

AIR AND WATER, PREMISES FOR A LITTLE KNOWN DOMAIN OF BIOCLIMATOLOGY, PSYCHO-HYDRO-CLIMATOLOGY

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ABSTRACT. Air and Water, premises for a little known domain of bioclimatology, psycho-hydro-climatology. Article shows the relationship between climatic phenomena and psychological events. Psychoclimatology includes pathological aspects, as well as therapeutic aspects.

Climate may trigger the development of artistic works, prose, poetry, painting or music. Artists are especially sensitive to nebulosity, rain, wind, lake, sea.

Key words: psycho-hydro-climatology, air, water, artistic manifestations

1. INTRODUCTION

The influence of environmental factors (of climate ones in particular) on the human body has been long known and numerous studies have been devoted to this topic. Let's remember that heat makes us sweat, while cold makes us shiver; much humidity in winter increases the sensation of cold, in summer the air becomes stuffy; windy weather, irrespective of high or low temperature, creates discomfort.

Yet, not so well known is the influence of natural factors on the psyche. What the geographer intends to do is to tackle this aspect from a psychoclimatological viewpoint. Psychoclimatology is a discipline in which Geography and the Medical Sciences meet². It is common knowledge that works of art – prose, poetry, music, and painting, offer insights into people's mental response, enabling the researcher to sense the psychical reaction stirred by some hydroclimatic aspects or events and provide therapeutically indication and perhaps also insights into some of nature's manifestation.

Natural factors many trigger specific symptoms in a depressive, maniacal individual, with asthenic, anxious, depressive or euphoric, obsessive hysterical or

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² The term **psychoclimatology** was introduced in 1934 by M. Piéry, professor of Therapeutical Hydrology and Climatology at the Faculty of Medicine, Lyon (France), in his *Traité de climatologie biologique et médicale*. The chapter devoted to this subject discussed the way in which the geographical features of the geographical environment, mainly air and water, can be used for therapeutical purposes. Psychoclimatology adds to other chapters of Psychotherapy bordering on nature, society, the arts, etc. (Aesthetotherapy, Arttherapy, Melotherapy, Family therapy, Group therapy, Ergotherapy – work-based therapy, and Ethnotherapy).

Because the paper include and the influence of the water surfaces on the artistic creation, we added the term "hydro", so we completed the original term and we created a new word **psycho-hydro-climatology**.

other types of neuroses. On the other hand, they may hinder a well-balanced activity, also generating artistic leanings which are dealt with by **Aesthetoclimatology**. This discipline looks at some climatic aspects that influence one's state of mind, strengthening mental health, disposition, behaviour and preventing mental diseases.

There are numerous examples of artistic response when one beholds a landscape, be it overcast, rainy, sun-covered, windy, stormy, at the sea-side, close to a spring, a mountain or lowland stream.

The artist has the capacity to express in his work what most people are likely to feel in certain moments of their life when, in the midst of nature, one witnesses ordinary or unusual manifestation of the local weather.

2. HYDROCLIMATIC ELEMENTS IN SUPPORT OF ARTISTIC EXPRESSION AND A PREMISE FOR THE STUDY OF PSYCHOCLIMATOLOGY

One of the most interesting cases liable to being studied from a psychoclimatological perspective is that of the Latin poet Ovid, exiled on the Black Sea coast in AD 8-17. In his *Epistles from Exile* he left us verses of exquisite beauty, suggesting the pressure put on the psyche of a Mediterranean poet obliged to live in a hostile environment of harsh winters with raging snowstorms, on the shores of a frozen sea as far as eye could see. His obsessive rhymes suggest the "narrowing of the field of conscience", a symptom described by P. Janet (1899) in his studies of psychoasthenia as follows: the focalisation of conscience on an idea, recollection, action, etc., the individual is haunted by and cannot get rid of.

Lots of artists appear to be obsessed with the manifestations of weather.

André Gide acknowledges that his mood depends on air *temperature* and on "Jupiter's frowns; Stendhal, very sensitive to temperature variations, could hardly cope with the heat of the Mediterranean shores.

