A Romanian Literary Topos – the Baragan Plain

Even though we usually define ourselves according to what Blaga called “the mioritic space”, “the undulatory space”, the matrix-space with the alternation hill-valley, we have to take into consideration the other geographic areas of the Romanian territory. Nevertheless, “the mioritic space” is not the only representative land of Romania and it is not the only territory that could help the writers’ imagination.

Besides the Carpathians and the hills, a vast plain lays in the south. It is the Danube Plain which includes the Baragan. This is the Romanian prairie that reminds us of the Russian steppe, of the Hungarian pusta, but also of the unlimited sea or ocean: the same immensity, and the same illusion of no boundaries.

The immensity of the Baragan was described in literature in very different manners and from different points of view as well by some Romanian writers such as Alexandru Odobescu (1834–1895), Panait Istrati (1884–1935), Mircea Eliade (1907–1986), George Calinescu (1899–1965), Marin Preda (1922–1980), Stefan Banulescu (1926–1998), Fanus Neagu (1932–2011), etc.

In our paper we present – in a few chapters which borrow the titles from a significant sentence that appears in the writers’ novels - the different aspects of Baragan. Thus, this territory is described as a Romanian Arcadia, a yellow land with an abundance of corn, a “miraculous” plain, a country of the flock of bustards, but also the country of the thistles, etc.

As a conclusion, for many Romanian writers the Baragan plain has always been geography beyond real, or rather a utopia and a myth.