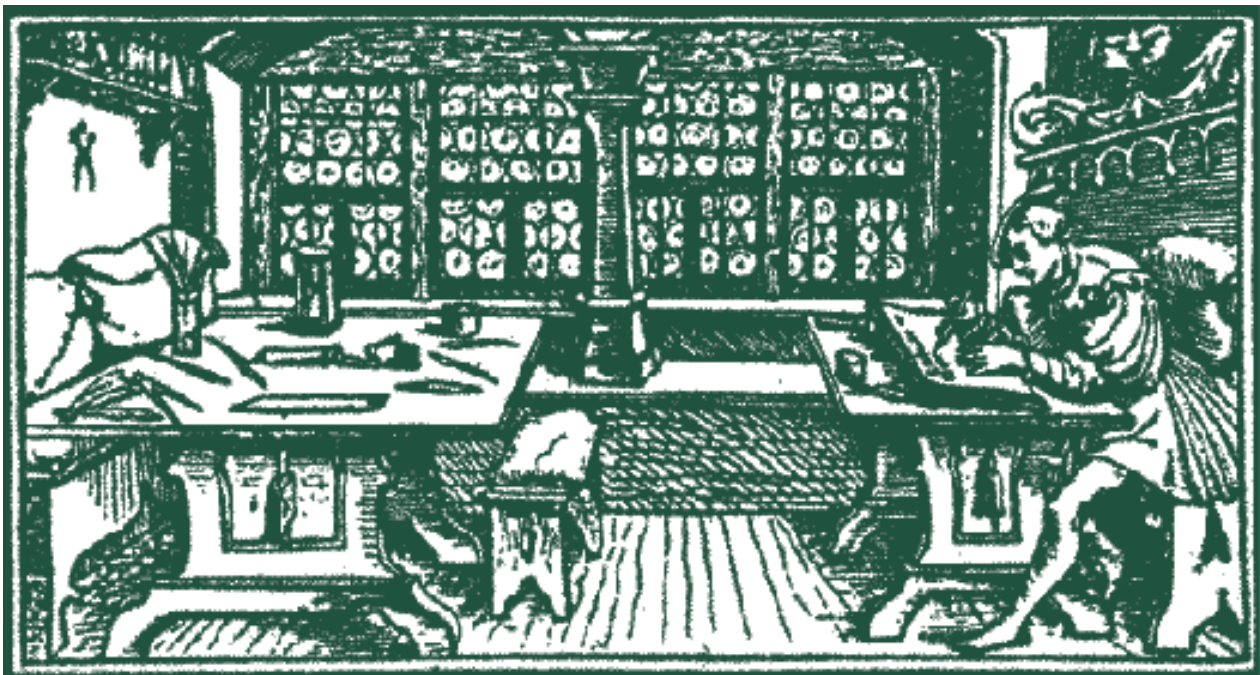




STUDIA UNIVERSITATIS  
BABEȘ-BOLYAI



# PHILOLOGIA

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2/2009

# S T U D I A

## UNIVERSITATIS BABEȘ – BOLYAI

### PHILOLOGIA

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**Număr coordonat de:**

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## ROMANIAN AND COMPARATIVE LITERATURE STUDIES

### IOANA EM. PETRESCU, EXEGETE DE MIHAI EMINESCU

IOANA BOT

**ABSTRACT.** *Ioana Em. Petrescu, exegete of Mihai Eminescu.* The study synthesizes the contribution of one of the most important poetics of the 20th century, professor at the « Babeș-Bolyai » University, to the study of Mihai Eminescu's poetic work, restituting the context of literary and political history of Romania of the time when the respective critical perspective was developed, as well as its impact on European literary ideas.

**Keywords:** Ioana Em. Petrescu, Eminescu, context of literary and political history

A évoquer Ioana Em. Petrescu, on retrouve dans la critique littéraire roumaine deux perceptions génériques et superficielles. Selon une première perception, Ioana Em. Petrescu, en tant que fille du professeur et historien littéraire D. Popovici (1902 – 1952), aurait hérité non seulement du patrimoine génétique, mais aussi des idées, des choix scientifiques et des études de son père, qui aurait formé, de cette manière, son successeur à la chaire de l'Université clujoise. Une attention minimale à la biographie nous révèle pourtant que D. Popovici était mort lorsque sa fille n'avait qu'onze ans, ce qui exclut toute possibilité d'une filiation scientifique directe. Certes, la tragique destinée du père allait sceller le devenir de la fille (maintes pages de son *Journal*<sup>1</sup> étant, dans ce sens, révélatrices). Elle décidera d'étudier les Lettres afin de pouvoir éditer les œuvres de son père. Son enfance et son adolescence seront ponctuées par des lectures puisées dans la bibliothèque du père, tandis que sa formation intellectuelle sera marquée par ses efforts en vue de retrouver les « traces » du père soit dans ses manuscrits, soit dans ses livres. En jeune maître-assistante au département dans le cadre duquel son père avait été professeur (dix ans auparavant), Ioana Petrescu devait plutôt – selon ses propres aveux, tels que nous pouvons les lire dans son *Journal* et sa correspondance – expier une « faute » aux yeux de ceux qui, jaloux autrefois du père, entendaient maintenant pouvoir s'en venger impunément sur la fille. « Etre la fille de Popovici » a en fait toujours constitué un héritage ambigu. La présence de Popovici dans les écrits de sa fille, qu'atténuaient autant de nouvelles lectures et recherches, d'une part, que le passage des années, ne sera pas tant « dictatoriale », que « dialogique ».

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<sup>1</sup> Ioana Em. Petrescu, *Jurnal, 1959-1990*, Pitești, Ed. Paralela 45, p. 204.

Ce dialogue, nous devons le restituer, dans toutes ses nuances intellectuelles, en nous appuyant sur les textes et les documents existants dans les archives. Pour le moment, nous n'invoquerons qu'une explicitation de ce dialogue (la plus complète, à ma connaissance, que l'auteur en ait donnée) concernant le champ des études sur l'œuvre d'Eminescu. Ioana Em. Petrescu esquisse ses hypothèses les plus importantes sur l'œuvre d'Eminescu comme une réplique à la vision dialectique « titan – génie » autour de laquelle D. Popovici avait construit ses propres hypothèses, quarante ans plus tôt : « Pour simplifier les choses, l'univers d'Eminescu est défini par Popovici selon une grille typologique, en tant qu'espace de conversion du 'titan' (le rebelle actif) en 'génie' (le contemplateur qui refuse l'engagement dans l'Histoire ou, plus généralement, dans l'action). À mon avis, Eminescu est, avant tout, un grand poète tragique (ce qui suppose de surmonter l'opposition pessimisme/optimisme pour déboucher sur une vision parallèle et similaire à celle de Nietzsche) ; l'emblème du héros tragique dans l'œuvre d'Eminescu me semble être le César, c'est-à-dire le héros qui, dans un monde sans dieux, assume une fonction de substitut divin, préservant ainsi, par son geste, l'existence des mondes, et ceci en dépit de la conscience ironique avec laquelle il contemple son propre effort. Le César, tel que nous le concevons, est, en fait, la synthèse des deux typologies explorées par D. Popovici – le titan et le génie »<sup>2</sup>.

La deuxième perception, toujours aussi discutable, ne considère Ioana Em. Petrescu qu'en tant que spécialiste dans le champ des études consacrées à Eminescu. Cela est moins dû au succès public de son premier ouvrage consacré au poète (datant de 1978), qu'à un préjugé « ancien » de notre champ littéraire, qui classe les spécialistes plutôt en fonction de leur objet d'étude et moins en fonction de la méthode employée ou des idées véhiculées et qui, de plus, s'est habitué à un certain autotélisme de l'exégèse « éminescienne ». Suivant une logique très simple, le préjugé selon lequel écrire sur Eminescu constitue l'épreuve obligatoire d'un spécialiste en littérature (l'une des illusions difficiles à éluder de la critique littéraire roumaine) entraîne, comme corollaire, un autre tout aussi fort. Ce dernier stipule que « Eminescu » est – dans une étude sur son œuvre – le plus important (sinon le seul) enjeu. Rien de plus réductionniste que cela pour approcher les types d'études que Ioana Em. Petrescu a rédigées. Ne cherchait-elle pas, elle-même, d'une manière appuyée, à corriger cette perception, lorsqu'on lui donnait la parole dans sa qualité d'« exégète de l'œuvre d'Eminescu » ? Sa vision élargie se centrait plus volontiers sur la théorie de la critique : « Je ne me prends pas pour un spécialiste d'Eminescu mais, purement et simplement, pour un 'critique', dans l'acception plus large que le terme de '*criticism*' revêt dans la terminologie anglo-saxonne. [...] Mes intérêts s'inscrivent dans le domaine de la poétique, de la poétique appliquée surtout. Or, les repères majeurs dans l'histoire du langage poétique roumain, ceux qui marquent, en effet, un tournant dans

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<sup>2</sup> Id., « Interviu » [Entretien], in *Tribuna*, no 24/1989.

l'évolution de la vision poétique, me semblent être Budai-Deleanu, Eminescu, Barbu et Nichita Stănescu. Parmi ces repères, Eminescu reste pour autant l'étalon de référence, celui en fonction duquel le devenir de notre littérature prend tout son sens. L'intérêt que je consacre à Eminescu est ainsi lié, pour moi, à un projet critique plus général, dans le cadre duquel il occupe pourtant une place privilégiée, justifiée par l'importance particulière de l'objet »<sup>3</sup>. Nous avons à nouveau affaire à une vision atypique, où l'étude de Eminescu représente la voie (royale...) dans un effort de resituer les concepts généraux de la littérature et de l'art : « l'intérêt pour l'œuvre d'Eminescu n'est pas diminué mais, par contre, accru par le fait d'être placé dans un contexte plus large, celui de l'histoire tout entière de la poésie roumaine ou d'un champ théorique plus étendu, allant des recherches sur ce qui fait la 'poéticité' jusqu'aux orientations de la pensée post-structuraliste. Je ne sens pas que, en écrivant sur Derrida, je m'éloigne d'Eminescu, mais bien que je me situe par rapport à une certaine tradition... »<sup>4</sup>.

*Eminescu, poet tragic* [*Eminescu, poète tragique*] s'est imposé dans la mémoire des spécialistes avec le nom plus « politiquement correct » de *Eminescu. Modele cosmologice și viziune poetică* [*Eminescu. Modèles cosmologiques et vision poétique*], titre sous lequel l'ouvrage paraît en 1978<sup>5</sup> et qui avait été choisi par son auteur afin qu'il pût passer sous les fourches caudines de la censure communiste. Il s'agit, probablement de nos jours encore, de l'ouvrage le plus connu de Ioana Em. Petrescu. On y propose une vision critique intégrative de l'œuvre poétique d'Eminescu, de même que de sa biographie intellectuelle, vision construite autour de trois foyers conceptuels reliant des éléments apparemment disparates d'une création protéique énorme et ouvrant, en même temps, la réflexion vers des problèmes plus génériques concernant la poéticité. Retraçant l'évolution interne de l'œuvre, depuis les toutes premières tentatives poétiques de l'adolescence jusqu'à la recherche des langages alternatifs, pour finir avec le silence de la maladie, l'histoire que Ioana Em. Petrescu y restitue :

1. est centrée sur l'identification d'une manière d'être dans le monde du sujet créateur (par rapport à laquelle ce dernier se figure rhétoriquement, c'est-à-dire modélise son cosmos),

2. va vers la révélation d'un sentiment tragique de l'existence (permettant des synthèses idéatiques comparables à celles de Nietzsche, pour ce qui est de la philosophie de l'époque, et représentant, en même temps, la cause première de « la séparation du romantisme », au niveau esthétique, de l'œuvre),

3. redéfinit, dans des termes étonnamment originaux et pourtant compatibles avec le *Zeitgeist* de la fin du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle, le rapport de l'artiste avec le langage, dans un scénario de l'imaginaire linguistique qui s'écarte des utopies de la mythologie

<sup>3</sup> Id., « Interviu » [Entretien], in *Caiete botoșănene*, V<sup>e</sup> année, no 10/1978.

<sup>4</sup> Id., « Interviu » [Entretien], in *Echinox*, nos 1-2/1990.

<sup>5</sup> Id, *Eminescu, modele cosmologice și viziune poetică*, București, Minerva, 1978. Ed. restituée par Ioana Bot, sous le titre original, *Eminescu, poet tragic*, Iași, Junimea, 1994.

*romantique* pour tenter les nouveaux territoires de la destruction, de la déconstruction et de la parole singulière moderne (sans transformer Eminescu en un penseur « protochronique » européen – *horribile dictu* !, mais sans renoncer, pour autant, à la vision comparatiste, surtout en ce qui concerne le changement de paradigme philosophique du postromantisme en général).

La manière d'être dans le monde du sujet y est définie en fonction de l'évolution du concept de modèle cosmologique, que Ioana Em. Petrescu importe, dans les territoires de la poétique, de l'histoire des sciences et des mentalités, en restituant ainsi sa fonction intégrative : « à notre avis, le modèle cosmologique représente une réalité de pénétration de la vision, dépassant, à un niveau plus profond, le niveau de la matière mythique qui sert de substance aux visions cosmogoniques explicites telles qu'elles apparaissent dans les œuvres littéraires, vu que le modèle cosmologique constitue l'expression du sentiment du fait d'exister dans le monde, des rapports originaires que l'être établit avec l'univers » (*Eminescu, poète tragique*). Quoique le modèle cosmologique adoptif d'une certaine époque artistique ou d'une certaine œuvre puisse entrer en désaccord avec le « modèle institué scientifiquement à l'époque en question », l'auteur présume que l'écart représente le signe – pressenti artistiquement – des évolutions ultérieures du paradigme ; « 'le sentiment à l'égard du monde' (compris en tant que rapport ontologique) nous semble être non pas un corollaire, mais bien un élément définitoire dans la construction du style culturel d'une époque » (*ibidem*). La succession des modèles cosmologiques adoptifs dans l'évolution accélérée de la vision poétique d'Eminescu, depuis le haut-romantisme jusqu'au post-romantisme, rend possible la cristallisation en imaginaire poétique des lignes de force de la dynamique interne de l'œuvre qui cherche à répondre au monde et à lui donner, en même temps, un sens. L'analyse thématique s'avère extrêmement fructueuse pour questionner un poète appartenant au romantisme européen tardif, et l'auteur ne cesse de souligner cette adéquation de la méthode à son objet. Qui plus est, dans l'ouverture théorique en faveur de laquelle Ioana Em. Petrescu plaide, on peut lire les germes de son intérêt pour de possibles rapprochements entre les solutions de l'art et le discours des sciences « dures ». Cet intérêt s'inscrit dans la voie du même paradigme, surmontant la rupture entre art et science. Sur cette rupture, qu'elle envisage comme une « blessure » et une « faute » de l'âge moderne, elle reviendra dans ses autres livres, *Ion Barbu și poetica postmodernismului* [*Ion Barbu et la poétique du postmodernisme*]<sup>6</sup>, de même que dans *Eminescu și mutațiile poeziei românești* [*Eminescu et les mutations de la poésie roumaine*]<sup>7</sup> et dans plusieurs études de moindre envergure.

Envisageant Eminescu comme un poète tragique (thèse qui constitue, d'ailleurs, l'objet central de l'ouvrage, comme le souligne le titre original), l'auteur

<sup>6</sup> București, Cartea Românească, 1993; 2e édition revue et complétée par Ioana Bot et Ligia Tudurachi, Cluj, Casa Cărții de Știință, 2005.

<sup>7</sup> Cluj, Dacia, 1989.

se situe, d'une manière explicite, sur une position contraire par rapport à la plus célèbre monographie consacrée à l'œuvre du poète national, publiée par G. Călinescu dans les années 30 du siècle passé : « à l'hypothèse de Călinescu, celle du demi-cercle ancré dans la cosmologie, nous préférons une autre hypothèse, ontologique celle-ci, par rapport à laquelle le foyer de l'œuvre d'Eminescu deviendrait le sentiment tragique de l'existence » (*Eminescu, poète tragique*). Une autre direction de sa polémique concerne la fameuse vision schopenhauerienne d'Eminescu. La perspective de Ioana Petrescu la resitue en l'intégrant parmi les prémisses philosophiques d'une construction poétique originale : « la séparation kantienne entre noumène et phénomène, la distinction schopenhauerienne entre le monde comme volonté et le monde comme représentation ou l'image hégélienne de la nature comme altérité de l'idée, tout cela ne constitue, pour Eminescu, que des prémisses philosophiques qui justifient et engendrent un sentiment tragique de l'existence. Assimilé à la pensée, l'être, condamné à être immortel, est contraint (dans les poèmes plus tardifs d'Eminescu) à subir le poids de l'existence universelle à la place du dieu absent, réfugié dans le non-être » (*ibidem*). La figuration éminescienne du sujet parvient ainsi à opposer aux attributs de « contemplativité pure » du génie schopenhauerien une « vocation ontologique », vocation qui crée et fait durer des mondes grâce au pouvoir de sa pensée, instituant du même coup une relation particulière avec la divinité moderne, absente de sa propre création. Aussi le sujet (tragique) doit-il assumer, pour l'éternité, d'une manière lucide et tragique, une destinée supérieure ; le triomphe du sujet poétique éminescien acquiert pourtant les valences d'une narration majeure du sujet interprétant. Au cœur même de l'ouvrage, là où l'on vient d'expliquer ce triomphe tragique, le discours critique « brouille » les formes pronominales et fait voir, dans un discours posé à la première personne du pluriel (occurrence rarissime dans les textes de l'auteur !), une mise en abîme de sa propre effigie : « Dans le vide cosmique, auquel il donne la forme du monde, Hypérion l'immortel se découvre le prisonnier de son monologue éternel, car la communication – tout comme l'amour – n'est qu'un commencement de la mort, c'est la présence, en nous, de celui qu'on n'est pas, de celui qui nous est étranger, de notre propre non-être » (*ibidem*). Ce « glissement » grammatical, signature discrète d'un sujet interprétant, se glisse précisément au moment où l'analyse est transformée en théorie et élevée au rang de généralité, dévoilant par là une subjectivité dynamique. Un tel geste conduit ainsi à une compréhension nuancée du projet exégétique de Ioana Em. Petrescu, assimilé à un projet existentiel (maintes notes de son *Journal* peuvent être lues de la même manière).

