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Key words: Păcală, picaresque, rogue, medieval town, rural traditional community, trickster

Păcală, the Romanian Traditional Rogue, Trickster and Wanderer

Summary

The present study is a first attempt to reevaluate a famous series of Romanian traditional folk-tales from the perspective of the picaresque story. These stories appeared in the rural Romania roughly at the same time when the picaresque story appeared in Spain and then was soon acknowledged in Britain, France and Germany, as a reaction to the development of the medieval town with its problems. The picaroon, or the rogue is the main character of these stories, with its more dramatic or humorous characteristics, but displaying the same main features. We think that the Romanian hero Păcală belongs to the same family of heroes, he is a picaroon: a poor orphan, trying to find his place in society, having a profound understanding of human nature, playing on people's vices and greed, lying and deceiving in order to find a place in society, wearing various masks, planning tricks, etc. At the same time, the Romanian rogue story has other characteristics than the Spanish 'original' due to the special condition of the Romanian rural community, with its beliefs and behaviours. Thus, Păcală is meditative, but rarely introspective, he accepts things for what they are, not questioning their status, he understands the rules of the village and tries to find a place in his own village (unlike Spanish or English rogues who run as far as possible from their birthplaces, so that they can pretend to be someone they are not).

In the following studies, separate Păcală tales will be considered from the point of view of the picaresque content, form and style characteristics.

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