mister constă în faptul că sacrul chiar se manifestă (...) manifestându-se sacrul se limitează, se istoricizează și astfel se limitează și încetează de a mai fi absolut”. All the translations, either from novels or critical studies, in this paper belong to the author.

² Gilbert Durand, *Structurile antropologice ale imaginarului*. Traducere de Marcel Aderca, Bucharest, Univers Enciclopedic, 2000, p. 348. The quote is translated from Romanian: „Mitul dobândește (...) structură sincronică deoarece e veșnică reîncepere a unei cosmogonii, și prin aceasta un remediu contra timpului și a morții, deoarece conține în sine un principiu de apărare și de conservare pe care-l comunică ritului”.

³ Valentin Tașcu, *Dincoace și dincolo de F*, Cluj-Napoca, Dacia, 1981, p. 222. Translated from Romanian: „D. R. Popescu crede în multiplă funcționalitate a mitului în lumea contemporană. Aceasta pentru că lumea însăși, la limita unei fantezii obligatorii, se consideră în permanentă ambianță

mitologică (...), mituri perene produc realitate (...)

⁴ Jean-Jacques Wunenburger, *Utopia sau criza imaginarului*, Cluj-Napoca, Dacia, 2001, p. 75. Translated from Romanian: „(...) de deformare, de defigurare vizând dezvoltarea elementelor oculate în discursul original”.

⁵ Valentin Tașcu, *Dincoace și dincolo de F*, p. 223. Translated from Romanian: „Astfel se întâmplă că atât mitul, ca valoare absolută, cât și realitatea, ca banalitate absolută, sunt respinse instinctiv de autor. Mijloacele sunt, ca de obicei, surprinzător de simple: desacralizarea mitului și sacralizarea realității întâmplătoare”.

⁶ Jean-Jacques Wunenburger, *Utopia sau criza imaginarului*, p. 271. Translated from Romanian: „Totalitarismul își trădează deci mai limpede ca niciodată apartenența la logica utopică (...) societățile totalitare sunt niște lumi logomahice, în care numai recurgând la o rostire mimetică și utopică poți învinge faptele. Așadar se poate vorbi despre o veritabilă «logocrație»: «se produce o sciziune între realitate și suprarrealitate (...)»”.

⁷ D. R. Popescu, *Cei doi din dreptul Tebei*, Cluj-Napoca, Dacia, 1973, p. 115.

The translation in English of the original quotations from D. R. Popescu's novels used in the present paper is extremely difficult, taking into account the specific language peculiarities of this writer, so the translations provided will be just guidelines for understanding. They also belong to the author of this text. The notes contain the original version of all the translations: “îl duceau deci pe Ciungu pe măgar spre locul cu cruce unde fuseseră popii duși, ca pe Iisus Cristos în batjocură, întrebându-l întinzându-i un pahar cu vin dacă le poate da lor paharul mântuirii (...)”.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 137. “Domnilor, sunteți niște îngeri! Într-adevăr niște îngeri puși pe șotii, nevinovați și curați ca lacrima. Și cum să fiți voi vinovați de ceva, doar n-aveți cap, îngerii nu au cap, ei au doar aripi și capul lor e la Dumnezeu. Și bine faceți! Voi sunteți îngerii Domnului!”.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 64. “Dumnezeu să vă dăruiască nuntă cinstită și pat neîntinat și să vă trimită el dragoste desăvârșită și pașnică”.

¹⁰ D. R. Popescu, *Vânătoarea regală*, Bucharest, Eminescu, 1976, p. 166. This is a quote from *Panihida* belonging to the monk Ioan Damaschin, used in the orthodox funeral service (the laymen funeral). It does not have an equivalent translation into English. “Care mărire stă pe pământ neschimbată, care suflare, care înălțare? Și care desfătare lumească este lipsită de întristare? Toate sunt mai neputincioase decât umbra, toate mai înșelătoare decât visurile... O clipă numai, o clipă și pe toate acestea moartea le apucă”.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 167. Another quote from a religious prayer dedicated to the soul of the dead.

¹² An ironic expression used by irreligious Romanian people to mock the Christian religion.