L'imaginaire linguistique du poète, ainsi que le conflit entre le poète et son langage (attiré par la transgression des limites de la communication, proche de la destruction), troisième axe majeur de l'exégèse proposée par Ioana Em. Petrescu, possède une charge polémique implicite extraordinaire, si l'on pense à toutes les études qui ont rendu commune la perception d'un Eminescu, poète créateur et glorificateur de la langue nationale. L'auteur propose une relecture attentive de



presque tous les arts poétiques éminesciens, tout en prouvant la précarité du scénario haut-romantique que la critique a projeté sur la vision éminescienne du langage poétique. Peu de temps après, suite aux découvertes de la déconstruction et des études de Paul de Man, l'auteur aurait pu identifier ces éléments à une allégorisation du sens poétique, en raison du blocage institué entre ce que les textes *disent* (la référence haut-romantique de la vision poétique) et ce qu'ils *font* (la construction rhétorique oblique, ironique du discours poétique). Chaque « pas » rhétorique du discours poétique vient subvertir la langue, telle que celle-ci est posée au niveau de l'imaginaire et de la vision esthétique. Une oscillation du sens vient encore troubler les contours du processus sémiotique. Il se peut que la fascination de Ioana Em. Petrescu pour les lectures rhétoriques et les allégories demaniennes trouve ses origines précisément là, dans la portée théorique d'une possible interprétation de ce genre. L'auteur démontre que la « poésie d'Eminescu ne naît pas (comme celle de Héliade<sup>8</sup>) d'une exaltation de la parole, mais bien d'un combat avec le langage » (*ibidem*), ce qui correspond, en somme, à la vision même du poète sur le langage : « les époques vraiment créatrices sont, pour Eminescu, celles pendant lesquelles la langue d'une nation n'est pas encore tout à fait cristallisée, car la poésie ne se sert pas du langage, mais elle naît en triomphant de lui. Mais, parvenant à briser les limites de la parole, la poésie d'Eminescu finit par sombrer dans le silence » (*ibidem*). Fondée sur une méfiance fondamentale envers le pouvoir de la parole, la poétique éminescienne ne peut pas se reconnaître dans les utopies romantiques qui imaginaient une langue poétique ontogène. La pensée d'Eminescu se tourne vers la nature mathématique du « langage universel », en découvrant la « trahison » du langage poétique et en sombrant dans le silence : le silence du poète à qui Odin (dans *Odin et le poète [Odin și poetul]*) fait le don de la Beauté, le silence de Sarmis l'impie, que les dieux font descendre dans la mer glacée (silence dont l'auteur proposera une relecture dans *Eminescu et les mutations de la poésie roumaine*), le silence du sujet dans *Ode (en mètre antique) [Oda. In metru antic]*. L'analyse de ce dernier poème met le point final à l'étude, en réfléchissant par le même biais aux chances de la poétique historique des formes – précisément au moment où, du point de vue historique, le structuralisme critique touchait à sa fin. Et cela en raison du fait que, comme déjà dit, ce n'est pas Eminescu, ce n'est pas *que* Eminescu qui constitue l'enjeu majeur de l'ouvrage...

L'un des axes de la démonstration entreprise dans *Eminescu, poète tragique* concernait l'éloignement du romantisme qu'Eminescu réalise ainsi pour la poésie roumaine. L'œuvre tardive de cet écrivain recoupe le territoire du premier modernisme anticipant, de cette manière, les solutions de la poésie du XX<sup>e</sup> siècle. Dans cet ordre des choses, la mise en relation de la vision poétique d'Eminescu avec les quatre grands univers lyriques qui lui suivront (Arghezi, Blaga, Barbu, Stănescu) apparaît comme une étape naturelle dans la construction du grand projet

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<sup>8</sup> Ion Heliade Rădulescu (1802-1872), poète roumain romantique, précurseur d'Eminescu, n. I.B.

de Ioana Em. Petrescu – celui d’une histoire comparée des formes de la poéticité dans la littérature roumaine, depuis Ion Budai Deleanu jusqu’à nos jours. Pour comprendre les principes qui ont servi à la publication, en 1989, de l’ouvrage *Eminescu et les mutations de la poésie roumaine*, il faut préciser que la structure du volume a été décidée par son auteur par effet d’« autocensure ». Ioana Em. Petrescu envisageait d’écrire un ouvrage sur la poésie de Nichita Stănescu (après avoir rendu à l’éditeur, en 1987, un manuscrit sur *Ion Barbu et la poétique du postmodernisme*, paru seulement en 1993, après la mort de son auteur). Les rédacteurs de la maison d’édition Dacia, avec laquelle elle collaborait, l’ont pourtant avertie qu’un titre pareil aurait peu de chances d’être approuvé par le Conseil de la Culture et de l’Éducation Socialistes, qui avait le dernier mot sur les projets de publication des maisons d’édition roumaines. Ce qui constituait le noyau dur du projet, consacré à Nichita Stănescu, deviendra ainsi le chapitre d’un volume qui semble traiter d’Eminescu, mais qui relance – du point de vue du couple *vue/vision* poétique – l’histoire du rejet dialogique d’Eminescu, entrepris par la poésie moderniste roumaine. Ioana Em. Petrescu se décide, de nouveau, pour un aller-retour entre une perspective de poétique historique, « de grande série » (on a affaire à une histoire de la poésie roumaine), et une lecture attentive à des séquences récurrentes, découpées par le fin tranchant d’une « coupe sémiotique » exemplaire. Les séquences concernent, dans l’œuvre de chaque poète analysé, les thèmes de la connaissance à travers la vue et/ou la vision, dans lesquels « l’œil » pourrait constituer le point de fuite de toutes les constructions allégoriques. Peu de pages de l’exégèse d’Eminescu réussissent, comme le chapitre de Ioana Em. Petrescu sur *L’aveuglement d’Orphée*, à rendre l’intensité de l’expérience interprétante. Il s’agit, sans aucun doute, d’une virtuosité critique, où le niveau thématique de l’imaginaire est revisité en une lecture rhétorique.

L’ouvrage affleure parfois la beauté subtile du manuscrit médiéval (ce que les titres des chapitres laissent, eux aussi, transparaitre). Il superpose aussi des couches dialogiques, intertextuelles. C’est le cas, par exemple, des séquences dans lesquelles l’auteur exprime son intérêt pour la déconstruction : dans l’analyse du poème *Cu gândiri și cu imagini* [*Aux pensées et aux images...*], l’écriture est lue, « dans les termes de Derrida », comme un « devenir – absence du sujet, comme rapport du sujet à sa propre mort ». Ce n’est pas la mode derridéenne (laquelle, dans les années 80, était encore à ses débuts) qui intéressait Ioana Em. Petrescu, mais bien la redéfinition de la catégorie du sujet, que les textes fondateurs de la déconstruction proposaient, en tant que « retour en spirale » à un modèle gnoséologique antérieur au positivisme de la modernité. D’une manière plus pointue que dans le volume précédent sur Eminescu, dans une visée théorique inaugurée par le volume *Configurations* [*Configurații*]<sup>9</sup> et appuyée par la monographie sur Ion Barbu (ce que les lecteurs de 1989, du volume *Eminescu et*

<sup>9</sup> Ioana Em. Petrescu, *Configurații*, Cluj, Dacia, 1981.

*les mutations de la poésie roumaine*, ne pouvaient pas savoir), Ioana Em. Petrescu cherche des rapprochements plus solides que les simples analogies du *Zeitgeist*, entre le paradigme des sciences « dures » et l’imaginaire de la littérature. Elle propose ainsi une vision particulièrement courageuse, puisant largement dans l’histoire des mentalités. C’est là qu’il faudrait probablement trouver l’une des raisons majeures pour lesquelles on a salué la parution de l’ouvrage avec une certaine méfiance (ce qui explique aussi le retard avec lequel le volume *Ion Barbu...* a paru, après le « tournant » de 1989). La critique littéraire roumaine, gracieuse et esthète, s’est toujours montrée particulièrement méfiante envers les références aux sciences exactes ou – en général – envers celles qu’on pouvait faire entrer, d’une manière superficielle, dans le domaine des sciences « non humaines ». Ioana Em. Petrescu n’hésite pas à y montrer que le changement du paradigme scientifique du modernisme tardif est précédé par la mise en place d’un nouveau concept de poéticité, « grâce aux mutations engendrées par les œuvres de Ion Barbu et de Nichita Stănescu par rapport à l’univers d’Eminescu, tenu pour étalon de la poéticité ». Les microlectures des textes poétiques lui fournissent des arguments pour la configuration d’une nouvelle vision poétique, dans laquelle « on privilégie la totalité et non pas les entités qui avaient perdu leur stabilité et leur statut autonome ». Cette vision « entraîne, à part la légitimité de l’idée de connaissance participative, un concept nouveau de poéticité, influencé par le caractère non anthropocentrique et trans-individuel de la nouvelle épistémè, et qui relance, pas seulement au niveau métaphorique, mais aussi au niveau structural, les privilèges du *goût* par rapport à la *vue*, de la *bouche* par rapport aux *yeux* », vus comme « deux modalités différentes de l’être de se mettre en rapport avec le monde ». Autrement dit, l’épistémè du XX<sup>e</sup> siècle « fonde un univers régi par le principe de l’identité, où le sujet n’occupe plus la place du spectateur, mais celle de l’*observateur* ou du *participant*, resituant ainsi, à travers des arguments différents [...] la relation sujet – monde spécifique à la pensée mythique ».

Cette coupe sémiotique, pratiquée à travers la ligne *vue/vision*, rend possible la mise en place d’une perspective de poétique historique extrêmement large, dans le cadre de laquelle le classique, le romantique et le modern(ist)e deviennent les catégories d’une dialectique « organique » de la littérature. Oscillant entre vue classique et connaissance participative – grâce au goût et à l’ingestion – « la poésie d’Eminescu représente le moment où la vue cède la place à la vision, couronnant la quête du romantisme des années 1848 et configurant les repères d’un concept – étalon de poéticité ». La métaphore centrale en est le miroir d’or, « espace d’épiphanie des essences, puisqu’on y retrouve non pas le phénomène transitoire, mais le monde comme idée ». La fondation d’un univers absurde, dé-romanticisé, proche en cela de celui de la poésie moderne, se fait, chez Eminescu, dans le même « cadre structurant de l’image » – ce qui pourrait expliquer l’écho tardif de la « modernité » de sa poésie, qui défait discrètement (quoique de façon radicale) le code romantique institué. En voyant dans « la tendance » éminescienne à

« métaphoriser le langage poétique » une tentative de guérison de la rupture sujet – objet, *le critique annonce une mutation qui appartiendra non pas aux successeurs naturels d’Eminescu*, c’est-à-dire Blaga et Arghezi (auxquels elle consacre peu de pages, à la fin du chapitre consacré à Eminescu), *mais bien à Barbu* dont la poétique non-euclidienne (définie par cinq propositions fondamentales) s’attaque, avant tout, aux catégories du langage, pour revenir ensuite à la pensée mythique, à la « connaissance participative », et à... *Nichita Stănescu*. Le chapitre sur Ion Barbu, bref et concis, devrait être compris comme une reprise – imposée par la cohérence de l’ensemble – de certaines positions assumées dans l’ouvrage monographique achevé auparavant et qui attendait dans les tiroirs de la maison d’édition.

Le retour à la mémoire affective, aux cadres structurants mythiques, la fait revenir – avec Barbu et Nichita Stănescu – sur les traces d’une poétique du sacrifice, surmontant la rupture du sujet. L’expression métaphorique de cette poétique, c’est le scénario des mystères d’Éleusis, évident chez Barbu, alors qu’il se fait, chez Nichita Stănescu, plus discret. Le choix des deux poètes pour l’un des scénarios mythiques les plus anciens et les plus répandus de la civilisation (le scénario osirien), employé afin de donner un « corps » à la vision, pourrait constituer une troublante voie de réflexion ouverte par cette étude.

Mais *Eminescu et les mutations de la poésie roumaine* ne parle pas seulement de l’éloignement, toujours dialogique, par rapport à Eminescu, entrepris par la poésie du XX<sup>e</sup> siècle. Il recoupe aussi l’histoire d’un trajet personnel du critique qui clôt son excursus favori –le volet dédié à Nichita Stănescu – par un retour à Eminescu, par l’intermédiaire de l’intertexte (la citation, la paraphrase, mais aussi ce que l’on connaîtra plus tard, dans les théories déconstructivistes, sous le nom de « greffe textuelle »). On y fait comme si, avant de surmonter le seuil épistémologique, la reprise du modèle éminescien signifiait l’accomplissement d’un rite qui éviterait la rupture, la « faille » de Stănescu, contournant l’aliénation du discours auto-commentateur.

On ne saurait que faire des suppositions, en nous appuyant sur des fragments rédigés sous la forme d’articles sur la prose d’Eminescu (parus en 2005 dans le volume *Studii de literatură română și comparată* [Études de littérature roumaine et comparée]<sup>10</sup>), sur ce qui aurait constitué les projets éminesciens ultérieurs de Ioana Em. Petrescu.

Un autre type de démarche consacrée à l’œuvre d’Eminescu nous est offerte par le texte du *Cours sur Eminescu* Celui-ci représentait, pour les étudiants en Lettres (« en Philologie », comme on les appelait à cette époque-là) des années 80 l’un des « textes » fondateurs de leur formation intellectuelle. Ce sont des générations d’étudiants parmi lesquelles on compte des noms célèbres de notre critique littéraire actuelle : Al. Cistelean, Ștefan Borbély ou Ion Simuț. Dans une première étape, le *Cours* a été conçu pour être utilisé lors des séminaires accompagnant le cours enseigné

<sup>10</sup> Id., *Cursul Eminescu*, texte établi à partir de sténogrammes par Ioana Bot, Cluj, Universitatea „Babeș-Bolyai”, 1991.

– dans les années 70 – par le professeur Gavril Scridon. Ioana Em. Petrescu était, à l'époque, maître-assistante. Le professeur Scridon (universitaire formé à l'école traditionnelle, d'une probité professionnelle admirable) s'est rendu compte très vite que sa jeune assistante le dépassait ; aussi a-t-il recouru à un geste sans précédent dans l'histoire de l'Université clujoise. Il a cédé son propre cours, le cours magistral sur le poète national, à une jeune spécialiste aux dons de laquelle il faisait sincèrement foi. Ioana Em. Petrescu a été ainsi censée enseigner ce cours à partir de 1981, et elle le fera jusqu'à la date de sa mort. Le *Cours sur Eminescu* n'est pas un simple « texte » (d'où, aussi, ces guillemets hésitants que je mets chaque fois que je le mentionne). Il a accompagné une formation intellectuelle dont j'ai moi-même bénéficié, et qui a représenté, pour bien des jeunes étudiants, « l'école » décisive, celle qui les aidait à trouver leur propre vocation. On l'invoque souvent afin de parler de « l'école clujoise d'études éminesciennes fondée par Ioana Em. Petrescu », même si son auteur ne l'a pas rédigé sous la forme concrète d'un livre. Quoique les fragments rédigés s'avèrent parfois surprenants, grâce à l'intensité des idées et à la vision d'ensemble qui les sous-tend, les manuscrits n'en ont gardé qu'une faible partie. Sans doute une large part de son contenu idéatique est-elle à retrouver dans les ouvrages publiés sur les mêmes sujets. Ce « texte », réduit afin de pouvoir occuper l'espace d'un essai ou disséminé dans le cadre d'un livre, perdait pourtant, pour ceux qui avaient eu la chance d'en faire l'expérience « à vif », l'effet irréductible du vécu.

« Perdu » dans sa forme performative, originale (vu que son auteur n'entendait pas le transcrire afin de pouvoir le modifier sans cesse, s'en servant comme d'« un terrain d'essai » pour les idées à venir), voué à des reconstitutions approximatives (appuyées sur les fragments gardés et les notes prises par les étudiants), il constitue, quand même, le « texte » auquel on puise l'une des propositions majeures de l'école universitaire fondée par Ioana Em. Petrescu. On l'appelait « Le Cours sur Eminescu » même si, dans les syllabus monolithiques de l'enseignement universitaire roumain de l'époque, on le retrouvait sous le nom de *Histoire de la littérature roumaine. L'époque des grands classiques. Première partie*. Il était conçu de manière à faire continuer, tacitement, une tradition universitaire inaugurée par D. Popovici pendant l'entre-deux-guerres. Le syllabus prévoyait un cours monographique consacré à l'œuvre d'Eminescu, *précédé par un autre cours sur la réception critique du poète national*. Le *Cours sur Eminescu* changeait d'une année à l'autre. Lors des séances, le professeur ne manquait pas d'énoncer à haute voix les questions que l'œuvre d'Eminescu lui posait à un certain moment, de marquer les possibles ouvertures ou suites de l'analyse, frayant des voies dans une bibliographie éminescienne autrement étoffée et autotélique. Les étudiants étaient les témoins d'une interprétation qui se construisait peu à peu, qu'ils pouvaient, éventuellement, retrouver plus tard dans les pages d'une étude publiée en volume. Mais ce cours a été aussi l'occasion de fonder, d'une manière programmatique, une solidarité de groupe, que notre vie littéraire contemporaine peut encore « lire » en filigrane au-delà de ses barricades prodigieuses. La séance était ponctuée par des commentaires, des débats, des ironies, de menus gestes qui concouraient à réaliser un moment de grâce.

Par la force des choses, je ne détiens, moi non plus, qu'une version du *Cours sur Eminescu*, celle à laquelle j'ai assisté pendant l'année universitaire 1983-84. Dans le vide laissé par la disparition prématurée de notre professeur, au mois d'octobre 1990, sa récupération à partir de mes sténogrammes étudiantins m'a semblé un geste d'une urgence dramatique. La remplaçant à ce cours, dès ce mois d'octobre 1990 jusqu'à cette date, j'ai tenu à faire connaître aux étudiants ces lectures reconstituées pendant l'année 1990-1991. Mon propre *Cours sur Eminescu*, à partir du mois d'octobre 1991, a coïncidé avec la publication lithographiée de la restitution du sténogramme et des notes de cours. C'est une variante du cours où, dans le jeu « aux méthodes critiques » que Ioana Em. Petrescu proposait à ses étudiants, se profilait déjà, accompagné d'un sourire complice, le leitmotiv « si j'étais un critique déconstructiviste... » (une fois rentrée des États-Unis, en 1983, notre professeur envisageait un volume sur la déconstruction, qu'elle n'avait pourtant réalisé que sous une forme fragmentaire<sup>11</sup>). Il s'agit du cours enseigné l'année même de la mort de Nichita Stănescu. On y découvre une séance remplacée, *ad hoc*, par une oraison funèbre dédiée à « Nichita Stănescu, le post-éminescien » – bâtie exclusivement sur des questions auxquelles répondra *Eminescu et les mutations de la poésie roumaine* et qui voyait en Nichita Stănescu le poète le plus important de la période moderniste roumaine. Dans son ensemble, au-delà de ses variantes « textuelles », le cours n'offrait pas seulement aux étudiants une exégèse de l'œuvre d'Eminescu, mais aussi une leçon sur l'art de cette exégèse, en s'appuyant dans ce sens sur des microlectures ou des rapprochements comparatistes plus amples. Aussi, dans sa première partie, le cours exigeait-il, à la fois, un exercice de rigueur et de relativisme critique. C'était, au fond, un apprentissage de la « lecture critique » fait par l'intermédiaire de l'histoire des études éminesciennes, de leurs origines jusqu'à nos jours. Le *Cours sur Eminescu* s'inscrivait ainsi dans le paradigme conçu par D. Popovici et constituait une réplique au modèle paternel. À le rapprocher du cours de D. Popovici, *Eminescu dans l'histoire et la critique littéraire roumaines*<sup>12</sup>, on retrouve la même ironie fine, le même plaisir du dialogue, la lecture raffinée, ainsi que la même capacité particulière de choisir (de citer) l'exemple le plus révélateur pour appuyer une certaine méthode. Mais cette « introduction aux études sur Eminescu » de la huitième décennie du siècle dernier ne représente, en fait, que la conséquence d'un autre regard, fasciné par d'autres problèmes posés par les textes critiques. Dès les premiers échos soulevés par l'œuvre d'Eminescu (qui aiguisaient son intérêt justement en raison de l'échec de ces systèmes critiques, du manque d'adéquation du discours à son objet) jusqu'à Edgar Papu et l'étude phénoménologique de l'œuvre des années 70, la relecture de l'histoire critique offre à Ioana Em. Petrescu l'occasion de situer son propre discours sous les auspices de la phénoménologie, délimitant ses rapports avec les noms célèbres qui l'avaient précédée dans cette entreprise. Le cours « jouait

<sup>11</sup> Restitué ds. Id., *Modernism/Postmodernism. O ipoteză*, éd. par Ioana Bot, Cluj, Casa Cărții de Știință, 2003.