Marcel Proust confessed to being a live barometer, vibrating with any vibration of the weather. There are few writers whose characters are not meteorosensitive. George Simenon for instance, created a healthy character, at home in any kind of weather: He loved whatever weather, ... particularly its extremes reported in next-day papers, deluges, tornadoes, biting frost and torrid heat

Another element artists are very sensitive to is *nebulosity*, the display of various types of clouds on a blue or overcast sky – Cirrus or Cumulus, in fine or stormy weather. Choosing from among the host of descriptions signed Baudelaire, Victor Hugo, Herman Hesse, Shelley, Rilke, Petru Creția, Geo Bogza and many others is a difficult task. Thinking of painting we could recall the exquisite poetry and profound realism of Constable's trains of clouds. In music we have Debussy's first cycle of *Nocturnes* titled The Clouds, which fascinates the listener with delicate, unstable and capricious musical vibrations suggestive of the passage of clouds on the sky.

Rain is one of the major phenomena that stimulates a certain mental disposition, usually melancholy, sadness, discouragement. There are lots of descriptions to this effect in the literature, e.g. Bacovia, a well-known Romanian poet, was deeply influenced by what weather specialists name precipitation; similarly Rilke, Pierre Loti, Emile Zola and Baudelaire, etc. In painting rain becomes an intuition rather than a visual reality. See Corot, Cezanne, Levitan, Luchian, Claude Monet, who convey a moist, heavy and glooms atmosphere.

Snow appears to be quite a temptation for painters, remember Turner, Sisely, Shishkin, the Japanese landscape, but also for some poets, from Homer to modern ones, like the Romanians Minulescu, Ion Barbu, or Bakonsky.

Wind does not leave artists, nor ordinary people either, indifferent. Analysing weather aspects in the work of the Romanian writer Mihail Sadoveanu, Nicolae Topor, a Romanian met specialist shows the author to be almost pathologically “allergic” to wind. Windy weather usually disturbs, irritates, and causes discomfort, lots of examples in Ovid, Homer, Stendhal, Victor Hugo, Paul Claudel, and Shakespeare. However, seldom it is true, the unleashed forces of nature may induce a complex, positive response. For example, many of Hermna Hesse’s pages offer a superb description of the Föhn blowing on the northern slopes of the Alps.

One of the most spectacular phenomena with a powerful effect on man’s psyche is no doubt *the tempest* in the writings of Homer, Victor Hugo or Jules Renard, in the paintings of landscape artists like Turner and Ayvazovski, or in the music of Vivaldi (*The Seasons*), Beethoven (*The Sixth Symphony*), Richard Strauss (*Die Alpen Symphonie*), or intuited in Tchaikovsky’s storms.

Very dear to the artists’ heart are the bodies of water, be it deep down in the sea, lowland or mountain lakes, rivers, waterfalls, or oceans.

In his collection of songs to the Spirit of Water, Goethe suggests a similitude between Man’s soul and water, a view that might explain in part the attraction, fear connected with the symbols of water, basically lust, disturbance, instability and endlessness embodied by this vital element.

Thommas Mann gives a description of composer Adrian Leverkühn’s submersion with the bathyscaphe; H.G. Wells imagines the world of the deep populated by strange beings; Andersen’s little sirein or Oscar Wilde’s mairmaid love and sing, but their stories have a sad ending, because the world of those beings is too different from that of men.

A refined and delicate picture of the lake is found in Eminescu, Lamartine, Cinchiz Aitmatov, and the list could continue. Here is only one example, probably unknown even to the Romanian readers. It is a fragment from *The Deserted Garden*, a volume due to geographer George Vâlsan, who writes: On a mountain top a lake is hidden / Sheltered from the world, guarded by the rocks / Lovingly, the sunlit sky / With deep, blue eyes / Looks upon it.