¹³ D. R. Popescu, *F*, Bucharest, Casa Românească, 1986, p. 128 – “oameni de piatră, nu-i lovește nicio durere, nu-i atinge nicio tristețe iremediabilă, carne de piatră, suflete de piatră, fără simțire, moarte – dacă nici moartea mamei lor, a bunicii lor nu-i schimbă și o suportă ca pe o ciorbă”.

¹⁴ D. R. Popescu, *Împăratul norilor*, Bucharest, Eminescu, 1976, p. 123. A specific Romanian curse used by old ladies in the countryside to send away the evil spirits. It makes specific reference to old superstitions according to which old ladies were able to cure somebody by means of curses.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 175. The curse Calagherovici's mother uses to curse the woman that led her son to death. Because of the rhyme and the non-equivalence between the two languages such folkloric structures cannot be translated.

¹⁶ D. R. Popescu, *Vânătoarea regală*, p. 49. "Au părăsit Egiptul, unde faraonii le uciseseră copiii și-i chinaseră și-i umiliseră, conduși de Moise (Moise ar însemna "cel scos din apă"). Fusese pus într-un coș de papură uns cu smoală pe Nil ca să nu fie, copil, omorât de egipteni. Îl găsisse fiica faraonului, care era bălbâit (...) Moise, cel care a ridicat toiagul și-a despicat Marea Roșie în două și-a găsit un drum, un adevăr, o cale, o scăpare evreilor, era bălbâit ca Petrache Lupu de la Maglavid".

¹⁷ D. R. Popescu, *O bere pentru calul meu*, Craiova, Scrisul Românesc, 1974, p. 188. – "(...) umilit de cărnurile și pielea lui cânta o bazaconie sperând să nu-i găsească la bojoci o tuberculoză".

¹⁸ D. R. Popescu, *Ploile de dincolo de vreme*, Cluj-Napoca, Dacia, 1976, p. 130. – "(...) un ins care se mănâncă singur, se devoră singur, ca un șarpe, la nesfârșit, fără scăpare".

¹⁹ D. R. Popescu, *Împăratul norilor*, p. 77. "Moise (...) are o mie de fețe, pe care nu le cunoști când spune adevărul și când minte. Uită-te mai bine la fața lui: e ca un Sfinx".

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 404. – "înfrângerea omului cu corn ar fi fost o salvare nu doar pentru ea și pentru cei duși și pentru memoria lor, ci mai ales pentru cei adormiți ca Ghenadie sau nepăsători sau fricoși; pieirea lui era necesară ca o apă ce cară și curăță zoaiele, ca un triumf al onoarei lui Horia și Calagherovici și ca o dovadă că omenia nu e o pasăre singură și săracă printre alice și hăitași plătiți...".

²¹ Mirela Roznoveanu, *D. R. Popescu*, Bucharest, Albatros, 1981, p. 145-146. "Moise

poate fi laolaltă Minotaurul, Sfinxul, Me-fisto, Diavolul, un personaj ossianic din Balcani, un Moise modern care, după ce propovăduiește și îndură pe pământul promis a rămas pe dinafara acestui pământ, lui nu i-a fost dat să intre în el".

²² Ioan Holban, *Profiluri epice contemporane*, Bucharest, Cartea Românească, 1987, p. 80-81. – "victimele și călăii, cei puternici și cei slabi, naratorii și personajele, cei ce povestesc și cei ce prevestesc, martorii și anchetatorii – toate «măștile» personajului lui D. R. Popescu se conturează în perspectiva efortului cunoașterii și al dovedirii libertății sale (...) fiecare își creează o lume și o istorie numai ale sale, în care se cuprind și lumea și istoria timpului".

²³ D. R. Popescu, *Vânătoarea regală*, p. 130. "Toate astea sunt întâmplări, faptele și întâmplările n-au nicio importanță (...) importante nu sunt aceste întâmplări că Horia e în cutare mormânt, că Țeavălungă Costică a băgat secera în gâtul lui frate-său, contează ce credem noi despre ele, de le uităm sau nu, de zicem că-s bune sau le blestemăm, de-o să asmuțim și noi câinii pe doctori sau nu, de în sufletul nostru le trecem la bine sau la negru. Omul, la urma urmei, nu e decât o cruce de oase".