<sup>12</sup> Restitué par Ioana Em. Petrescu ds. D. Popovici, *Studii literare*, t. VI, Cluj, Dacia, 1989.

à Călinescu » (envers lequel elle gardait une méfiance constante, nuancée d'une admiration distante), optait par la suite pour D. Caracostea et « l'analyse de l'art comme langage » et se situait, enfin, par rapport à l'interprétation de D. Popovici, « entre l'histoire et la typologie littéraire ». On y cherchait aussi à récupérer une visée évolutive (tant contextuelle qu'intra-textuelle) de l'examen de la poéticité éminescienne.

L'examen proprement dit de l'œuvre – le deuxième et le plus large volet du cours – cherchait, tout comme dans *Eminescu, poète tragique*, à déceler trois types de visions poétiques et ontologiques. On poursuivait la même succession chronologique des « étapes de création » classiques. Même si elle ne cesse d'accuser « la nature conventionnelle de cette chronologie », Ioana Em. Petrescu s'appuie plutôt, pour des raisons didactiques, sur les divisions de l'histoire interne de l'œuvre éminescienne. La conséquence, au niveau conceptuel, en est une récupération intéressante de la dimension diachronique inhérente à l'œuvre, qui convenait bien au contexte théorique post-structuraliste de l'époque. À part les discours reconstitués d'après les sténogrammes, il y a aussi un cours qui a été rédigé par l'auteur pour servir à une analyse institutionnelle de son enseignement. Elle y rédigeait les directions principales de la démarche critique : « Dans les cours antérieurs, j'ai examiné la filiation – programmatique – de l'œuvre éminescienne pendant la première étape de création par rapport à la poésie romantique des années 1848. Cette filiation est évidente au niveau des thèmes et des motifs, au niveau de la conception poétique (messianique), au niveau des sous-genres privilégiés [...] et, particulièrement dans les poèmes anthumes, au niveau de l'expression poétique [...] ... Ce que j'ai appelé 'les trois étapes de création éminescienne' constituent, en fait, trois types de visions (poétiques et ontologiques), trois types de 'propositions de réalité' [...] ; elles renvoient à des âges différents dans l'évolution de l'esprit éminescien. La chronologie stricte reste pourtant conventionnelle et approximative... ». Sans renoncer à la rigueur de la vision d'ensemble, le *Cours sur Eminescu* se donnait la licence (à la différence des pages que Ioana Em. Petrescu faisait paraître) de mettre parfois entre parenthèses l'idée en cours pour se pencher sur l'analyse d'un texte. Cela pouvait déboucher sur des développements éblouissants, qui révélaient une autre facette particulière de leur auteur : son plaisir de l'analyse textuelle, sa conviction que, dans le corps du texte, devaient prendre essor les hauts vols de l'analyse comparée, des théories de l'imaginaire ou de la philosophie. À tout cela s'ajoutaient souvent des réponses implicites, sous-jacentes, que l'auteur donnait à certaines perspectives proposées par la bibliographie canonique.

L'expression elliptique que les sténogrammes ont retenue du *Cours sur Eminescu* ne se superpose pourtant pas sur la phrase, dense et élégante, des études rédigées par Ioana Em. Petrescu. Du point de vue stylistique, le texte est, sans doute, inférieur et non-spécifique. Mais il réussit néanmoins à recréer l'effervescence de l'esprit critique, le plaisir d'enseigner s'appuyant sur le texte éminescien et – ce qui rend plus transparent le portrait de ce créateur d'école – la passion de l'esprit questionneur qui caractérisait Ioana Em. Petrescu.

La réception des études de Ioana Em. Petrescu par les spécialistes de son temps est un chapitre intéressant pour quiconque voudrait reconstituer le contexte de notre vie littéraire pendant les huitième et neuvième décennies du siècle dernier, et comprendre les habitudes de l'horizon de lecture des « spécialistes ». Un bref survol nous permet de conclure, aujourd'hui, que *Eminescu, poète tragique* (surtout celui-ci) et *Eminescu et les mutations de la poésie roumaine* ont été intégrés dans le circuit canonique des textes de référence, mentionnés par les manuels aussi bien que par les instruments auxiliaires. Mais de quelle manière les a-t-on reçus lors de leur parution ? Pour le dire gentiment, on les a reçus *avec prudence* ; les pages du *Journal* sont éloquentes pour ce qui est des frustrations de celle qui aurait aimé qu'on la lût sans le préjugé de « l'amitié », mais aussi au-delà des poncifs d'une critique paresseuse et esthète par-dessus tout. Trente ans après la parution de son premier ouvrage, on pourrait dire que l'histoire a normalisé la situation. Le rapprochement toujours plus accentué entre les études littéraires et l'histoire des mentalités a facilité l'acceptation de ce qui constituait, à l'époque, une position extrêmement nouvelle et, du point de vue théorique, courageuse. *Trop facile*, dirais-je. Figurant déjà parmi les références obligatoires d'une bonne bibliographie scolaire, didactique et académique, acceptées ainsi par une vulgate (réductive, comme toute vulgate l'est), les idées de Ioana Em. Petrescu ont la tendance de perdre leur « marque » – et, à la fois, l'acuité de leurs cibles théoriques. Leur appartenance à une certaine époque de la critique et de la théorie littéraires est prouvée aussi par le rapprochement idéatique entre *Eminescu, poète tragique* (datant de 1978) et les *Perspectives éminesciennes* de Dan C. Mihăilescu (rédigées entre 1978 et 1980 et parues en 1982, avouant la filiation des mêmes lectures puisées aux études éminesciennes classiques...). On assiste pourtant, ces dernières années, à une certaine « folklorisation » de ses idées, dans le sens de leur appropriation et utilisation sans aucune référence concrète (nécessaire quand même, du point de vue déontologique). Je n'y donnerai qu'un seul exemple : il s'agit de l'ouvrage de Mihai Cimpoi, *Esența ființei. (Mi)teme și simboluri existențiale eminesciene [L'essence de l'être. (My)thèmes et symboles existentiels éminesciens]*<sup>13</sup>, qui vient d'ailleurs d'être réédité récemment. Mihai Cimpoi est aussi le co-auteur, en collaboration avec Eugen Simion, de l'entrée « Eminescu » du *Dictionnaire Général de la Littérature Roumaine* (2006). Selon la thèse de l'ouvrage, présentée comme nouvelle et originale, Eminescu serait... un poète tragique. L'oubli de la référence originale de l'idée critique va, ainsi, de pair avec des renvois insignifiants à l'ouvrage de Ioana Em. Petrescu, concernant des détails secondaires. Cela est insuffisant pour contenter une éthique minimale du dialogue critique, mais bien assez pour apaiser les scrupules éventuels de l'auteur – et ceux d'une critique littéraire généralement distraite pour ce qui est de l'identification correcte de ses sources.

Consacrées, depuis ces deux dernières décennies, tant par l'usage scolaire que par la bibliographie existante dans ce domaine, ces études sont loin de s'être

<sup>13</sup> Iași, Princeps Edit, 2007 – 1<sup>ère</sup> éd., Chișinău, 2003.



transformées en monuments gelés. Les questions qu'elles soulèvent, les rapports multiples qu'elles établissent avec l'histoire tout entière de la littérature roumaine de même qu'avec des points théoriques majeurs de la critique post-structuraliste européenne font une lecture incitante et actuelle. Leur place dans l'histoire des idées littéraires roumaines contemporaines reste encore à préciser. Elles appartiennent à un territoire thématique très agité et très contesté ces derniers temps, suite à la chute du communisme. Ceci dit, il nous incombe de faire une dernière remarque, pour ce qui est de l'attitude de Ioana Em. Petrescu envers l'œuvre d'Eminescu, en tant que « sommet du canon littéraire roumain ». À aucun moment ses commentaires ne glissent vers le discours encomiastique facile, propre aux créateurs de statues. La rhétorique de l'exégèse qui parle pour ne rien dire lui est tout à fait étrangère et les textes de Ioana Petrescu la sanctionnent parfois, avec malice. Son goût pour l'œuvre éminescienne (en tant que type de rapport interprétatif) ne cesse de « se garder » des excès, grâce à une affirmation du geste critique. C'est le cas où, à la fin de la reconstitution de la révolte éminescienne contre le langage, Ioana Em. Petrescu juxtapose les thèmes de l'œuvre sombrant dans l'incohérence aux hantises de l'artiste, la *persona* sombrant dans la maladie. Il y a des fragments anthologiques dans *Eminescu, poète tragique* dans lesquels le critique change du registre pronominal de son propre discours, glissant vers la première personne du pluriel (un « nous » pas du tout générique). Le critique assume et avoue une affinité élective, en écrivant : « A-t-on le droit de choisir, comme chacun de nous le fait – même sans s'en rendre compte, l'admirable portrait du jeune Eminescu, le portrait viennois d'un exemplaire humain extrêmement pur et beau, condamné à subir, dix ans plus tard, la folie qui brouillera son regard limpide, la souffrance qu'il surmontera, dans la folie, avec euphorie ? Certes, ce droit [...] nous est offert comme un juste legs de la part de celui qui a été crucifié dans la pensée, dans le corps et dans la parole, de celui qui s'est retiré dans la folie lorsque le poids de la pensée censée garantir l'existence des mondes lui était devenu insupportable... ». De l'autre côté du geste axiologique, la perpétuation d'Eminescu comme *summum* de notre modernité littéraire est redevable d'une définition catégorielle du poète : « Eminescu demeure la dimension fondamentale de la culture roumaine, celle par rapport à laquelle on se définit, à chaque nouvel âge de notre spiritualité. Il n'y a eu aucune mutation culturelle essentielle, pendant ce dernier siècle, qui n'ait obligatoirement créé un nouvel Eminescu », affirmait le critique lors d'un entretien datant de 1990<sup>14</sup>. Cette perspective pourrait informer aussi bien les actions contestatrices que les excès identitaires de ces derniers temps, signes d'une crise d'adolescence pour laquelle Eminescu reste la référence essentielle, à l'encontre des prétentions des personnes impliquées. De quoi fournir un argument supplémentaire en faveur de l'intérêt que ces études peuvent susciter pour le lecteur contemporain.

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<sup>14</sup> Id., « Interviu » [Entretien], in *Echinox*, nos 1-2/1990.

## TEXTUAL MIRRORS AND AUTOSPECULARITY

CĂLIN TEUȚIȘAN

*As who might be the god whom our hearts we devote*

**ABSTRACT.** M. Eminescu – reflexions of the text (imaginary/language) upon itself. The pressure of the Romantic model upon the individual creator. The forms of reflection of the conscience of convention: textual mimicry (Romantic clichés; specific Eminescian typologies); insertion, in the epic discourse, of lyrical „cartridges”; schemes of mise en abyme of the epic discourse (the mutation of narrative voices and of time of narration); distorting mirrors of fiction and refracted image: irony and its discursive strategies (anti-hero, anti-destiny, anti-saga).

**Keywords:** text, Romantic model, textual mimicry, fiction, narrative voice

### Avatars

One of the most spectacular ways of textual reflection in Eminescu’s prose is the self-reflection of the text. As far as poetry is concerned, such a mirroring pattern can be traced in the *Gazel* placed as motto at the beginning of the poem *Călin (File din poveste)*. The *Gazel* represents a textual mirror in which the big text, whom it prefaces, reverberates its face. Moreover, *Gazel* also expresses in terms of reflection its own mirroring function. It has thus the form of a discursive catopeter – a mature and fascinating hypostasis of literary specularity. The prose is no foreign to such formulae of reflexion. Either that we depict the imaginary, with its symbols related to the above idea, or that we choose simply to focus upon certain discursive portions, which can be found in several of Eminescu’s epic products, we can observe that the textual mirror reproduces, in many instances, „parcels” of the self.

In terms of the symbolic order, the epic imaginary from Eminescian proses hints at an object – namely, *the book* – which sums at least some fundamental specular functions. Extremely frequent in these proses, in one way or another, the book is a symbol of knowledge, often the magic one. It includes the law of the universe, and its reading engenders control upon the world. On appearing in the text, the sign of the book indicates the presence of certain processes of re-evaluation and essentialization of the world on basis of the verbal act. In other words, it is assumed the power of the logos to extend over and sometimes even to instaurate a cosmos.

In *Sărmanul Dionis*<sup>1</sup> [*Poor Dionis*], for instance, books appear as „characters” from the very opening lines of the short story. They are included in the description of Dionis’ room, yet their function is not only to add detail to the decorum, but rather to complete the hero’s character pattern: „in a corner of the room, on the bare floor, several hundreds of old books were slumbering in random stacks, many of which were in Greek, ripe with Byzantine wisdom”<sup>2</sup>. The old book of learning becomes symbol for Dionis’ inner life. Following the physical portrait, his interior portrait constitutes a model of intelligence and thought, realized by describing his reading obsessions. To the same extent, the old book also expresses the means to activate a typically Romantic ideal: the search for origins. Ancient books are „golden scriptures”, which put the reader in contact with the sense of the world. Of course, they can only provide fragments of the original truth. Yet, their great number offers the chance to reconstitute, on summing up, the big Truth. One of the books is particularly striking in this respect, as it gives the stunning chance of direct acces to the whole Truth. It is the magic book of master Ruben, which Dionis mysteriously comes in possession of – a book which transports the hero in the world of all possibilities. Once reading it, Dionis’ ontological trajectory changes completely. He transcends his human condition and becomes a demonic genius, a spirit of the world. On examining the occult text, Dionis discovers the essence of the universe and of the existence. The sign of the world in the magic book is the pattern of red interlocked circles: „Turning a page he came across a host of overlapping circles, as many as to resemble a ball of red yarn or a cobweb spattered with red blood.”. It assigns the obscure and hardly comprehensible topography of the universe, but also its lively, pulsatile, organic nature. By reading or merely touching the sign one can amount to world portals. Time and space are no longer insurmountable fatalities. They can be thus controlled, and matter subjects undistinctively the magus’ command. Within the imaginary „reality” of the story, the book thus reveals its fascinator function and its absolute power. The magic book is itself, undoubtedly, a symbolic projection of the book from the „real reality” (specifically that which we hold in our hands to read the fable), as well as of the role the latter is meant to play. Therefore, the text invites to a *fascinated* reading, through the symbolic identification it engenders.

So, Dionis’ magic book includes „all mysteries of science” (in the sense of *knowledge*). It makes „stars to move out of their place with the deep speech and combined calculus of ciphers”. It is nevertheless a dangerous instrument, as the blood sign reunites the splendor, as well as the horror of its power. The book must be read seven by seven pages in order to make sense. The cipher represents „the

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<sup>1</sup> For the prose, the edition used is M. Eminescu, *Opere [Works]*, vol. VII, *Proza literară [Literary prose]*, critical edition composed by Perpessicius, introductory study by Perpessicius, București, Ed. Academiei, 1977.

<sup>2</sup> Translations after *Poems and Prose of Mihai Eminescu*, Edited by Kurt W. Treptow, The Center for Romanian Studies, Iasi-Oxford-Portland, 2000, transl by Ioan Giurgea.

symbol of the code of creation”, yet it is only the symbol of the *reading* of creation, as a product, not of the proper divine *act* as well<sup>3</sup>. In this lies Dionis’ great error, as he behaves like the sorcerer’s apprentice, who does not master well enough the secrets he possesses. The world, as product of creation, subjects to him entirely. The possibility to create is therefore practically impossible.

We can read in the opening lines of *Geniu pustiu* a short theory of the novel, which defines the epic genre as „metaphor of life”: „Dumas holds that the novel is as old as mankind. He may be right. It is the metaphor of life. Have a look at the gilt tail-side of a fake coin, listen to the idle song of a day with no claim to raise more ado in the world than any other ordinary day, unveil the poetry lying dormant in them, and the novel is there”. To some extent, such a definition of the novel as poetry of reality is paradoxical. One cannot but speculate, by comparison, upon a possible definition of poetry proper. Poetry might then be the metaphor of (mythical) thought and feeling. Anyway, the epic formula theorized here by Eminescu (more exactly, by the Eminescian narrator) is not quite that of objective realism, as long as „the gilt tail-side” of the coin, the „poetry” of the day are supposed to lay at the basis of epic architecture. Of course, Eminescu’s novel is by no means lacking the context of a dramatic reality. A reality developed in its historical, political, social and even economic data. However, the opening phrase hints at the true content of the text, in matters of importance and extent within the narrative structure. Namely, it refers to the dynamics of the characters, their inner and outer conduct, in respect to the rigors of this reality. In the human being thus lies the poetry of reality – here the substance vital to the construction of a novel.

The beginning of the novel *Geniu pustiu* also displays an anecdote whose subject is Tasso’s portrait: „In a stack of dusty old books [...] I came across a more recent volume: *Novellas with Six Engravings*. I opened it and came across the history of a Scottish king on the verge of falling prey to death on account of an embalmed human skull. And could you imagine whom the litographer had to play the king of Scotland in his engravings? Tasso! The explanation is easy to provide: economy. I produced Tasso’s portrait for the purpose of comparing them. It was he, trait for trait. What bizarre coincidences can occur on this earth, i said to myself, a smile lighting up my dreaminess. Could a similar history such as that which i was reading ever befall a Tasso?... Yet i had overlooked that all objective impossibilities are none the less possible in our mind and that, in the long run, everything we behold, hear, think, and consider comes down all to arbitrary creations of our own subjectivity rather than to real things”. If it can happen „in our mind”, it can then happen in the novel as well. Here is an *ad hoc* definition of fictionality. It is the expression of an advanced awareness of literariness. By its structure of successive frameworks, the novel suggests obviously enough such an awareness of the creation as cultural phenomenon. The Romantic „Imagination” and „Inspiration”

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<sup>3</sup> See Ioana Em. Petrescu, *Cursul Eminescu [Course Eminescu]*, Cluj-Napoca, „Babeş-Bolyai” University, Faculty of Letters, 1993, p. 93.

must have, of course, their specific contribution to the elaboration of the narrative text. However, they are subjected to rational control to an extent that reaches theoretical heights. *Geniu pustiu* seems to be telling us that the novel is based on a certain reason of creation, as well as on awareness of convention, which leads us to read a character with an historical existence in a fictional code. The portrait of Tasso as king of Spain represents a deceitful mirroring of reality into fiction.