Springs, narrow or wide valleys, gorges, waterfalls, deltas, lagoons fill thousands of pages of world literature. Obviously, only a few can be recalled here: André Gide describes artesian wells and mineral springs (*The Fruit of the Earth*),

Pushkin's poem *The Bronze Horseman*, speaks of floods on the Neva River; Alexandru Vlahuță (*The Bistrița Gorge*), Ana Blandiana (*The Great Canyon and the Niagara Falls*), Geo Bogza (*The Olt Valley*), M. Sadoveanu (*The Delta*, a flood event on the Siret), etc.

Composers sing the Danube River: *The Blue Danube* (Strauss), *Waves on the Danube* (Ivanovitch), *the Vltava* (Smetana), the E flat major accord in the prelude to the *Rhine Gold* (Wagner) suggests an acoustic idea, namely the idea of the beginning as all things, expressed in the springs of the Rhine (*Ring of the Niebelung tetralogy*). Romanian composers, in their turn, draw their inspiration from the rivers Pruth, Siret, Bistrița, Arieș and many others.

Painters in France immortalise the Seine, in Russia the Volga, in Romania the Mureș, Danube, Siret, etc.

However, it is *the sea* that constitutes one of the biggest attractions. This huge body of water is vital for all inhabitants on Earth, it is a means of travel, a source of food, health and recreation. Yet, for sailors, navigating in the midst of raging waves can be terrifying, indeed; it can also be a pathogenic source of epidemics in the vicinity of crowded coasts. It is impossible to overview all writers, poets, musicians and painters enthralled by the charm of the endless facets of a quiet or rough sea, and by the special feeling of uneasiness on beholding this marvel of nature. Let's recall only a few, e.g. Thomas Morales (*Poems of the Sea*), Goethe, Ruben Darion, Rabindranath Tagore, Salvadore Quasimodo, and above all the Greek (a people of sailors since times immemorial) Kostios Palamas, Kavafis: "when to Itháki you start, wish yourself a long voyage"; Porphyras: "I love the billows that may crawl afar", and many others. Baudelaire depicts a different image when saying: terrible, wild ocean, I hate you for the roar I hear in you; similarly Victor Hugo: waves are treacherous: "they kill, capture, hide, appear to know nothing and smile ... the sea water is nothing but claws". Many artists rediscover themselves in the struggle and disquietude of the sea: "the sea resembles a mirror: it reflects just how you are" (Anton Holban); "Whenever you see it, it looks differently, yet it is the same" (Gala Galaction).

The portrait of the sea made by Zaharia Bârsan in his play *The Red Roses* is above comparison: "You endless and always struggling sea / Beholding the green expanse, how much I pity you / For you never know and never will know what tranquility is ...".

In music we have Debussy's well-known piece *La mer* (The Sea) (Three symphonic sketches for orchestra, one of which is *Dialogue between Wind and the Sea*); Ralph Vaughan's *The Sea Symphony*, Rubinstein's *The Ocean* and Enescu's *Vox Maris*.

Seascape in painting takes on a multitude of aspects; calm, stormy, at sunrise, at sunset, rocky coast or flat beach, e.g. Ayvazovski, Claude Monet, Edgar Degas, and Nicolae Grigorescu.

3. INSTEAD OF CONCLUSIONS

This brief presentation of the relationships between the elements of nature and the human psyche has been aimed at introducing the reader to a domain little tackled by hydro-climatology, namely Climatopsychology as a psychologist physician termed it some 80 years ago (or rather Psychoclimatology in a geographer's words).

What goes without saying is the *direct* relationship between the elements of climate and the state of health or diseases in terms of physiological signs, and *indirect relation* when mental signs become apparent. The weather may have a pathological or therapeutic effect on people, it depending on the intensity of met phenomena, their limits of manifestation, but also on one's individual characteristics, such as age, adjustment capacity, human type and individual level.

There are philosophers, essayists and art critics (Emerson, Amiel, Ruskin, Taine, Blaga) who admit that the environment, the landscape and the climate may influence people's anatomy, psyche, structure, thinking and disposition (mood), some works inducing *catharsis* (the term, first used by Aristotle, signifies release from pressure and psychical rebalancing) a state relating to fresh notions like aesthetoclimatology and psychotherapy based on the return to nature.

This outline invites the reader to meditation and to attempting a very rewarding study.

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