²⁴ D. R. Popescu, *Cei doi din dreptul Țebeii*, p. 25. – "(...) nu-i văzusem zbatându-se cum se zbătea popa Dumitru sau Aladar și moartea acum dusă din gură în gură mi se părea că nu este altceva decât această zbatere nervoasă și această spaimă de a nu-ți vedea trupul arătând murdărit de propriile tale gunoaie și slăbiciuni".

²⁵ D. R. Popescu, *O bere pentru calul meu*, p. 147. – "(...) n-o să fac din Fruntelată un trădător și n-o să-i dau treizeci de arginți" or "Acesta este trupul meu și beți dintru acesta toți". Jesus' words from the Bible are distorted.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 138. “Baba Sevastița se duce în rai și în iad când vrea, doar pune capul pe căpătâi și este în lumea de dincolo, dorind să știe totul, și ce este dincolo de moarte. Poate că pentru ea raiul și iadul sunt ca pentru noi piața și parcul”.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 139. “Se odihneau morții și câte-va muieri împărțeau bragă și era o lumină peste tot răcoroasă și plină de pace și mirosul a zambile și a violele și a primăvară, deși în dreapta vedeam cum ninge și în stânga cum bate soarele și înainte cum apăruseră stelele pe cer: era în același timp și vară și iarnă și primăvară și ziua și noapte și fiecare putea să-și aleagă unde să stea și ce să facă”.

²⁸ D. R. Popescu, *F*, p. 185. “Satul îi ziseseră: împărăteasa, fiindcă tatăl ei, observaseră oamenii de la o vreme, vorbea despre un rai unde oamenii trebuie să fie împărați, nu Dumnezeu: un rai al omului, pe pământ (...) real, lumea văzuse doar cum în grădina raiului împărătesei Ileana, cei bătrâni devin tineri și cei tineri oameni maturi (...) Ei îi ziceau mai concret, nu împărăteasa dragostei (...) ci împărăteasa acestei părți a omului care-l face să se simtă împărat”.

²⁹ D. R. Popescu, *O bere pentru calul meu*, p. 156. – “îi puna Grigore Bondoc să fure o țandără din pădure și s-o pună noaptea pe foc, că e foarte frig... foarte ger, ce mai, îngheață pietrele în iad, după cum e dispoziția ăluia cu coada îmbârligată. Și Calagherovici lua o bucată de lemn...”.

³⁰ D. R. Popescu, *Ploile de dincolo de vreme*, p. 69. “Eftimie rămăsese la fel și se vede că nu-și dorea altceva decât ce avea. Cloțe cu pui răcăiau în țărână și rațe cu gâtul golaș se bălăceau în crovul de lângă jghebul fântânii”.

³¹ Marian Popa, *Dicționar de literatură română contemporană*, Bucharest, Albatros, 1977, p. 445. – “(...) labirintul vieții ca adevăr

absolut, în care negația și afirmația se confruntă și se complinesc”.

³² Ion Vlad, *Convergențe*, Cluj-Napoca, Dacia, 1972, p. 301. “Motivul mitic al labirintului e aici o aspirație spre eliberare și-n același timp o condamnare a monstuo-zității morale, a caracterelor versatile”.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 301. “A ști să trăiești cu demnitate și să păstrezi mărturia celor care au fost devine un leitmotiv al romanului. Un leitmotiv intonat elegiac și grav în numele respectului față de generațiile dispărute sau chemate să moară cu demnitate”.

³⁴ D. R. Popescu, *F*, p. 409-410. – “știam că el e convins și o să-mi repete că orice om e un labirint și că degeaba bunăoară acum căutăm să vedem ce este înăuntru acestui labirint care se numea Nicolae: tot n-aveam să aflăm nimic și nici el, chiar de-și știa cumva gândurile și observa ce este în afara lui tot n-avea nicio soluție, nu exista nicio ieșire în ultimă instanță din acest labirint. Era întortocheat ce spunea Vasile și foarte simplu în același timp: omul este un labirint ce se caută pe sine și nu se găsește și cu siguranță nu știe cine este, ce vrea, ce-a făcut. E un necunoscut el față de sine și nu se poate cunoaște. Și nu doar mediul social este un labirint fără ieșire, ci și viața e, și omul în primul rând. Degeaba voia Nicoale să scape din acest labirint, să fugă din el, labirintul era în el”.