Once set the laws of fictional conventions, the world thus inaugurated has no boundary. *Geniu pustiu* hence proposes, from the very beginning, a *conscious* reading, highly aware of the conventional nature the book has. It is a proud and risky bet. The unveiling of the convention mines the fiction and its capacity of seduction. The novel displays its articulation, putting at stake the fascinator power of texture and imaginary, besides any obstacles. The raw (even brutal) force of the book – this is one of the superthemes of this short fragment of literary and aesthetic theory of the novel, from the preamble to *Geniu pustiu*.

One can distinguish in Eminescian prose several ways of reflecting the consciousness of convention. They constitute steps towards a heightened self-awareness of the authorial voice. We can depict from their development the modalities of control the author applies to his own text, the formulae he resorts in order to structure some lines of force. These lines would become paradigmatic attributes of the Eminescian *textual atmosphere*. The first of these forms relates to what we could call *textual mimicry*. The phenomenon has, in its turn, several forms of manifestation, determined by certain interior motivations.

Firstly, the text falls under widely used *Romantic clichés*. We can name in this respect the portrayal in byronic pose and also the virgin, titanic or fantastic landscapes. No wonder it happens so, as Romanticism is a school movement, with a rather rigorously composed table of characteristics moulded from a certain spirit of the age and a *forma mentis* philosophically founded. The Romantic model exerts huge pressure upon the individual creator, both by its cultural „institutional” authority, and the fascination of forms of creation suggested.

Secondly, the text makes use of certain *specific Eminescian typologies*, which it here imposes. We can speak of a mature form of intentionality of creation, by which the work constructs its defining mark in the context of the general history of the movement and of literature on the whole. *Typologies*, yet not clichés, what distinguishes the two being their function within the narrative economy. They operate as fundamental articulations of the construction, supporting, as predicates of the narrative sentence, its tensions and gravitations. Some of these typologies seem to come from the space of poetry and bring into the epic specific figures, elements or hypostases (the angel face, the face from the castle, the dead lover, the elegiac metaphysics, the rebellious metaphysics; the dome, the wood, the palace, the basilica, the cave, water mirrors; the romantic love, the contemplativeness, the revolt, the irony). Others are however prose-specific. We can mention here the heroes’ portrayals from *Geniu pustiu* and *Sărmanul Dionis*, but also the reproduction,

improved in *Sărmanul Dionis*, of the moon paradise from *Umbra mea* [*My Shadow*]. The same occurs with the typologies of the elementary, were we to invoke concentric universes and their structures of successiveness and centring. Or with attitude and behavior typologies – erotic stories from *La aniversară* [*On birthday*] and *Întîia sărutare* [*First Kiss*] stand as proof in this respect. One can, of course, dwell upon the fact that some of the texts represent project drafts developed in other stories. Yet, the genetic criterion is of lesser importance here. What matters more is the fact that these texts represent the image of author's typological obsessions, underlined by repeated returns. Eminescu moves, almost compulsively, around the same typological and imaginary nuclei. It is clear that these nuclei organize and structure the author's fictional imagination, up to the last consequences – as they appear in the written text.

The second form of textual autospecularity can be related to the insertion in the epic discourse of lyrical „cartridges”. These poetic intarsions hold various functions in the epic structure they belong to. There is, first, the case when the poetic fragment cannot be detached, as idea, subject and vision from the prose where it is included. The poem then functions as a cosmetic artifice, meant to highlight the lines already traced by the epic, by means of the mannerist volutes of the lyrical discourse. In a Romantic age deeply marked by poetry, considered to be the mythical language of essential truths, prose resorts to such structures at least from two causes. One is aesthetic, on the one hand, as the language of poetry allows discursive mannerizations otherwise hardly acceptable in prose. On the other hand, as expression of a spirit of the age, poetry can paradoxically provide more plausible substance to a portrait. A character in love, for instance, claiming its passion in verses, falls under a Romantic convention unanimously accepted. Even if such a conduct is conventional, the character appears so the more convincing, due to the pressure of convention. The best example is the love poem from *Geniu pustiu*, written by Toma Nour and dedicated to his lover, Poesis. Toma elaborates the poem in the period of utmost bloom of erotic feeling, when the love scenario is not yet overshadowed. The verses express indistinctly the same intensity of feeling, the same supercategorical connection and the similar effects upon the character in love that the discourse in prose expressed until then. Here is the text: „When, at night, my soul ecstatic vigil kept,/ My guardian angel alighted in my dream,/ Enfolded in a cloak of clouds and moonlight,/ Airing my head with its seraphic wings,/ But as i saw you clad in that dress, pale-white,/ A child in longing and mystery wrapped,/ Before your sparkling eyes that angel departed./ Just as the sea sleeping, deep, calm, undisturbed,/ In its endless bosom of light and affection/ Divinely reflects the divine source of light,/ Shedding golden days onto her watery breast,/ So, too, you, my darling, you, sweet dream of love./ Can change into daylight the night in my soul/ With your dark stars, with your faint smile.”. No wonder that the aquatic mirror appears in the paste of lyrical imaginary. It brings forth clear signals of specular processes leading beyond mere stylisms. One should read in the mirror of sea from the poem, the symbolic identification with the Romantic soul of the lover. The poem

assumes the symbolic and metaphoric image of the subject, who thus utters itself. But the verses also offer the faithful reflexion of what prose expressed until then. The poetic fragment functions as a golden mirror transferring in the mythical and metaphorical language of essences that which the prose could only express within rational categories of the real. Toma's poem is the expression of heavenly blessing of the earthly wedding between the two characters.

Another function of the poetic intarsion from the epic text reveals when the poem differs in its vision from the frame-prose. The poem provides *another interpretation* of the same theme, enabling the extension or the nuancing of the perspective. It is the case of the lyrical fragment from *Sărmanul Dionis*. The short story is based on the compensatory schemes of the parallel universes, between which Dionis perpetually oscillates. However, the two space-time units (the 19th century Bucharest and Iassi in Alexander the Good's age) are not the only types of compensatory universes where the hero escapes. The third such universe is actually the poem itself, since the alienating reality it describes is transfigured and fictionalized by means of irony. A „mise en abyme”, reflecting, to a large extent, the short story itself<sup>4</sup>. To an ironical register, the given reality thus becomes „liveable”, tolerable, with all its mice, bugs and lice included. Irony is also related to an ontological slapstick transference. It occurs when Dionis identifies in a sort of projection with the tomcat inside the room, which hence becomes a kind of totemic animal of the character. A virtual cat world comes into being in Dionis' vision, with all its ironical articulations of meaning: „I would still remain a poet if but cats the world should people;/ I would, tragically mewling, set up eulogies – like Garrick-/ Watch, while basking in the sunlight, the mouse tails besides a hail-rick,/ And by moonlight walk the garret, ramble on the roof and steeple!// If i were a sage, my feelings would experience mad division;/ In a hall of public lectures for ideals i'd boldly fight,/ And i'd show the gen'rous youngsters, the young ladies gay and bright/ That this world is merely dreamland and a tom-cat's senseless vision.// As a priest, in yonder temple, dedicated to the power/ Which, repeating its own image, has created the catkind/ I would shout, „O, tribe of tommies! Woe to you and yours! for, mind,/ You have disregarded fasting! Kneel in awe, o cats and cower!// Are there such as hold the tables in a reverence uncivil,/ Disbelieving the Almighty and the greatest mind of all/ Who the destiny of kittens can upon demand unroll!// Don't they fear the Godless creatures, Hell and bats, its spirits evil?”. Of course, the poem is equally a pamphlet meant for the society which maintains art (particularly, poetry) at the periphereal limit of existence and ignores the inspired word of the minstrel.

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<sup>4</sup> See also Ioana Bot, *Discursul unei priviri îndrăgostite – exercițiu de recitare a poeziei eminesciene* [*The discourse of an enamored look – exercise of rereading of the Eminescian poetry*], in „Language and literature”, vol. III-IV, 1999, p. 19, and Caius Dobrescu, *Mihai Eminescu. Imaginarul spațiului privat. Imaginarul spațiului public* [*Mihai Eminescu. Imaginary of the private space. Imaginary of the public space*], Brașov, „Aula” Publ., 2004, pp. 47-48.

The third form of text's self-reflection regards the mise-en-abyme schemes of the epic discourse. The successive framings take place by changing narrative voices and time of narration. *Geniu pustiu* is the clearest example in this respect. Outside the time scheme, the succession of narrative voices and discourses they produce is even more important. The narrator of the frame-story (placed in Bucharest, in the second half of the 19th century) functions as discursive mirror for Toma Nour and his romantic story. This narrator constructs a possible perspective upon Toma and his personality, as one can infer from the direct friendship relation of the two. This frame includes Toma's memoirs, which reflect discursively himself, John and Poesis. Nour's confessions work as an „oblique reflection”, by which the character „regards himself and opens himself”<sup>5</sup>. A new image of Toma is hence born – a subjective image about himself, within the dynamics, directly told, of his inner feelings and motivations. The two perspectives, of the narrator and of his own, build a more complete image for Nour, who remains the best constructed character of *Geniu pustiu*. Structurally speaking, the frame-story reflects symptomatically in Toma's memoirs (who evokes especially Transylvania of the 1848 revolution). This happens in the sense that the tandem narrator – character henceforth narrated can be applied to couple Toma Nour – Poesis. The woman is moreover shaped through self-discoursivization, namely the letter addressed to Toma, whom he reads when Poesis is already dead. Just as the narrator from the frame story had come upon Toma's letters, letting him know the memoirs had arrived after the hero's death. The authors of the respective letters had already left the scene of the world. Those who read them can thus connect to the historical moment of extraordinary existences, but also to their transhistorical existence.

Finally, the fourth form of autospecularity depends directly on irony and its discursive strategies. In the sketch [*Părintele Ermolachie Chisăliță*], for instance, the Eminescian prose reveals in an ironical mirror. A „realist «physiology» from the Romantic perspective” (just like *Aur, mărire și amor [Gold, glory and love]* or *Contrapagină [Counterpage]*)<sup>6</sup>, the text proposes a grotesque show-like world. The sketch is a refracted, reversed image of the Eminescian epic scenarios. Father Ermolachie Chisăliță is an anti-hero (the basic models of this remain those from Budai-Deleanu's *Țiganiada [Gypsyiad]*), „stupid and drunkard”, looking „as a thief rather than as a pope”, and illiterate as well. Here is his portrayal, memorable by its ironic-negating spirit: „the pope was pretty tall for his kind, no doubt, but one could hardly guess his pride as a cleric. He went well up one fathom, he would step up stiffly, of which reason the bad mankind used to call him: pope Melesteu. His hair and beard were red, which made him look more like as a thief rather than as a pope, but what has one got to do with it? The pope's greatest merits were that he

<sup>5</sup> See Sabine Melchior-Bonnet, *Istoria oglinzii [History of the Mirror]*, București, Univers Publ., 2000, pp. 295-296.

<sup>6</sup> See Eugen Simion, *Proza lui Eminescu [Eminescu's Prose]*, București, Editura pentru Literatură, 1964, pp. 199-232.



had gotten used to being stupid and drunkard. His father had been village swine-herd and, his son being lazy, naughty and tardy, he had thought he would be good for a priest [...] he knew evangels by heart, and where he forgot, he would only say God bless! Or he would make the chorister tell down a prayer, while he would accompany him by ghaghaghagha! When pope would gall into mistake and people would wonder themselves: «For the love of God! What he is saying?», the chorister would reply sharply: «Do shut your mouths, can't you see your pope sings Greek?» this kind of attitude would he impose. Father Ermolachie's kamelavkion looked very nice, rather over the nape, as it was too large, but it looked pretty well on him, you would think he was a tailed Russian. On reading, the kamelavkion would fall upon his eyes and pope would grossly revile. Be it inside or outside church, he would give no damn about it... «Stoop! Do not fall!... damned kamelavkion!»". The holy book, the „scripture”, is no longer a sign of the world, but a sort of dead book. The anti-hero's illiteracy kills the symbolic power of the book.

Chisăliță's destiny is an anti-destiny. The grotesque model replaces the heroic model. Just as sterile mysticism replaces metaphysics. The scene when the pope is taken for a devil and shut by his parishioners inside the church to be burnt alive, mimes with gross irony the tragic magnitude and high discourse of Homer's saga: „O, thou muse! Teach me to praise the tragic of this scene, look at little Buchilat jumping for the toll rope and drawing it nearer, look at the ox alerting the village and waking it up with the whick, as if at a monastery. Pope would shout in the church making the plasters on the walls fall. And who, o, thou, muse could call those illustrious names of those who gathered at the cemetery to put the church on fire [?] the first to step up with a huge stick would be brave Mitruță Buruiană. He was followed by terrible and smart Ftoma lui Culbeci and light-hearted Toader Zurgalău, all holding stakes. And who does my eye also meet in the shinning lines? Could it be but the terrible Dămian LongSleethood? And who does outshine you in brave deeds, you ram-gatherer Gobbler? I have seen you all on the paths of glory, thou, of all the smart the smartest Văsălie CluckCluck, and thou, Neagu of Șolomon. Here is as like an eternal face among human fading faces, like a sausage delicately made among the big blood puddings, a brave young man shines in the dark crowd” etc. Finally, the mere fight replaces the heroic battle in this grotesque anti-world. The topsy-turvy world reveals its truths in the ironic mirror. It is just another paradox of specularity.

### **The signature inside the fiction**

An illustrative image of distorting mirrors also appears in the sketch *Contrapagină*. A part of the text is written in an almost avantgarde formula. More exactly, the sketch parallels, on two columns, the diverging discourses of the World and the Destiny. Each of the columns expresses a modality to characterize some individuals, taken one by one. The difference between the form and the essence of the human kind, whom these parallel characterizations assert, constructs, on

the one hand, the comic effect of the fragment. On the other hand, the same scheme produces a certain dramatic effect, as the two perspectives mirrored reveal sad truths about the human kind. *Contrapagină* is written in a language imitating to the extremes of the grotesque and unintelligibility the cultural sephomore slang of the time. The text opens with an ironic excursus on novel theory. Its most important function is to express the conscience and self-detachment of the authorial voice which is rather less frequent in the literature of the time. It is the preamble necessary to an acute critique applied to World and Destiny, according to whose laws genius composers, poets and prose writers beg in Wien, Berlin or Paris. Of course, we deal with an unequivocal *pro domo* pledge, made by means of transcribing in the text the author's initials, and he thus becomes his own character: „i.f. it happened for Mrs. World to dictate

M.E.  
feuilletoniste ennuyant  
and Mr. Destiny to write:  
M.E.  
Theatre Prompter”.

The reality of the text becomes thus deceitful, since as well as inside and outside its borders (see the signature from the end of the sketch), the same initials are used to name the author and the character. So the more as, we already know it, the biographical detail confessed is real. One could nevertheless hardly decide upon the extent of „real” reality and fictionality, if one were to distinguish them in such a textual product. We can observe, however, the erasement of borders between written text and reality, or at least between its fictional and nonfictional elements. We can assert the text exceeds the margins of its pages and covers. The text overflows into the world, overwhelmingly. And if the text represents an interpretation of the world, its utmost desire is to replace the mediocre absolute truths of the real by the Great Relative Truth of interpretation, on coming out of the stage into the hall.

The discourse from *Contrapagină* is strongly personalized and self-ironic. It evokes the signs of authorial voice's flagrant detachment from the traditional scheme of the occult god behind the fictional world. The proof for that is the open dialogue with the hypothetical reader, led according to very non-conformist rules. The impoliteness of the voice sarcastic to the assumed vexed reader is doubled by the use of an obviously degraded language (a sort of merchandise-language, as the one described in the poem *Cum negustorii din Constantinopole... [As Constantinople's merchants...]*). The result of that is the apparent disfunctionality of the text, in its capacity to link the issuer and the reader. Only apparent however, as *Contrapagină* cannot be discussed in terms of simple communication of information, but especially in those of *moral therapeutics*. Under the sign of „poverty book” and of „all-equal”, the Eminescian text turns upon itself in an ironic demarche, filled with

certain tension given by the conscience of the value of its own gesture. A gesture half amused, half protesting to the writing model of the time, as well as to its own authorial demarche. One of the great gods in front of which the text „devotes its heart”, with mixed feelings, ist the TEXT itself.

Eminescu's proses thus appear to be faithful mirrors of the author's obsessions, both from the point of view of the imaginary and of rethorical strategies meant to stage great visions. Moreover, they are equally representations (even fractured, sometimes) of a daring adventure of the writing being, who ceaselessly searches for its own definition, inside and all around the fiction, in the world anxiously peopled by relative truths.

## LE RAPPRESENTAZIONI DELL'ITALIA NELLA LETTERATURA ROMENA POSTBELLICA

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**ABSTRACT.** By assuming the perspective of imagology, the present essay tries to identify the major representations of Italy in postwar Romanian literature, representations which generally oscillate between the image of *the paradisiac mother country* and that of *the forbidden country*.

**Keywords:** representation, emigration, exile, real geography/imaginary geography, communism and postcommunism

Per questo saggio ho scelto un approccio specifico all'imagologia attraverso un tema abbastanza frequente nella letteratura romena: la rappresentazione dell'Italia. Benché io abbia trattato la letteratura, come spesso succede in questo genere di approccio, soprattutto come un „documento antropologico”<sup>1</sup> (Daniel-Henri Pageaux), capace di trasmettere qualcosa d'interessante tanto sul Sé quanto sull'Altro (dunque su ambedue le identità coinvolte, dato che – citando lo stesso Pageaux – „L'immagine è una traduzione dell'Altro, ma anche un'auto-traduzione”<sup>2</sup>), non ho perso di vista il criterio del valore artistico. A tale proposito ho lavorato con delle opere letterarie a cui gli specialisti attribuiscono un'eccellente qualità artistica.

Da quando esiste una letteratura romena artistica, nel senso moderno del termine (cioé solo a partire dall'Ottocento), l'Italia ha esercitato sugli scrittori un fascino particolare. Non ha rappresentato uno spazio di formazione propriamente detto, o almeno non in accezione pedagogica: i giovani romeni, appena allontanatisi da Bisanzio, andavano a studiare in Occidente prevalentemente in Francia e Germania. Direi che l'Italia abbia esercitato l'attrazione di uno spazio privilegiato, verso il quale conducono affinità elettive. D'altra parte credo di poter affermare, sin dall'inizio, che nella mia visione ci sono tre ipostasi maggiori in cui l'Italia è stata presente nella biografia e nelle opere dei letterati romeni lungo l'Ottocento e la prima metà del Novecento. (Naturalmente, queste ipostasi interferiscono e vengono nettamente divise solo in vista dell'analisi).

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<sup>1</sup> Daniel-Henri Pageaux, *Literatura generală și comparată*, traduzione di Lidia Bodea, introduzione di Paul Cornea, Iași, Polirom, 2000, p. 93.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 88.

La prima è quella della *geografia reale*, lo spazio del viaggio di piacere, in cui il viaggiatore è liberato da qualsiasi obbligo e disposto ad entusiasinarsi davanti alla scoperta della Patria originaria e dell'Arte suprema. Molti dei maggiori scrittori romeni hanno viaggiato nella Penisola: Ion Heliade Rădulescu, Nicolae Bălcescu (morto a Palermo nel 1852), Vasile Alecsandri, Mihai Eminescu, Titu Maiorescu, G. Călinescu, Mircea Eliade ecc.

La seconda ipostasi che affascina gli scrittori romeni è la *lingua italiana*. E infatti uno dei dibattiti culturali più lunghi dell'Ottocento (che durò più decenni) si svolse intorno alla cosiddetta tendenza italianizzante. Alcuni scrittori hanno provato a purificare la lingua romena dalle impurità slave e realizzare un innesto massiccio d'italianismi tramite i quali volevano avvicinare il romeno alla sua origine latina e alla modernità occidentale.

La terza ipostasi è quella *dell'Italia tematizzata*, le di cui rappresentazioni si ritrovano sia nei testi di chi ha viaggiato sia in quelli di chi ha solo immaginato lo spazio della Penisola. A partire da una delle primissime novelle in romeno *Buchetiera din Florența* [*La Fiorista di Firenze*] di Vasile Alecsandri (1840) fino a, diciamo, la celebre opera drammatica di Camil Petrescu, *Act venețian* [*Atto veneziano*] (1929), vi sono molte opere letterarie romene di primo livello che trattano argomenti, temi o personaggi italiani. Tutte tre le ipostasi presentate qua sopra prendono come punto di partenza la libertà degli scrittori di interagire. Dopo il 1947 (l'istaurazione del regime comunista), interviene una notevole modifica che consiste proprio nel divieto di questa libertà di scambio (incluso quella di viaggiare) liberamente con il (nel) mondo occidentale.

Certamente non si può parlare della stessa situazione durante tutta la dittatura. Benché la Romania si trovasse, in tutto questo periodo, dietro la cortina di ferro, nel lager socialista (nei termini dell'ideologia sovietica), vi sono state diverse tappe: una prima, dura, stalinista, fin verso il 1965 (quando era quasi impossibile viaggiare in Occidente o adoperare l'Occidente in quanto topos letterario), poi una tappa di liberalizzazione fino al 1971 (quando Ceaușescu promulga le cosiddette Tesi di luglio, antioccidentali) e una terza, in cui il comunismo s'intrecciò con il nazionalismo e un forte culto della personalità, quando s'intensificarono i divieti e i soprusi (fino al crollo della dittatura, nel 1989).

Si può quindi affermare che l'Italia sia stata, durante il regime comunista, al pari di tutti gli altri paesi occidentali, uno *spazio dell'al di là*, difficilmente raggiungibile. Citando Sanda Golopenția (professoressa e scrittrice emigrata negli Stati Uniti nel 1980, dove insegna alla Brown University): „La possibilità di viaggiare all'estero e la possibilità di emigrare vengono spesso considerate, in Romania, come i due lati aggemellati di una stessa rivendicazione. [...] Nel mondo da cui veniamo, la partenza rappresenta in sé un miracolo. La partenza è mirifica<sup>3</sup>”.

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<sup>3</sup> Sanda Golopenția, *Cartea plecării*, București, Univers, 1995, p. 62.

Nonostante tutti i divieti e la propaganda nettamente antioccidentale, né l'Occidente in genere né l'Italia in particolare hanno perso la loro capacità di affascinare. Al contrario, in un certo senso le barriere politiche ne hanno aumentato l'intensità. Dato che alcuni scrittori (un numero più limitato e con maggiori difficoltà) riescono a viaggiare, quasi tutti possono immaginare l'Italia e poiché vi sono periodi in cui la tematica occidentale viene tollerata nella letteratura, possiamo ritrovare – sfumate, è vero – le tre ipostasi della raffigurazione dell'Italia nella letteratura romena del dopoguerra, durante e dopo il crollo della dittatura.

Vi sono diverse categorie e generi che contribuiscono alla configurazione di queste rappresentazioni: reportages di viaggio, diari, romanzi, poemi. Interessante è il caso del poeta Adrian Popescu che esordisce nel 1971 con il volume di poesie *Umbria* (Cluj, Dacia, 1971), in cui la provincia è costruita con l'immaginazione, e solo in seguito, dopo qualche anno, gli si offrirà l'opportunità del confronto con il modello originale. Ecco la testimonianza dell'autore: „In seguito alla pubblicazione, nel '71, del primo volume di poesie, *Umbria*, nel '75 ho scritto «Al Magnifico Rettore dell'Università per stranieri, Perugia » [in italiano in originale], una domanda di borsa di studio. I miei argomenti, lungamente preparati insieme a Marian Papahagi sono stati convincenti. Voglio vedere la realtà *de facto* delle mie proiezioni, dicevo nella lettera; il mio libro ha il nome della provincia descritta da una memoria...ancestrale, adesso vorrei mettere in confronto il mio sogno con la realtà immediata”. Di conseguenza: „Ebbi il dono divino di scoprire l'Occidente in modo diretto ad un'età quando l'anima è ancor giovane e la maturità non pretende comodità. A 29 anni entravo in Italia felice e sbalordito<sup>4</sup>”.

Il viaggio in Italia come un „*dono divino*”, una fonte d'ineguagliabile felicità, è un luogo comune nelle testimonianze di chi ha avuto l'opportunità (e voglio sottolineare: rara) di farlo. Un'opportunità eccezionalmente offertasi a Ruxandra Cesereanu, a 18 anni, quando arriva in Italia per visitare il nonno greco-cattolico (religione vietata in Romania dal 1948), esiliato e vivente in un monastero romano. A quest'occasione visita Venezia che la sconvolge e le da „una sensazione di languore e di libertà” e dove „chiudevo gli occhi come in un abbandono erotico”<sup>5</sup>. Ana Blandiana registra la „curiosa sensazione – che abbiamo condiviso – che emmettevamo luce, che eravamo fosforescenti di felicità”<sup>6</sup>. Mentre si trova nel treno Roma-Venezia, il poeta A. E. Baconsky sente „che vivo un episodio fra sogno e

<sup>4</sup> Adrian Popescu, *Italia subiectivă*, introduzione di Marian Papahagi, Iași, Ars longa, 1997, pp. 99-100.

<sup>5</sup> Ruxandra Cesereanu, *Veneția cu vene violete*, Cluj, Dacia, 2002, p. 11. Oltre a questo volume di poesie, Ruxandra Cesereanu è anche l'autrice di una splendida novella d'amore che si svolge nella stessa città: „neanche sapevo cosa andavo a fare a Venezia e perché mi vi trovo, solo se non fossi venuta proprio per far nascere i desideri licquidi. Qui avrei imparato come farsi desiderare da un uomo. Come sbalordirlo e incatenarlo in una passione da cui non possa librarsi per un tempo. Come giocarci e fargli perdere la ragione” (Ruxandra Cesereanu, *Nașterea dorințelor lichide*, București, Cartea Românească, 2007, p.10).

<sup>6</sup> Ana Blandiana, *O silabisire a lumii*, București, Humanitas, 2006, p. 49.

allucinazione, o che sono una finzione io stesso, un personaggio creato dalla fantasia di qualche scrittore ironico”<sup>7</sup>.

Lo stesso sentimento d’irrealità colpisce anche Norman Manea, che viaggia a Venezia nel 1979 (il suo primo viaggio in Occidente, a 43 anni). Dato che lo scrittore (emigrato dalla Romania nel 1986) evoca questo viaggio in un libro scritto e pubblicato dopo il crollo de comunismo, è in grado di dare (a differenza di Baconsky) anche la spiegazione di questo sentimento d’irrealità: „L’evaso temporaneo dalla colonia penitenziaria della Romania socialista negoziava, con angosciata modestia, fra la frustrazione e l’esaltazione che lo sollecitavano altrettanto. Ritardato in tutto e fratturato in tutto, era pur contento di trovarsi, anche come un povero vagabondo, anche per un pomeriggio di primo approccio e un’altra mattina della separazione, in un posto famoso tanto da sembrare fittizio”<sup>8</sup>.

Tutt’altra esperienza quella del viaggiatore arrivato a Venezia, 20 anni più tardi (più precisamente nel gennaio 2002), venuto dagli Stati Uniti, in viaggio per Percoto dove avrebbe ricevuto il Premio Nonino. Questa volta, Venezia non significa più „un’episodio sfumato nella confusione”, ma: „Abitavo in un’albergo della parte ricca della città, le barche e l’acqua si trovavano a un passo, come nello schermo della finestra della stanza. Tempo eccellente, sole primaverile, pochi turisti, tempo a disposizione per passeggiate e dolce far niente. Notti stellate, vino eccellente, atmosfera cordiale”<sup>9</sup>.

Un’altra scrittrice che vede l’Italia in momenti e da prospettive diverse è Gabriela Melinescu. Il primo viaggio (in treno) lo fa nel 1974, quando parte da Bucarest insieme ad una delegazione di scrittori romeni. Lo fa con l’entusiasmo specifico dei romeni, a cui aggiunge una ragione personale: „L’Italia era stata «il mio sogno» sin dall’infanzia. La sorella di mio padre, Elena, si era sposata con un’italiano: l’ingegnere Umberto Pescamosa. Lo zio Umberto ci amava molto e ci mandava sempre dei regali dalla sua Italia, sognando di portarvici una volta. Medaglioni con la Madonna, d’oro e d’argento, cioccolato che ho assaggiato per la prima volta, e tanti altri erano i suoi regali per noi bambini, ma anche per mia madre, che gli faceva pena vedendola sempre impregonata tra i lavori domestici e di notte la fabbrica di tappeti di juta”. Poiché questo zio muore molto giovane il viaggio progetato non avvenne mai: „Lo zio Umberto è rimasto per me sinonimo dell’Italia. Viaggiare nel suo paese equivaleva ad una resurrezione, in tutti i sensi oscuri della parola”<sup>10</sup>. Vi si recherà due anni dopo, questa volta da Stoccolma, in compagnia del marito René Coeckelberghs, editore d’origine belga stabilitosi in Svezia, con cui farà dei viaggi annuali in Italia, specialmente alla Cattolica (dall’altro Coeckelberghs è anche l’editore in svedese di Pier Paolo Pasolini e

<sup>7</sup> A. E. Baconsky, *Remember. Fals jurnal de călătorie*, vol. I, București, Cartea Românească, 1977, p. 283.

<sup>8</sup> Norman Manea, *Plicuri și portrete*, Iași, Polirom, 2004, p. 332.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 333.

<sup>10</sup> Gabriela Melinescu, *Jurnal suedez III (1990-1996)*, Iași, Polirom, 2004, p. 48 și p. 50.

Giorgio Bassani<sup>11</sup>). Benché avesse passato a Roma già anteriormente dei giorni meravigliosi (scoprendo che „Roma era esistita già da tanto nella rete fina dei miei nervi”<sup>12</sup>), considera questo secondo viaggio come „solo adesso sarà infatti la prima volta, perché mi sento libera e non c'è la vergogna di non avere i soldi per comprarmi dei libri e degli album meravigliosi”<sup>13</sup>.

Per la maggiorparte degli scrittori romeni, quelli che non arrivano a visitare l'Italia, quest'ultima non rimane *il paese paradisiaco*, ma *il paese vietato*. Un esempio in questo senso lo fornisce lo scrittore Radu Mareș, a cui viene rifiutato il passaporto nel 1982: „Benché il rifiuto non fosse stato il primo, la mia reazione fu terrificante, per qualche mese mi sono trovato in pericolo di subire un crollo nervoso. Ebbene, queste reazioni sono e saranno difficili da spiegare. Per quale ragione una persona mentalmente equilibrata si possa trovare sul punto di perdere la ragione per il rifiuto di un banale passaporto? Quali reti interiori si sciolgono?”<sup>14</sup>. Altri ancora ci arrivano in quanto emigranti ed è proprio questa vulnerabile condizione che gli fa percepire intensamente qualsiasi umiliazione. Dato che „per un tempo siamo degli esseri senza futuro”, come scrive Sanda Golopenția che – durante il viaggio verso gli Stati Uniti – passa qualche mese a Roma, può notare „sulle facce degli emigranti che vedevo intorno una nuova umiliazione. Diversa da quella vista in Romania”<sup>15</sup>. Suo marito, l'etnologo e scrittore Constantin Eretescu, che durante il soggiorno a Roma aveva tenuto un diario che ha come titolo il nome di pensione che gli ha ospitato (*Pensiunea Dina*), ha uno stile più epico e rappresenta soprattutto delle scene di vita quotidiana. Così registra la storia di Caterina, la donna delle pulizie, che dice del padrone: „Sa dove trovare gli alimenti più economici di tutta Italia. A volte mi vergogno anche di mettere il cibo sulla tavola. Gli dico: - Ma al posto di mettergli davanti tanta pasta al pomodoro, meglio dargli meno pasta con un po' di formaggio sopra. Ma va! E fa un cenno di

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<sup>11</sup> Dato che i due scrittori arrivano a Stoccolma per la presentazione dei libri, Gabriela Melinescu fa, nello stesso diario, delle brevi annotazioni sul suo conto. Del primo scrive: „Una persona tesa, bassa, dagli occhiali neri, dai capelli lisci nerissimi, accompagnato dal suo amoroso Nino, l'attore. Nella sua presenza si sentivano i raggi forti della sua personalità, non sempre positivi. Andammo a vedere uno dei suoi bellissimi film, *Uccelacci e uccellini*, e durante lo spettacolo qualcuno si destò e urlò cose terribili, parole indecenti sull'omosessualità. E stata una sorta di premonizione, perché mentre tornava da Stoccolma (noi l'abbiamo portato all'aeroporto con grande amicizia) fu ammazzato nel modo più bestiale. Era una persona geniale, piacevole e dolce rispetto alle donne e riservato rispetto agli uomini, che conservava il suo segreto e le sue terribili esperienze come un tipo di bomba che esplodeva solo di notte” (*Jurnal suedez, I (1976-1983)*, București, Univers, 2000, p. 44). Per quanto riguarda Bassani, la scrittrice osserva: „Che differenza fra Pasolini e Bassani! Con noi fu estremamente gradevole, a ciò ha contribuito anche il fatto che René parla un'italiano di una perfezione dantesca; ha già edito ancora due libri di Bassani ed è interessato ai suoi nuovi testi. Ma sul palco, nelle luci, Bassani sembrava pedante e prezioso, parlando e leggendo i suoi poemi in una maniera egoista”.

<sup>12</sup> Gabriela Melinescu, *Jurnal suedez III*, p. 51.

<sup>13</sup> Gabriela Melinescu, *Jurnal suedez I*, pp. 44-45.

<sup>14</sup> Radu Mareș, *Anul trecut la Calabria*, Cluj, Dacia, 2002, p. 12

<sup>15</sup> Sanda Golopenția, *Cartea plecării*, p. 74 și p. 76.



noia con la mano: - Sono emigranti, sono emigranti [in italiano in originale]. – Emigranti, gli dico, ma ti danno 10.000 lire al giorno ciascuno e hai sempre 60 persone nella pensione. Sono loro che ti han fatto ricco.”<sup>16</sup>.

Una scenata assai simile (ma questa volta nel registro comico) la racconta Ana Blandiana da Palermo, dove insieme al marito vengono ospitati clandestinamente da una famiglia: „Dopo aver liberato e messo a nostra disposizione una delle camere spostando i bambini, e dopo che noi, lasciandoci i bagagli, avevamo voluto uscire in città, la paura e lo sbalordimento dei nostri padroni furono sconfinati. Un’uscita avrebbe comportato numerosissime possibilità di essere osservati dai nemici che spiano per reclamare al fisco il fatto che danno camere in affitto senza pagare l’imposta dovuta legalmente. E, alla fine, cosa vogliamo fare in città? Prendere un po d’aria, risponderemo noi colti di sorpresa così per dire. Prendere aria, si meravigliò il nostro albergatore anticonformista. Venite con me! [in italiano in originale] E prima che potessimo accorgerci cosa stava succedendo, fummo fuori dall’appartamento e avviati su una scala anti-incendio in cima alla quale, dopo lo spostamento di qualche tegola, fummo spinti sul tetto. Avevamo voluto l’aria? Ecco dell’aria quanta ne volevamo, tutto il firmamento della città che si stendeva ai nostri piedi un po’ vacillanti sul mezzo metro di tetto”<sup>17</sup>.

Ma non sono solo questi incontri casuali che interessano gli scrittori romeni, ma anche *gli italiani in genere*. La maggiorparte vanno in viaggio portandosi addosso gli stereotipi più comuni. Nel suo diario d’emigrazione, Constantin Eretescu osserva: „Impauriti dall’idea del furto, molti emigranti hanno deposto tutti i valori, documenti, soldi, anelli nella reception della pensione. [...] La notizia che gli italiani ti strappano la borsa dalle mani aveva fatto il giro del mondo”<sup>18</sup>. I pregiudizi (questa volta in un registro pittoresco) non mancano neanche a Gabriela Melinescu: „Mi esalto all’idea di andare nel «paese dell’arte», della civiltà, ma anche dei «ladri» [in italiano in originale] e degli omicidi, dei sanguinari, come agli italiani piace nominarsi senza traccia d’autocritica ma solo constatando una terribile verità”<sup>19</sup>.

Qualche anno più tardi, nel suo viaggio annuale a Cattolica, la scrittrice scopre cose più interessanti sugli italiani: „qua non c’è nessuno che non sia interessante, come nella Commedia dell’Arte, tutti recitano una rappresentazione tragi-comica e filosofica chiamata vita, personale e pubblica. Ho capito allora quanto fosse importante vivere insieme alla gente; in questo mondo tutti vengono integrati: i pazzi e gli idioti hanno il loro posto come i saggi e gli abili e tutti compongono un mondo vivo, in cui uno si può lasciare andare con tutte le sue angosce”<sup>20</sup>. Sempre

<sup>16</sup> Constantin Eretescu, *Pensiunea Dina (Jurnal de emigrație)*, București, Editura Fundației Culturale Române, 1995, p. 49.

<sup>17</sup> Ana Blandiana, *Cea mai frumoasă dintre lumile posibile*, București, Cartea Românească, 1978, p. 167.

<sup>18</sup> Constantin Eretescu, *Pensiunea Dina (Jurnal de emigrație)*, p. 24.

<sup>19</sup> Gabriela Melinescu, *Jurnal suedez I*, p. 44.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 181

lei scrive sui suoi concittadini estivi: „sono davvero delle novelle vaganti!”<sup>21</sup>. In cambio, Ana Blandiana è affascinata nello scoprire l'immagine „della disinvoltura italiana, di quell'irripetibile miscuglio di sublime e popolare, di umanità e caos, di bellezza e disordine, di genio e innocenza, di vita, di vita! Che simbolo della forza vitale di un'arte che, dopo aver riempito i musei del mondo, si riversa fuori, con la stessa vitalità, continua a vivere per strada, nelle piazze...”<sup>22</sup>.