³⁵ D. R. Popescu, *Împăratul norilor*, p. 354. “Cred că forța labirintului stă în negura din el, în densul întuneric ce nu poate fi surpat: și nu poate fi fiindcă, din ordin regesc, Dedal a construit acest întuneric fără întoarcere pentru burta monstrului jumătate taur și jumătate om, acest labirint de negură în care să fie mereu sacrificați oameni pentru burta neîncăpătoare și de întuneric, pentru burta minotaurului. Șiruri de tinere fete și de tineri bărbați ce sălășluiră în seculi întunecați



în pânțele nesătul al minotaurului și cei care încearcă să taie cu sabia întunericul sfârșiră trași pe roată și mâncați de corbi (...).

³⁶ Ibid., p. 355. – “(...) în umbra și în întunericul puternic și al puterii din labirint poate, mulți ajunseseră înaintea lui Tezeu să-l omoare pe Minotaur, dar ucigând monstrul și nevenind înapoi, neștiind drumul către lumină înseamnă că le plăcu întunericul și că și ei deveniră prinți ai întunericului, sau mai pe șleau minotauri, asasini ce doriră la rândul lor jertfe și tribut de sânge pentru burta lor. Problema e și mai clară: cine uită de unde a plecat își uită rădăcinile și calea spre lumină și prinde gustul puterii”.

³⁷ D. R. Popescu, *Împăratul norilor*, p. 356. – “și pentru Moise ce e puterea decât un labirint întunecos în care chiar terminând învingător, ca să trăiască (nemaștiind drumul spre ziua de-afară și spre lumină) a început să ceară și să mănânce tot ce i-a dat și nu s-a sfiit să-și înghită dușmanii întâi, apoi prietenii, ca la urmă pe cei de-un sânge cu el, din familia lui (...)”.

³⁸ Ibid., p. 355-356. – “(...) s-ar putea spune că ideea a venit din inima ei, adică din dragoste, și că numai dragostea pentru viața lui l-a scăpat și ne-a scăpat de minotaur. Numai dragostea față de semenii cu care împărțim pământul, și apa, și pâinea ne poate limpezi viața și face stăpâni pe propria noastră viață”

³⁹ Eugen Simion, *Scriitori români de azi IV*, Bucharest, Cartea Românească, 1989, p. 224. – “învățătorul din Pătârlagele este un apostol al minciunii și pedeapsa lui este să nu poată ieși din labirintul instalat în ființa lui. Neamul lui e blestemat să se stingă și el însuși nu va trece Iordanul, nu va cunoaște, altfel spus, liniștea și iertarea oamenilor”.

⁴⁰ Aureliu Goci, *Romane și romancierii în sec. XX*, Bucharest, Fundația PRO, 2000, p.

330. – “cu Biblia pe masă, adică pendulând între Facere și Apocalipsă”.

⁴¹ A well-known Romanian newspaper.

⁴² D. R. Popescu, *Podul de gheață*, Cluj-Napoca, Dacia, 1982, p. 176. “Dacă ești aici, Doamne, Dumnezeuule, ieși și răspunde: Ieși! Altfel te scuipe în față, îți zgârii ochii alor tăi...că și Cornel, și omul ăsta. Doamne, dacă ești, ai curajul și răspunde...”.

⁴³ Arghezi is known in Romanian literature for his religious psalms in which he expresses his belief in God but only based on clear evidence.

⁴⁴ “Vreau să te pipăi și să urlu: Este!”.

⁴⁵ D. R. Popescu, *Podul de gheață*, p. 62. “L-au scos de acolo și l-au purtat pe umeri, cu cruce cu tot, până pe malul râului, dar când să-l treacă dincolo, apa fiind rece, au renunțat și-au zis să-i dea drumul la vale, printre sloiuri, să vadă cum plutește (...) și-așa a trecut prin mijlocul orașului, plutind cu fața în sus pe crucea înaltă, cu ochii la cer. (...) Un val de rugină i-a acoperit fața și mâinile din scursorile de la fabrica de cuie și tinichea și de la combinatul de acid sulfuric”.