Radu Mareş arriva in Calabria messo in guardia sugli abitanti tristi, egoisti, non comunicativi, crudeli, egoisti e tirchi; dopo tre mesi di soggiorno (nell'autunno-inverno fra il 1990 e il 1991) torna in Romania con una visione totalmente diversa: „Quì ho incontrato la gente migliore che abbia mai conosciuto in vita mia”<sup>23</sup>. Probabilmente l'idea non sarebbe del tutto condivisa da Beatrice, romena di cui storia è inclusa nella confessione di Radu Mareş. Benché consideri gli italiani civili (rispetto ai romeni), il fatto di aver sposato un uomo del posto ed essere arrivata così a far parte di una famiglia molto conservatrice le fanno spesso rimpiangere la „maledetta Calabria”<sup>24</sup>. Fra altre storie dette da Beatrice riterrei quella che riguarda il suo desiderio di trovarsi un lavoro: „sognavo di lavorare e Antonio mi aveva promesso che me l'avrebbe permesso quando si fosse aperto l'aeroporto di L, di cui sapevo che fosse in ultimazione e ci sarei andata a lavorare. Questo fin quando, un giorno, ero al negozio e ho raccontato ad uno dei clienti i miei progetti e che aspettavo l'apertura dell'aeroporto. Lui rise: l'aeroporto era aperto già da due anni! Ma ti rendi conto? Mi sentivo sul punto d'impazzire, di esplodere!”. Emigrata, Beatrice rimane un personaggio sospeso fra due mondi: „Qua non mi piace – e non mi piace ancora oggi – , non mi piace la gente, non ho amiche, non amo andare a spasso, ma neanche posso tornare nel mio paese”<sup>25</sup>.

Lo stesso dramma viene condiviso, fino ad un certo punto, anche dal protagonista del romanzo di Gabriela Adamesteanu, *Întîlnirea [L'Incontro]*. Traian Manu vive in Italia sin da giovane (dai tempi della Seconda Guerra Mondiale quando era venuto in Occidente per studiare) ed è diventato professore universitario, direttore dell'Istituto Europeo di Ricerca dell'Ambiente Mediterraneo di Napoli. Solo nel 1986 ritorna in Romania (di cui semte costantemente nostalgia). Questo ritorno tardivo (dopo ben più di quattro decenni) in un mondo alieno, totalmente diverso da quello dei ricordi e dei tormentosi sogni notturni, l'incontro di parenti praticamente sconosciuti, gli provoca uno choc identitario e gli rinforza l'idea che la sua vera patria è infatti quella adottiva, cioè „questo paese per cui ha

<sup>21</sup> Gabriela Melinescu, *Jurnal suedez II (1984-1989)*, Iași, Polirom, 2002, p. 81.

<sup>22</sup> Ana Blandiana, *O silabisire a lumii*, pp. 24-25.

<sup>23</sup> Radu Mareş, *Anul trecut la Calabria*, p. 236.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 111.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 109.

sofferto per farlo suo”<sup>26</sup>. Mentre racconta la tenebrosa avventura di questo viaggio ad una giovane coppia italiana di ex-studenti, Manu gli confessa: „non vi auguro di sentirvi d’un tratto esclusi dalle regole protettrici del nostro mondo!”<sup>27</sup>, e alla moglie dice con fermezza e irritazione: „Te l’avevo detto che quello non è il mio paese”<sup>28</sup>.

La distanza fra i due mondi viene narrativamente valorizzata anche nel romanzo *Vocile nopții* di Augustin Buzura, un forte romanzo sociale pubblicato nel 1980. Ștefan Pinteș, il protagonista del romanzo, giovane lavoratore con studi universitari interrotti, aveva conosciuto nella Jugoslavia (dove si trovava in una delegazione studentesca) una coppia d’italiani: un pittore e la moglie, Violetta, giornalista di un quotidiano di sinistra. Il romanziere sfrutta il personaggio per poter aprire tramite lui degli argomenti tabu, tipo l’esperienza della droga (conosciuta dalla giornalista a New York), o per criticare (indirettamente) il regime: „«Voi non contestate, vero? Solo affermate!» «Dipende, dissi. E una distinzione un po’ manichea... Non è forse più nobile affermare? Certo che anche noi abbiamo contestato e contestiamo ancora... » « Sì, lo so, avete contestato la borghesia finché non ne rimase niente...Forse solo le abitudini... » «Se si conservano le abitudini vuol dire che... » «Poi i boiari, gli avversari, gli oppositori, gli amici innocenti...lavoro sodo, scherziamo? Penso che fra qualche tempo forse procederemo anche noi nello stesso modo... »”<sup>29</sup>.

Le allusioni di Violetta sfiorano due problemi importanti della dittatura: il divieto di contestare / criticare il Potere e la durezza del Partito Comunista che, in una società monopartita aveva escluso i propri avversari politici (che erano finiti in prigione o nei lager di lavoro). Come il pittore era ispirato e occupato, il giovane romeno ebbe un episodio amoroso con Violetta: „mi sentivo attratto da lei in modo speciale, non tanto come donna, benché fosse bella, ma mi affascinava soprattutto per quello che aveva visto e conosciuto”<sup>30</sup>. Dall’altro la donna non esita a proporgli di andare in Occidente, proposta che lui rifiuta proprio perché avrebbe equivalso ad una fuga politica e perciò gli sarebbe mancata la possibilità di tornare. Anche se non ha accettato la proposta a cui non mancava un senso persuasivo quasi disperato („Ma perché non hai il coraggio di provare? Vuoi soffrire ogni volta che vedi una cartina?”), Ștefan se ne ricorda con rammarico, associandola alla possibilità di

<sup>26</sup> Gabriela Adameșteanu, *Întîlnirea*, Iași, Polirom, 2007, p. 31.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 164.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 209.

<sup>29</sup> Augustin Buzura, *Vocile nopții*, București, Cartea Românească, 1980.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 209.

evadere: „ogni volta che mi viene in mente sento l'odore dell'aria fresca, un indicibile bisogno di evadere...”<sup>31</sup>.

E infine l'ultimo personaggio su cui mi soffermo, pervaso anch'esso dalla proposta di rimanere in Italia, fa parte di un romanzo apparso nel 2001, *Coborîrea de pe cruce*, scritto da Florina Ilis, autrice che fa parte dalla nuovissima generazione di scrittori romeni. Il tempo della narrazione è anch'esso post comunista. Il protagonista Theo Ignat, studente ad Arte Plastiche, ha una borsa di sei mesi in Italia e ci arriva con lo stesso sfrenato entusiasmo del romeno intellettuale o artista: „Roma, sono come il protagonista di una fiaba arrivato nel paese delle meraviglie, non so dove guardare per primo, toccherei tutto alla volta, vorrei avere degli occhi anche sulle piante dei piedi che calpestrano la pietra antica di queste piazze, vorrei annusare, assaggiare, sentire più di quanto lo possano fare i miei sensi, sono come una stanza buia senza finestre e vorrei abbattere tutte queste mura che mi oscurano lo sguardo”<sup>32</sup>. Non mi soffermo né sulle storie di vita e né sulle numerose annotazioni artistiche occasionate al personaggio dall'esperienza italiana (forse ricorderei solo che, arrivato agli Uffizi, „tutto mi sembra irreale”); in cambio vale la pena di ricordare i suoi dilemmi di emigrante potenziale, risoltisi alla fine con il suo ritorno: „Non me ne andrei più di qua, gli confesso circondando con lo sguardo la Piazza di Spagna, E perché non resti? La domanda logica di Andrea, C'è in me qualcosa d'indistinto, provai a spiegargli, come se fossi diviso fra due desideri altrettanto forti: uno, quello di rimanere qui, di riprendere tutto da capo, e l'altro esige che io torni, di tornare da Ana e di cominciare seriamente a dipingere e i due richiami mi consumano adesso tutta l'energia, non so, Anche in Italia puoi dipingere! Provò Andrea a sostenermi, Lo so! Però prima devo lavorare per mantenermi e non mi aggrada l'idea di lavare i piatti in qualche ristorante”<sup>33</sup>.

Paese degli italiani o terra promessa degli emigranti, l'Italia viene costantemente associata, nelle sue rappresentazioni nella letteratura romena, alla libertà, alla bellezza, alla tolleranza, alla vitalità, all'arte, alla musicalità della

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<sup>31</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 235. Interessante da segnalare che nell'introduzione (*Mărturisire despre Vocile nopții*) alla seconda edizione, postcomunista, Buzura confessa che il personaggio ha avuto un modello reale, incontrato nel 1972 in Jugoslavia: „Le circostanze in cui l'avevo conosciuta, le sue paure e qualcosa dalla sua biografia, quanto ha avuto voglia di raccontarmene, tutto l'ho spostato nel romanzo. Lei, la grande giornalista a cui non era sfuggito nessun punto bruciante del mondo, da Biafra fino in Vietnam, dal Libano e Israele fino all'America latina, era, ai miei occhi, un tipo di simbolo del giornalista ideale, ma anche dell'opacità tipicamente occidentale rispetto al nostro Est, talmente chiuso in quei tempi. Le era impossibile capire come mai io non potevo andare nel Nepal quando lo desideravo, perché non ve la posso accompagnare o almeno nella sua Italia natale, una distanza accettabile per una buona macchina che ha girato le strade dell'Europa. Suo marito era ancora più lontano dalla nostra realtà: «Se non puoi scrivere quello che vuoi nel tuo paese, perché non ti sposti in un'altro? O almeno prova a convincere il mondo che il governo deve essere cambiato». Nell'economia del romanzo „il dialogo con Violetta era un tipo di grido” (Augustin Buzura, *Vocile nopții*, I, ediția a doua, București, Universalia, 1999, p. 18).

<sup>32</sup> Florina Ilis, *Coborîrea de pe cruce*, Cluj, Echinoc, 2001, pp. 156-157.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 196-197.

propria lingua<sup>34</sup>. Sicché mi prenderei il rischio di dire che l'Italia rappresenti, per i romeni, più di uno spazio occidentale, un'immagine identitaria ideale, senza essere necessariamente anche idealizzata. Essa sembra condividere gran parte dei difetti che i romeni riconoscono propri: la loquacità, l'incostanza, il conservatorismo, ma equilibrate, o almeno sfumate, da qualità: stabilità storica, eccellenza artistica, generosità, civiltà. Arrivata a Firenze, Ana Blandiana riflette: „Settecento anni in cui un'ospedale è sempre stato ospedale e un collegio sempre collegio è troppo per un'immaginazione abituata a riempire lo stesso periodo d'invasioni, guerre, catastrofi, rovine”<sup>35</sup>. In un certo modo, nell'immaginario romeno di ieri e di oggi, l'Italia va vista come una Romania pura, intera e musicale, non ancora arrivata alle sponde del Danubio e alle porte dell'Oriente. E così che si spiega, probabilmente, il fatto che desta sempre nei romeni – citando la stessa scrittrice – „un'ammirazione quasi mistica” e „una nostalgia patetica”<sup>36</sup>.

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<sup>34</sup> L'ipostasi affascinante della lingua continua ad essere presente nelle rappresentazioni romene. Sicché Radu Mareș parla del „piacere puro, addirittura l'emozione estetica, come ad un concerto” che si rivela ai romeni nell'ascoltare l'italiano (*Anul trecut la Calabria*, p. 191) e Adrian Popescu la considera „la lingua più infantile dei terreni”, essendo „elementare, primaria, ingenua, anche se avvolta sistematica, diminutivale come nessun'altra, espressiva, colorita con sillabe melodiose” (*Italia subiectivă*, p. 81).

<sup>35</sup> Ana Blandiana, *O silabisire a lumii*, p. 182.

<sup>36</sup> Ana Blandiana, *Cea mai frumoasă dintre lumile posibile*, p. 161.

## THE EUROPEAN LITERATURE BETWEEN REALITY AND UTOPIA

RODICA ILIE

**ABSTRACT.** By dwelling upon such issues as the European identity reflected in literature, the action of trans-national cultural stereotypes or the construction of canon, the present essay debates from an interdisciplinary perspective on the theoretical and concrete foundations of the concept of European literature.

**Keywords:** alterity, cosmopolitisme, europeanism, values of democracy, European culture

The manner of creating a new „grand récit” in the postmodern paradigm does not actually bring about a new reality; today, the utopias are immediately turned ordinary, they go through the legitimization stage, they assert themselves as stories, so that they then turn into ideology or, in the most restrictive case, into cultural stereotypes and into slogan. This is the case of the idea of European literature, it is the subject matter of the comparatists, of the theoreticians of culture, possibly of the philosophers and political analysts. Less, of the writers. Although they aspire to universality, to European acknowledgement at least, the writers themselves produce and maintain the specificity, the unmistakable identity of the culture they belong to, and this because the emotional and intellectual profile particular to the literary works is contained in the language, obsessions, in the ideas and in the involuntary, temperamental, personal/ national labels. Neither do I believe that the great artists melt away in the indistinctness of some exterior desiderata, of foreign affairs, nor do I believe that, writing is related voluntarily to exclusively European marks, but to values and ideals of Europe as paradigm and cultural experience of the freedom of thinking, of democracy and tolerance, of the real cultural dialogue, where the models and the national cultural values could be respected, naturally and organically integrated in diversity, acknowledged and accepted beyond the ethnic, national, religious specificity.

It is exactly this fact of the aspirations to the common values of the European culture that induces the utopian, ideal and symbolist character of the enlarged communication/ community, from the national to the universal, from the autarchic rigidity of a literary work written in a small-scale usage European language, to escape by translations, adaptations, and re-writings, from the identity borders to the de-centralization and acceptance of the alterity, of diversity, of *the other* (Jean Baudrillard, Marc Guillaume, 2002).

**In search of Europe.** From *the old Germany, mother to us all*, (Nerval) to *the old Europe, mother to us all*, the romantic spirit – the digger of the roots, of the legendary traditions, of the northern or Mediterranean mythologies, of the exoticism of the marginalia – aspires simultaneously both to centrality and to the acknowledgement within the strong nucleus of the major cultures as well as to universality. The trajectory towards the fulfillment of the European unity ideal is rather difficult and consists of the stages of the definitization of the national consciousness, then the ones of the dramatic historical influences, highlighted by the 20<sup>th</sup> century wars, by the treaties and geopolitical agreements. Beyond this socio-political, ideological or diplomatic tumult of the definition of the European order throughout the centuries of modernity, the literature and the arts have built, have reflected and have perpetuated *the spirit of Europe*. Even paradoxically, by canonic battles, by “the construction and deconstruction of the classics” (A. Compagnon, [1993], 2002), by the acceptance and assimilation of the marginalia thanks to the translations, the debates among the academic, literary and artistic elites.

The moment of the highest effervescence – the avant-gardes and the programmatic modernism of the 20<sup>th</sup> century which have synchronized the rhythms of the small cultures to the pulse of the metropolis, to the experimental dynamism, to the cosmopolite European spirit roughly speaking. Paris, Vienna, Milan, Zurich were at the time the centers of the latest *tradition of the new*, they become the dream of every writer, passage spaces to the form of seizing of the universe. Europe was opening up by the great metropolis. The romantic Titanism, the imperialism of the modernist subject reconfigured in the image of *the artist as a common person, as a person integrant to the crowds, dandy and child* (Ch. Baudelaire) revived in the cosmopolite spirit of the European intelligence in the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Moreover, on the tracks of the integrative romantic aspirations, Europe represents both the center and a boundless homeland. A homeland without materiality, a chimaeric realm of the homeless (such as Apollinaire), of the exiled or the excommunicated (such as Ovid, Dante, Cioran), of the cultural self-exiled (such as Tzara, Eliot, Pound), of the converted cosmopolites, trying to get to a center (the example of the same paradoxical Apollinaire, then T.S.Eliot’s, whose center is Dante or Ezra Pound’s example looking for the center everywhere, from Limousin in China, from Rapallo and Pisa in SUA and eventually in Venice, the least “rooted” city in the world).

**Europe and the New Spirit.** A representative example of this referring ambiguity to the center called Europe, to the indistinct, imageless homeland can be found, in this sense, in Guillaume Apollinaire. This one will dialectically self-define: bastard permanently searching for a plural identity; homeless, intending by his deeds to obtain the acknowledgement of the French citizenship.

As a continuation of M. Raymond’s assertion according to which in the literature of the 20<sup>th</sup> century “aesthetic and ethic, life and poetry almost merge”, one should see mirroring in Apollinaire’s poetry a part of his empiric existence, life

fragments saved by poetry from the stage worthiness of a torn existence, maintained by a traumatized biography of *the person without features*, of the homeless in search of a past, of a center, of an identity. For this reason, in his poetry, two divergent attitudes will cohabit on the background of the dramatic structure of the split subject. This one divides his poetic existence between adoration, by recalling, of the past's lights and the exploration of a still unborn world of the future. The present is but the coordinate which instills in him the thirst for real, involving the ego in a dynamic search which progressively leads to the abolishment of nostalgia by self-mockery and mystification, by projecting it in a continuous anticipation. His appetite for the reality of the industrial modernity justifies only at the level of the compensation in imaginary. The euphoria of the rhythms of the prosaic existence, although it contaminates the modern traveler, does not save the ego from the crisis of the loss of unity with the sacred, from the painful memories or from the experience of the failure. The most common images which translate the repeated tearings are: the traveler, the wanderer, the rejected, masks which are found in *The Emigrant from Landor Road*, in *Zone* or in *Le chanson de mal aimé*.

Author of a contradictory poetics, Apollinaire will rewrite, on the one hand, French folk rhythms, toying with the sentimental harmony, on the other hand he will nourish the imaginary, as well as the syntax of his poems, from the mechano-morph sensitivity, from the aggressive rhythm of the modern world preferred by the Italian futurists. „Material poetry” (M. Raymond), in a certain sense, inculcates upon the French poet the verve of the epic, dramatic tensions obtained by the transcription of the rough sensations, unaltered by the stylistic tradition of the symbolism or of the refined, decadent modernism. Dynamic and prosaic, the new poetry is born out of the cosmopolite urban sensitivity, by the wiping away of the borders between interior and exterior, but, symmetrically contrary to the romantics, who were assimilating the exterior to the interiority, this time the projection is fulfilled as „objectifying” (in the sense used by de H.P. Jeudy) just as with Whitman, F.T. Marinetti or Álvaro de Campos, the frantic heteronymous of the poet Fernando Pessoa. But Apollinaire does not equalize the mechanism and the body, the human existence is made of the same ineffable substance: of dreaming, melancholy, failure, hazard, accidents of the optimism or usual reflections on fragments of the revived existence from the depth of the innocent past of childhood. Although he was a defender of the avant-garde, critic and theoretician of the futurism and cubism, prophet of the new tendencies of an innovating radicalism and mentor of some movements such as Dadaism and Surrealism, Apollinaire is the poet who detests the idea of poetic avant-garde school and remains a supporter of the equilibrium, privilege of the classic doctrines. It is a paradoxical posture, but it is justified in an onto-poetic manner, both in the search of a center, and out of fear of fixity and fixation. One can see this dualism in the rationalism and at the same time in the prophecy of the lecture „*L'Esprit nouveau et les poètes*” (delivered in 1917 and published in *Mercure de France*, on the 1<sup>st</sup> of December 1918), but also in the formal contradictions, of poetic syntax and attitude, present in his poems.



Although Apollinaire's poetry is trying to define *the new spirit* of the change of the point of view is complex, different from the anti-traditionalist exclusivism of the futurist. In the doctrinaire text „*L'Esprit nouveau et les poètes*”, the author will discuss about both the innovating tendencies of the aesthetic modernity and, about the conventions, the formal resistance and the blockings which may appear, as dangers or, contrarily, as galvanizing elements for the new spirit. Thus, in his conception about art, both the cosmopolite avant-garde enthusiasm for the realities of the modern world, and “the infallible critical spirit” of a “solid common sense” associated to the sense of “duty” are preserved, features which the poet discovers in the classic French inheritance, in the romantic tradition of the integrative, panoramic perspective on the universe data and on the subject domain. These cultural traditions will accentuate on the one hand the social role and the moral duty of the modern poet, and on the other hand they will “accelerate” his search, emphasizing, by romantic influence, that “curiosity of exploring all domains able to offer literary material for the exaltation of life, under any form that it might be” (anthology *Modern Poetry. Modern poets about poetry*, p.175). It can thus be noticed that the new artistic sensitivity feeds, even in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, on the deposits of the European tradition, Apollinaire, T.S. Eliot or Ezra Pound, Constantin Kavafis or Fernando Pessoa, novelists from Joyce to Saramago, project their art along two complementary coordinates: the statement of the perennial principles of art and the presentation of the data of the new adventure of the *new European spirit* by the re-semantisation, rewriting, and re-contextualization of the canonic data of the Latin Middle Ages, of the Renaissance or of the Greek antiquity.

The categories of the classic aesthetic – of a new typological classicism, rather resemantized by adaptation, rewriting, pastiche, parody – asserting the centrality or trans-historic reference point of the European canon, frequently reappear in the aesthetic theories of these writers: „We should not forget – Apollinaire emphasized– that for a nation it is perhaps more dangerous to allow being intellectually conquered rather than by arms. For this reason, the new spirit results mainly from order and duty – the great classic qualities by which the French spirit highly manifests – to which freedom is added. This freedom and this order amalgamate in the new spirit, they characterize it and give it strength.” (p. 177)

Although it has universalistic propensities, due to the inherent character of being contemporary with and synchronic to the rhythms of modernity, the *new European spirit* must retain the national specificity, inculcate upon the art the character of the unique speech, identity and ethnic specificity. From these ones can obtain “the variety of the literary expressions and it is exactly this variety which needs to be saved” as Apollinaire points out. He signals in “*L'Esprit nouveau et les poètes*” a symptomatic manner of referring to Europeanism: “Given its cosmopolite character, the lyric expression does not produce but vague pieces of writing, without accent nor structure, whose value does not surpass the one of the common places in international parliamentary rhetoric”. The criticism included in this finding

confirms the thesis according to which the universal art will be firstly national, that the tensions for access to the European acknowledgement confronts its self first, the experience of its own language, of the diverse and authentic identities which make the artistic formula of that particular writer unmistakable and irreplaceable in the European area. Apollinaire's virulent finding – by which the mimetic spirit, the taste of the bourgeois conformism, the common places, the politics-produced stereotypes, the fashion, the cinematography transformed into a mass cultural phenomena are implicitly convicted – is emphasized by an observation which needs to be circumscribed to the fashionable analogical – technologic taste which disseminates *apparent* values of the imposition of the plurality of tastes: “You should notice that the cinema, the cosmopolite art, solely, already present ethnic differences which the people identify immediately; the habitual watchers distinguish effortlessly between an Italian and an American film”. Beyond the irony hidden under the tone of the objective finding, Apollinaire will continue his exercise of cultural analysis in the sense of acknowledging the synthesis data of the new sensitivity, but including also a strong patriotic feeling, paradoxical for *the homeless* person, of the one who wanted his confirmation as a French citizen: “The entire new spirit, which sets its ambition on marking the universal spirit, and which does not consider limiting its activity to a domain or another, is – and wants to remain – a particular and lyric expression of the French nation just as the classic model is, pre-eminently, a sublime expression of the same nation” (p.177).

To see in the *new spirit* a universal tendency does not stand in Apollinaire's vision for considering it shapeless, undefined, but a concrete expression “particular and lyric of the French nation”. Just as in the case of the poet Fernando Pessoa, the universalism is derived from the propensities of an exacerbated national spirit, which thrives on the phantasms and imperialist utopias (Portugal of the navigators and Napoleon France, respectively), with the distinction that, if for the poet of the heteronyms the expression of the universalism had messianic, historic, mystic. For Apollinaire this is a derivate of the sensitivity and aesthetic tradition rebuilding an imaginary homeland, which mingles the French traditions with the ubiquitous cultural projections, encouraged by the new discoveries of the epoch. For one of them the utopia projects retrospectively, activating the past, for the other the accent falls on the prospective dimension, announcing the dynamic spirit and the potentiality of the future. A future when Europe is not only the dreamt about country, but a cultural-politic, historic reality in whose concretization he involves prophetically and poetically.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Once again, Apollinaire is the extoller of the *new* as a religion to be, clearly delineating the social role for the artists of the modern world. On the tracks of the visionary Rimbaud, the poetry cannot only rhythm the action, more than that, it has to outrun it; „Bunch of energies in full development” (M. Raymond, 1985, 276), the poetry of the new spirit sets itself in the avant-garde of the culture, and the poets will play

Contradictory theoretician, Apollinaire is the fervent supporter of the innovation, but he does not forget about the necessity of order, of equilibrium, trans-temporal classic desiderata which affiliates to the doctrine of truth, present for a complete definition of the concept of the new spirit. It is imperiously necessary to highlight the fact that, unlike the “tough” truth of the classics’ thinking, the new truth is polymorphous, never the only valid, and this relativism implicitly present in Apollinaire’s expository is due mainly to the knowledge of Nietzsche’s philosophy. Luc Ferry points out the fact that Nietzsche’s philosophy results in the change of both the instance of the subject and of the truth, the knowledge is heteroclitic, “there are no truths, only interpretations”. To complete, by paraphrasing, we can say that there is not one Europe, but several Europes, real or imaginary. Consequently, the modern subject does not find any certitude, it defines as a “broken subject”, torn between ratiocination and irrational, between history and dream, between real and fictional, between the centre as homeland and homeland as an unspecific universe: “The only possible life: in art. – the philosopher stated in *Die Geburt der Tragödie aus dem Geist der Musik* – Thus we stray from life” (Ferry, 1997, 193). The commentary that Ferry makes signals the action of deconstructing the platonic truth, action which does not erode any modality of existence of the truth, but it only interrogates an instance which, insufficiently, opens the possibilities for the knowledge of profundities, beyond the rationalism of the essences, of the pure ideas or of the scientific, positivist theories „truth that only art, maybe, could be able to satisfy, because, at this level, the senses only ceases to lie to us «as long as they indicate ‘the becoming, the disappearance, the change....’»” (p.193).

Apollinaire subscribes (in the *Beautiful Red-headed*) to this Nietzschean theory of *truth* – as non-falsification, polymorphism, becoming, - and of profundity which removes the accent from the superficial to the interior experience of the dramatic subject, defined at the intersection between sensorial and spiritual, between technique progress and sentimentality infused by the energy of its euphoric holding, at the crossroads between tradition and new, order and adventure, centre and periphery.

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the part of innovators, discoverers, prophets and creators. It is to this mission that Apollinaire considers the essential nucleus of his manifesto: „the poet is alone (...) the modern poets are first of all the poets of the permanently renewed truth. Their duty never ends; they have surprised you so far, they will surprise you more from now on, (...) The modern poets are thus creators, inventors and prophets to the highest profit of the community they belong to, they ask us to check what they state. They turn to Plato and they beg him to listen to them at least, before he chases them from the Republic” (p. 180). Achieving intertextual reference with Rimbaud’s letter to Paul Demeny (published only in 1912), Apollinaire lets himself contaminated with Rimbaud’s visionary pathos and invokes again the platonic authority for the acknowledgement of the merits of those who fathom the unknown, who open the gates of the impenetrable, inviting to a new form of knowledge, beyond the barriers of thought, moral, religion, traditional philosophy and conventional social order. Charles Russell sets clearer differences between the attributions of the visionary poets, all their hypostases being found in Apollinaire’s programmatic text, as well as in the doctrine of the Italian futurism or in Pessoa – Campos’s futurist manifest, *Ultimatum*: „As inventor, the poet was to create new means of expression and vision. As discoverer, he or she would lay bare the eternally new life as it emerged in the culture. As a prophet, the poet would sing of the possible – the future – world to come” (1985, p.64).

Europe as centre and, at the same time, as spiritual homeland is the Europe to which the American poets and the writers of the colonies return. This is the Europe of the confrontation of traditions and of the polyphonic dialogue of cultures, of homelessness by writing and of outrunning the linguistic barriers, of a diverse cultural memory, assimilated by grafting, by rewriting and „*wrapping* of six centuries of culture”. This is the essential image of Ezra Pound’s Europe: “We had dealt with everything that existed in *The Divine Comedy*”, the writer states in a conversation with Donald Hall. “The issue is to develop a coherent cycle, setting similarities between the contemporary spirit and the one in the Middle Ages, after carefully having been got rid of the classic culture it had been taken over by during Renaissance”. It was a return to an archaic Europe, mingling heathenism and Christianity, the primitive forces of a “golden age” with their modernization and entrance into history, the irrational with the reason, the equilibrium with the straying. Possibly for this reason Ezra Pound’s complex of alienation and praise of cosmopolitanism is explained by Guy Scarpetta by the heterogenic writing, by the “stubborn refusal of being affiliated to a national cultural tradition”(1997, 115), by the refusal of settling, of one’s striking roots in only one language (a visible tendency with other writers of the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, such as Pessoa). The visions in anamorphosis about Europe appear from the selective taking over of the data of this tradition, and their adequate reading induces a tabular, iconic, polyphonic process. This Europe belonging to Pound will have in its centre another sensitivity than the one where the new spirit is located in the conception of Apollinaire, who used to see order in the French classicism. For Pound the capacity of assimilation of the cultural diversity is ensured by the heteroclit character of English, a flexible, changing, integrative language, which “has conquered vast territories due to its capacity of absorbing the other languages, namely, it stole the Latin roots, and it even has several variants available, while Italian and French showed less flexibility. It took bits from the Greek and swallowed medieval French, by keeping at the same time its solid Anglo-Saxon basis” (Scarpetta, 1997, 114).

This trans-national language was competing against the language of the international diplomacy of the time, by offering the sight of the definition of a new European, transnational and transpersonal identity, identity multiplied by the culture of the reader-traveler and of the traveler-reader for whom only “to be everything, in all possible kinds”, as Pessoa used to say, was enough.

If for Ezra Pound the cosmopolite spirit evolved between the borders of the European universe and non-European where English ruled, for Pessoa the cosmopolitanism defined less by the plural, heteronymous writing of the diversity taken over as theatre of the human being. Pessoa is a cosmopolite in his own language, Portuguese, and an exiled in English, an European with a double status, both as insider as well as outsider (experimenting the life in the colonies, his childhood spent in Africa, but also the experience of the de-personalization and of multiplication in others). Dreaming about Europe, he learns to become Álvaro de Campos, the poet writing in English, de-personalization and mask of the universal modern subject; Ricardo Reis, the Latinist poet, of the ironic-gnomic expression, the poet of parody and rewriting, or Alberto Caiero, bucolic, Whitman-like poet.

In the reveries of the modernist poets, one cannot speak of only one Europe of nations, but of an Europe as universal inheritance, as diverse and plural cultural memory. For this reason, every current ideology, affiliated to the contemporary spirit of the European Union, becomes artificial and rigid when applied to literature. The Union became a fact a long time ago by arts, but the motivations were other but the geo-political or diplomatic ones. The artists were, at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the first “Euro-parliamentarians”, without institutions and without official frames.

If “Dante, Goethe and Chateaubriand belong to the entire Europe by the only fact that they were Italian, German and French respectively” (as general de Gaulle said), they existed and “made up Europe without being aware of it” (Bernard Genton, 2002, 311), Pound, Eliot, Pessoa and Apollinaire, Kundera and Saramago belong to Europe just because they lived and saw in it a *homeland*. A historic and trans-historic, national and trans-national, ethnic and trans-ethnic reality, a cultural memory and a “Republic”, similar to Plato’s. That is why, I believe that the European literature, in today’s terms, is reality and utopia. A *reality* conditioned to conforming to the respect of diversity, dialogue and multitude of political, moral, sexual, religious options. But, a *utopia* in what concerns the data of the literature as art of the word. And that because the identity and the specificity, the authenticity and the originality legitimize especially within the framework of a limited sensitivity, modeled at an elementary linguistic level. Roland Barthes considers that style is born at the intersection between the sociality of the language, as public, normative activity and the intimacy of one’s own articulation. T. S. Eliot, associated the poetic feeling – represented by the objectifying of one’s personal emotion in the generic character of the impersonal correlative – with the diffuse religious feeling: emergent as an individual experience, but accessing to the state of communion, of sharing the same feelings, ideals, values. Beyond the conservatory vision, taken over by the American poet, one finds the assertion of the same idea of spiritual unity governed and guaranteed by a centre, (Christian, even if heretic, by Dante) a plural centre, eventually, of the personal gnosis, heterodoxies finding his starting point exactly in *The Divine Comedy*.

Instead of conclusions, we should re-open the issue of the occidental canon and admit the rightfulness of Harold Bloom’s elegy. The centre is Europe, a mythological and symbolic Europe of fictions and of the ideals of freedom. But the same Europe is the Europe of wars, of colonies, of Diaspora, and of the political dissidents, of past and present wounds, of conventions, treaties, directives, statistics and reports. In this last we identify the phantasms of Europeanism, its values culturally recuperated: „*I have never loved Europe that much, I have never believed so much in its virtues than in the years that I spent in Morocco* (Marcel Bénabou states): *years of childhood, years of adolescence which ended at the same time with the French protectorate on what used to be called, exotically and pompously, The Empire ... It was about a different Europe: that Europe that I had imagined at the beginning of the 50’s, a Jewish-Moroccan child who had not gone there yet.* An Europe partially imaginary. An Europe built piece by piece starting from the most diverse things,

from among which reading has its privileged place, because the meeting with the great names of the European literatures seemed to me more real than the contacts, also daily, with some Europeans in bones and flesh..." (2002, 338)

This way of defining Europe was one of promises, of reveries and cultural revelations, obscuring the barriers and the ethnic-religious blockings. The same author reminds of the confusion of social freedom and of the ambiguity of defining a plural transparent society (for example, the entrance in the town pool in Meknès, "available during the week, it was reserved to Arabs on Friday, to Jews on Saturday, and to Europeans on Sunday"). Thus, Europe becomes the generator of some ethnic, social, religious, political stereotypes, of some thinking schematisms in contradiction to its values (occidental liberalism, the topic of *personal happiness*, of equality, of freedom, or bourgeois prosperity, of secularity). This will be the moment of disenchantment, of de-mythologized process of the Europe of colonies, which had had the merit of having maintained the dream, re-modeling the sensitivity and imagination, everybody's personality and collective mentality. Beyond its phantasms, there were to be discovered the weaknesses and the artificiality of an administrative system which for the colonized had produced "a permanent feeling of nostalgia and frustration" (p. 344). The excessive Europeanization led, paradoxically, to the loss of the privileges of Europeanism. Europe-matrix will get to be afraid of its bastards, "which it had created without knowing exactly what it was doing" (p. 345). And this is how begins the adventure of assimilation, of the discipline of the union, of the acknowledgement of the other as partner (but not as equal or friend) of the intercultural dialogue.

Europe is no longer of the nations, but of the European identity, at the most of ... identities. In this context of the incantations for the European construction, in this official setting different from the spontaneity of the meetings, and defined by press releases, parliamentary discourses, "The literary Europe takes pains at getting born"; "The literary Europe, if it still exists, is a space, but not a power", the critic Bernard Genton (2002, 321) states sharply. As a consequence of the finding of enclavisation, we should ask ourselves if this symbolic construction called *the literature of Europe*, with a canonic value, still has the strength of becoming sovereign on the current European spirit. The skepticism can be overcome, in Genton's vision, by cultural infusion in the tired organism of the mother-Europe, with "new" blood from "somewhere else", offered by translations and adaptations, debates, dialogue readings and a real integration of some "writers most often allogeneous" (p. 319). But this will be a different Europe, of the marginalia, an Europe equally complex, although of the peripheries, just as Hans Magnus Enzensberger indicated prophetically, an Europe of Europeanism, „rather tiring – but equally interesting, unforeseeable" (Genton). An Europe of „the ecumenical vocation, one which includes the concepts of difference, anomaly, of mixture and of uprooting, being capable of demonstrating an appetite equal to Picasso's for the arts from different continents and from different periods..." (Juan Goytisolo, Benard Genton, 2002, 319)

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## ÉLÉMENTS D'ETHNOLOGIE CONTEMPORAINE. LE FOLKLORE SUR L'INTERNET

ELEONORA SAVA

**ABSTRACT. Contemporary Narrations: the Internet Folklore.** The present study suggests an anthropological “radiography” of messages that can be named *Internet Folklore* since they have a theoretically infinite number of addressees, do not convey a personal content for a unique recipient; on the contrary, they imply a largely general character and in the end can contain the indication to be sent to as many recipients as possible. Messages of this type verify a series of folklore defining features, mentioned by the classical textbooks: the anonymous character (the message’s initial transmitter is often unknown), the syncretic character (they use text, images and sound at the same time, being *multimedia messages*), the traditional character (many of them are built on familiar epic structures, typical for the oral narrations). At the same time, they require a redefinition of the folklore because the conveying way is not oral, non-mediated (man to man and mouth to ear) but written, mediated, through a non-traditional channel (Internet) that in its turn involves a series of contextual modifications.

The group of messages on which I base my analysis was gathered during two years (2007 – 2008) and contains mostly narrations. From a typological point of view, they can be integrated in four great categories: jokes, urban legends, rumors and chain messages. The addressees and addressers were teenagers and adults, mainly girls and women (it’s about messages received by this study’s author). Most of the texts are written in Romanian but there are some in other languages, too: English, French.

The chosen examples show the vitality of the folklore, contradicting the opinions which supported its disappearance, since the contemporary societies, like the traditional ones are creators and carriers of folklore. The addressee of these messages is a public that has never ceased to tell stories and to trust the power of story to take possession and signify the reality. The comparison of folklore-traditional narrations with those sent through Internet shows only superficial differences: the medieval or rustic settings, the mythical characters and the conflicts that motivated the heroes’ actions have disappeared; the texts have neither the complexity nor the amplitude of the old fairy tales. In essence though, they are built on the same logic of symbolic nature and resort to the same narrative elements – action schemes, characters, significance systems – that exist within the cultural register shared with both the recipient public and the old narrations.