⁴⁶ D. R. Popescu, *Dumnezeu în bucătărie*, Bucharest, Viitorul Românesc, 1994, p. 131. “Cum se umplea Catargul de vin: se așeza pe un scăunel, în vană, pune o pâlnie în gât (direct în gât) și doamna Titirișcă...gâl! gâl! gâl! (...) Mireasa cânta Internaționala, iar Catargul regimentul zece, trece, tu-tuu!”.

⁴⁷ D. R. Popescu, *Vânătoarea regală*, p. 32. – “și când m-a dus mama să mă boteze eram prea mare ca să mă mai bage popa în cazanul cu apă și să mă lepede de satana”.

⁴⁸ D. R. Popescu, *Paolo și Francesca și al treisprezecelea apostol*, Bucharest, 100+1 Gramar, 1998, p. 211-212. A distorted version of the well-known *Our father* prayer: “Tatăl nostru carele ești în ceruri, dă-ne nouă iubirea noastră de femei, cea de toate

zilele, și ne duce pe noi în ispită, acum și în vecii vecilor, Amin! Comuniștii de ieri, disidenții cât frunza și iarba, revoluționarii, cu certificate la purtător, anticomuniștii de azi, criptocomuniștii și cleptocomuniștii – toți în păr, dușmani și prieteni, prin parcul de curând cosit, la plimbare, printre statui (...). Tatăl nostru carele ești în ceruri, dă-ne nouă zaibărul nostru cel de toate zilele și nopțile, se închina Mircea (adică eu), printre statui, dând cu stângul în câte un nas de piatră căzut la podea (pe iarbă) și fluierând din buze, fiuu, fiuu”.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 123. “Iosif și Maria, părinții (prezumtivi) ai lui Iisus. Ce-au făcut ei când au aflat că Irod va ucide toți pruncii, până la doi ani, ca să-l poată omorî pe Mântuitorul lumii, Cristos? Au fugit în Egipt, să-l scape de sabie pe pruncul sfânt”.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 147. – “(...) partea de lut și de îndoieli în divinul Fiu?...Sau nu cumva însuși Hristos era al 13 lea apostol, cel care credea cel mai tare și cel ce se îndoia cel mai mult, știind ce o să fie cu El și ce-o să se aleagă din jertfa Sa”.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 281. “Mă-ntorsei pe cruce, adică îi lăsați pe lampagiii și labagiii de altădată să-și dea coate și să mă spurce în şușoteli. Habar n-aveau că de pe cruce lumea se vede mai bine”.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 322-323. – “(...) mie atunci mi s-a făcut milă de Fiul Domnului și l-am dat jos de pe cruce cu labele mele și i-am spus să se

îndepărteze de locul numit Golgota, care înseamnă Locul Căpățâniei, și că, îmbrăcat în hainele lui, mi-am potrivit mâinile și picioarele în cielele răstignirii sale, strigând cu glas mare, când s-a făcut lumină, în ceasul al nouălea: “Eli, Eli, lama sabahtani?” adică “Dumnezeul Meu, pentru ce M-ai părăsit?” (...) și apoi eu mi-am dat duhul, de s-a sfâșiat în două de sus până jos catapeteasma templului și pietrele s-au despicat, și mormintele s-au deschis. El nu putea muri, el nici n-a murit, el doar m-a luat în brațe din mormântul în care am fost pus, ca să pară că a înviat Cristos”.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 365. “Dacă vom derula din nou scena alungării celor doi pietoni păcătoși din grădina Edenului, vom constata că ei au fost vărsați într-un peisaj damnat – care e însuși pământul! Căci i-a zis Dumnezeu lui Adam: “Pentru că ai ascultat vorba femeii tale și ai mâncat din pomul din care ți-am poruncit : Să nu mănânci, blestemat va fi pământul pentru tine (iată cum îl subliniem noi și pe Dumnezeu)... spini și pălămidă îți va rodi el și te vei hrăni cu iarba câmpului.” Acest pământ, lipsit de dobitoace, de păsări, de pești, de fructe etc (rămase în rai!) e un loc al surghiunului”.

⁵⁴ Gilbert Durand, *Figures mythiques et visages de l'œuvre. De la mythocritique à la mythanalyse*, Paris, Berg International, 1979, p. 293. – “cheia pentru înțelegerea operelor de artă (...) este lectura mitului”.