**Keywords:** Folklore, Internet, Narrations, Postmodern Media Culture.

Notre étude se propose de faire une radiographie d’ordre anthropologique de certains messages qui puissent être identifiés avec le syntagme *Folklore sur l’Internet*, puisqu’ils ont un nombre théoriquement infini de destinataires, ils ne transmettent pas



un contenu personnel à l'adresse d'un récepteur unique, mais tout au contraire, ils impliquent un caractère de large généralité, et ils peuvent, à la fois, contenir la consigne de les faire disséminer autant que possible aux plusieurs récepteurs. Les messages de ce type vérifient une série de caractéristiques définitoires du folklore qu'énoncent les manuels classiques : le caractère anonyme (l'énonciateur initial du message reste souvent inconnu), le caractère synchrétique (en tant que *messages multimedia*, ils ont recours au texte, à l'image et au son à la fois), le caractère traditionnel (bon nombre d'entre eux se construisent sur des schémas épiques connus, typiques du discours oral). Ils revendiquent en même temps une redéfinition du folklore, car la voie de transmission n'est plus orale, sans intermédiaire (présence directe, côte à côte et bouche à l'oreille), mais écrite, par intermédiaire, par le truchement d'un moyen non traditionnel (l'Internet), qui, implique, à son tour, une multitude de modifications contextuelles. Les dernières décennies ont imposé la redéfinition des phénomènes folkloriques, car les conséquences des moyens média par rapport au processus de transmission sont devenues essentielles.

L'analyse des cinq termes classiques de la communication (qui est-ce qui parle, qu'est-ce qu'on parle, à qui est-ce qu'on parle, comment est-ce qu'on parle (par quel moyen) et pourquoi est-ce qu'on parle (pour quel résultat), marque le fait que, pour ce qui est du folklore sur l'Internet, *le moyen* a le rôle central, en portant son influence de manière directe sur tous les autres éléments. Ainsi, l'énonciateur autant que le récepteur doivent en avoir les connaissances techniques et les équipements nécessaires : savoir manipuler l'ordinateur (être alphabétisés/es et e-alphabétisés/es), avoir l'ordinateur personnel et/ou l'accès à la communication par l'Internet, avoir des coordonnées électroniques (adresse e-mail), etc. Bien qu'il soit, d'une part, restrictif (car il limite la sphère de ceux qui sont impliqués dans le processus de la communication), ce moyen est, d'autre part, extrêmement permissif : il efface les distances spatiales (les messages circulent sur tous les méridiens), temporelles (ils sont transmis rapidement, quoique l'Internet soit l'un des moyens de transmission asynchrone), sociales (ils circulent entre des gens appartenant à différentes catégories et couches sociales)<sup>1</sup>, culturelles (il y a effacement des frontières entre récits et traditions locales, entre « culture haute » et « culture basse »). L'aire incroyable que recouvre l'Internet a engendré des syntagmes tels « village global » ou « folklore planétaire ». Il a, en même temps, restructuré le caractère *collectif* du folklore : bien qu'il recouvre infiniment plus d'individus, ceux-ci ne représentent qu'une addition d'individualités, et non pas une *collectivité*, car, autant l'énonciateur que le récepteur se trouvent seuls devant leurs ordinateurs personnels- posture spécifique à l'individu des sociétés post-industrielles. Lorsqu'il s'agit des messages à chaîne, l'énonciateur n'est pas nécessairement le créateur du message, pouvant en reprendre le contenu dans un message antérieur qu'il retransmette soit en tant que tel, soit sous une forme changée (une version), et le destinataire n'est pas unique, situation qui nous fait

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<sup>1</sup> On a parlé, par exemple, du potentiel de l'Internet en tant qu'agent de démocratisation. Voir Briggs–Burke 2005, p. 14.

prendre en considération le terme à *qui* de la formule communicationnelle aussi dans le sens de *combien*. Le nombre de destinataires augmente de manière exponentielle en fonction du nombre d'expéditeurs, virtuellement infinis. Une étude plus approfondie pourrait prendre en compte *les dimensions des différents groupes* auxquels le message est parvenu, ainsi que les implications sociologiques de ce type de communication à travers de longs réseaux. La redéfinition du caractère collectif du folklore implique aussi la dimension interactive de la communication par l'Internet : de tous les moyens de communication modernes, celui-ci permet la participation directe la plus vivante des utilisateurs, à la différence de la radio, de la télévision ou de la presse écrite, qui, dans une première étape, ont été, en grande partie, passives. À la longue, elles sont devenues, elles aussi, interactives (après l'apparition de la télécommande, des appels en direct, des émissions publiques, etc), mais dans une plus petite mesure que l'Internet.

Quant aux messages sur l'Internet, la narrativité est, de loin, la plus productive, mais le contexte du conteur change, de manière inévitable et radicale : la communication n'est plus directe, elle se fait par l'intermédiaire de l'ordinateur, et les conséquences en sont multiples. La culture orale, en grande partie, une culture de l'oreille, en harmonie avec les paysages sonores, se voit remplacée par une culture de l'œil, où ce que l'on voit est plus important que ce que l'on entend, et où l'individu ne communique plus directement, dans un espace physique, avec un autre individu, mais avec une machine, dans un espace cybernétique. Le terme d'*interface* devient de plus en plus fréquent, en signifiant cette relation entre les humains et les ordinateurs, mais aussi cette communication entre des ordinateurs et d'autres ordinateurs encore, et plus récemment, entre différents individus ou groupes d'individus.<sup>2</sup>

La problématique qui se pose naturellement est si l'Internet détruit les communautés ou s'il crée de nouveaux types de communautés dans lesquelles le rapprochement spatial perd de son importance. Dans le contexte du récit oral, le rapprochement spatial était vif et profondément humain, en apportant sa pierre à la configuration de l'identité du narrateur, tandis que, dans le cas du récit sur l'Internet, l'identité du narrateur s'efface derrière des adresses e-mail, des noms, des sobriquets, des listes d'expéditeurs. La transmission par courrier électronique exige un passage de la communication organique à la communication électronique, échange qui entraîne une série de conséquences psychologiques et sociales.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Voir Briggs – Burke 2005, p. 288.

<sup>3</sup> Dans l'ouvrage *The World on Paper* (1994), le psychologue canadien David Olson en fait l'analyse de quelques-uns et propose le concept d'*esprit alphabétisé*, par lequel il additionne tous les changements produits par la pratique de l'écriture et de la lecture par rapport à la façon dont on réfléchit sur le langage, sur l'esprit et sur le monde, depuis la subjectivité jusqu'à l'image du monde en tant que livre » (apud Briggs – Burke 2005, p. 22). Un autre chercheur canadien, Walter Ong, connu pour *Orality and Literacy* (1982), « a souligné les différences de mentalité entre les cultures orales et la culture qui relève de l'écrit, soit-elle, chirographique, typographique ou électronique, en remarquant, par exemple, le rôle de l'écrit dans la décontextualisation des idées, en d'autres mots, son rôle dans l'enlèvement des idées du cadre des situations face-à-face, où elles étaient initialement formulées, pour pouvoir les ancrées dans d'autres situations » (apud Briggs – Burke 2005, p. 288).

Le lot de messages qui fonde l'essentiel de notre analyse a été sélectionné le long de deux ans (janvier 2007- janvier 2009) et il contient, dans la plus grande partie, des récits. De point de vue typologique, ils peuvent s'encadrer en quatre grandes catégories : des blagues, des légendes urbaines, des rumeurs et des messages à chaîne. Le destinataire et les expéditeurs sont des adultes, en majorité de femmes (les messages étant reçus par nous-mêmes des personnes avec lesquelles nous avons une correspondance par l'Internet). La plupart d'entre eux sont des textes écrits en roumain, mais il en existe quelques-uns en d'autres langues aussi : en anglais, en français et en hongrois.

## I. Des Blagues

Parmi les messages les plus fréquents que nous avons reçus et gardés dans la période mentionnée, les blagues semblent être la catégorie la plus productive de toutes les constances culturelles transmises par Internet. « Des produits folkloriques spécifiquement citadins, plus récents du point de vue historique et peu étudiés chez nous par rapport aux catégories de la littérature orale traditionnelle, les blagues sont brefs récits humoristiques. Le plus souvent, elles ont une structure simple, réduite à un seul épisode, qui réside dans la description du squelette d'une situation et d'une conclusion. »<sup>4</sup> Malgré sa simplicité apparente, l'espèce est difficile à cadrer dans une définition. Au fil du temps, des folkloristes, des anthropologues ou des psychiatres en ont proposé diverses définitions. »<sup>5</sup> Il y a des blagues sur des groupes humains (ethniques, régionaux, de genre, socio-professionnels), sur des relations entre les parents et les enfants, sur des ivrognes, sur des nains, sur des personnalités historiques, sur le travail, sur le sex, sur la Radio Erevan, etc. On l'a déjà souligné, il n'y a aucun aspect de la vie et aucune catégorie humaine qui ne fasse pas l'objet des blagues. »<sup>6</sup> Au-delà de la richesse thématique de l'espèce, son profond ancrage dans le réel est évident, car, ces textes sont un excellent baromètre psychosocial du moment historique. Si avant 1989, en Roumanie, les blagues politiques étaient des plus fréquentes et des plus prisées, aujourd'hui il n'y en a plus beaucoup. Dans le cadre de l'échantillon sur lequel nous appuyons notre recherche, il n'y a pas une blague proprement dite politique, sauf une, du type « de la preuve de la suprématie » qui ait une quelconque allusion politique, puisqu'à la

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<sup>4</sup>Eretescu 2004, p. 284.

<sup>5</sup> Pour Cathy Linn Preston, la blague a une série de particularités spécifiques: «Une petite scène fictionnelle- verbale, visuelle ou cinétique- qui a comme but de produire un effet commique dans le cadre où on l'interprète.» On peut définir les inversions symboliques en art et en société, selon les propos de Barbara Babcock « en tant que tout acte comportemental expressif qui vient à l'envers, contredit, abroge ou offre une alternative quelconque aux codes, aux normes et aux valeurs généralement acceptés, soient-ils linguistiques, littéraires ou politiques. » On peut identifier des techniques identiques ou similaires dans les blagues. Pour Victor Turner, elles sont des formes acceptées de clownerie, tandis que pour Freud, des formes de désinhibition qui ont une fonction hostile (agressivité, satyrique ou de défense), soit une fonction dénonciatrice», Eretescu 2004, p. 284.

<sup>6</sup> Voir Eretescu 2004, p. 285

fin, elle se rapporte au ministre des finances, mais elle pourrait être encadrée aussi auprès des blagues sur les ethnies ou à celles sur des catégories professionnelles (des médecins) : *Le docteur américain dit : 'Chez nous, en Amérique, la médecine est tellement avancée, qu'on prend un rein à un individu, on en fait le transplant à un autre, et, dans six semaines, çui-là cherche un emploi !' Le docteur allemand répond : 'C'est n'importe quoi, chez nous, en Allemagne, on prend un poumon à un individu, on en fait le transplant à un autre, et, dans quatre semaines, çui-là cherche un emploi !' Le docteur russe dit : 'c'est toujours n'importe quoi, chez nous, en Russie, on prend une moitié de cœur à un individu, on en fait le transplant à un autre, et, dans deux semaines, tous les deux cherche un emploi !' En voilà le docteur roumain qui se lève et qui répond : 'Il y a point de comparaison, vous êtes tous en arrière par rapport à nous : chez nous, en Roumanie, on en a pris un, sans cerveau et sans cœur, on l'a fait ministre de finances et maintenant tous cherchent un emploi.'*

Parmi celles qui ont plus de longévité, il y a les blagues avec Bula, personnage représentatif d'ailleurs de la mémoire culturelle roumaine.

A côté des thèmes déjà entrés dans l'histoire de l'espèce, il y a beaucoup de blagues modernes qui se moquent de quelques catégories, personnes ou phénomènes récemment parus dans le paysage social : des blagues sur des blondes, sur des mémés qui bossent sur l'ordinateur, sur la globalisation, sur des coïncidences ou sur de nouveaux riches.

**Blagues sur des coïncidences :** *À la maternité, dans la salle d'attente, trois hommes sont impatients, l'âme à la bouche. Et en voici la sage-femme qui sort et qui félicite le premier : - Félicitations, vous avez des jumeaux ! – Mon Dieu, quel coïncidence, je travaille effectivement à la Minnesota Twins... Après une heure, en voilà qui sort la même femme et qui dit au deuxième père : - Il est pas croyable, vous avez des triplets !- Je n'en crois pas mes oreilles, quel coïncidence, je travaille effectivement à la 3M Company. Le troisième perd ses esprits.- Qu'est-ce qui le prend ? demande la sage-femme. – Lui, il travaille à la 7UP...*

**Blagues sur la globalisation :** *Question- Quelle est la définition la plus appropriée de la globalisation ? Réponse- La mort de la princesse Diana ! Question- Comment ça ? Réponse- Une princesse anglaise qui a un amant égyptien a un accident dans un tunnel français, dans une bagnole allemande au moteur néerlandais, conduite par un Belge, saoulé avec du whisky écossais, étant étroitement poursuivie par des paparazzi italiens, sur des motos japonaises. La princesse était en traitement chez un médecin américain qui lui prescrivait des médicaments brésiliens. Et tu reçois ce truc d'un Roumain, tu le lis sur un moniteur coréen, assemblé par des ouvriers de Bangladesh, dans une usine de Singapour, transporté en bateaux par des Indiens et déchargé par des Siciliens, transporté de nouveau dans des camions conduits par des chauffeurs mexicains et enfin vendu par des Juifs à toi et à d'autres.*

**Blagues sur les nouveaux riches :** *On dit qu'un tzigane va à la pêche en sa Mertz 600 SEL. Et voilà le tzigane qui descend de la bagnole, il tire la moulinette d'or le dernier cri au fil en soie naturelle et une aiguille de diamant et pêche à la mouche.*

*Et alors, merveille : il attrape le poisson rouge. Oh là là... Et le poisson rouge : 'tu sais, je suis le poisson rouge qui fait réaliser ces trois vœux... Et le tzigane : DIS CE QUE TU VEUX.*

La transparence des boîtes postales de l'Internet rend visible une partie de la chaîne d'utilisateurs des textes envoyés, en dévoilant un segment du réseau de transmission et en relevant le fait que les blagues ont une diffusion/circulation internationale. On peut l'observer aussi de l'aire thématique, de la langue dans laquelle les blagues sont transmises (quelques-unes en anglais ou en français), des adresses des expéditeurs (qui habitent en Roumanie, en Israël, au Canada, etc).

Les blagues ne constituent une nouvelle espèce ou une catégorie moderne de la culture populaire, elles sont brefs récits humoristiques qui existent depuis l'Antiquité, autant dans la littérature écrite que dans la littérature orale.<sup>7</sup> Il y a actuellement des sites spéciaux qui contiennent des collections de blagues, quelques-unes interactives et accessibles sur l'Intenet.<sup>8</sup> Leur publication en ligne a des implications majeures envers l'oralité, particularité définitoire de l'espèce (et du folklore en général). Toutefois, elles ne circulent pas exclusivement sous forme écrite, mais, en parallèle, elles sont transmises oralement, cette dernière forme permettant l'existence des versions et des *sessions* de blagues, dites dans le cadre d'un groupe, où tous participent, et les rôles (Énonciateur-Récepteur) font alternance.<sup>9</sup> Un exemple : nous avons entendu la blague sur les nouveaux riches, reproduite en haut, d'abord transmise oralement, et dans quelques mois, nous l'avons reçue, d'une autre personne, par l'Internet. Dans la version orale, le protagoniste était un homme politique extrêmement riche, renommé pour son manque de culture et par sa bêtise crasse. Sous sa forme écrite, celui-ci est remplacé par un Tzigane, le texte écrit changeant l'accent depuis la sphère des hommes politiques récemment enrichis vers celle des groupes ethniques. Le récit oral était beaucoup plus riche en détails significatifs, plus succulent et plus vivant, structuré sur des marques non-verbales et para-verbales : de la gestuelle, de la mimique et de l'intonation (le poisson rouge formulait sa question trois fois d'affilé tandis que le pêcheur ne lui faisait pas attention, étant trop préoccupé de ses propres outils dorés, et rien

<sup>7</sup> « Les écrits d'Esop ou de Boccacce, les scènes de la *Commedia del'Arte* ou de Mille et une nuits, les blagues, les sketches modernes, les épigrammes- tous ont ouvert la voie au genre. Entre ces formes culturelles et les blagues a eu lieu un échange continu de thèmes, elles se sont réciproquement soutenues et ont évoluées en parallèle. » Eretescu 2004, p. 288.

<sup>8</sup> [www.bancuri.net](http://www.bancuri.net) – Anthologie de *blagues* roumaines; [www.bancuri.biz](http://www.bancuri.biz) – des *blagues* de qualité, des *blagues* pour des gens intelligents; [www.glume-bancuri.ro](http://www.glume-bancuri.ro) – une riche collection de *blagues* et de plaisanteries pour tous les goûts; [www.bancuri.acasa.ro](http://www.bancuri.acasa.ro) – les plus fortes *blagues* de Roumanie, des *blagues* pour tous les genres; [www.bancuri.w5.ro](http://www.bancuri.w5.ro) – *Des blagues* – Une collection de *blagues* groupées en catégories parmi lesquelles des Albanais, des Transylvanais, des Blondes, et beaucoup d'autres. Tu connais une blague et veux la rendre publique ?... [www.bancuriglume.com](http://www.bancuriglume.com) – *Des blagues*, des plaisanteries, des conneries et beaucoup d'autres trucs amusants. [www.glumetzul.ro](http://www.glumetzul.ro) – Les plus nouvelles *blagues*, poésies, photos fun, animations, textes, etc.

<sup>9</sup> Le participant actif, celui qui dit la blague, devient participant passif, récepteur des blagues que quelqu'un d'autre dit, pour reprendre après le status de participant actif, etc. » Eretescu 2004, p. 298

qu'après les trois essais, le personnage humain répondait, ennuyé : « Dis ce que tu veux ! ». Il restait fidèle en plus à un certain *protocole* spécifique de l'espèce, car raconter une blague c'est commencer d'abord par une « formule de vérification, plus précisément, par la question si l'interlocuteur connaît ou pas l'histoire qu'on va raconter : 'tu sais celle avec... ?', 'T'as entendu celle avec... ?' Il est nécessaire de le demander, car une blague connue ne relève plus le même intérêt. »<sup>10</sup> Par rapport à cela, la forme écrite est plus courte (concentrée, dépouillée de détails), elle ne permet pas d'habitude de versions et n'exige pas de protocole. Pourtant, si les blagues circulent par l'Internet entre deux ou plusieurs amis, le récepteur peut devenir, à un moment donné, énonciateur en répondant par une autre blague (ou plusieurs) à celui qui lui a envoyé de tels textes, le processus de diffusion étant semblable à celui des versions orales, quand chacun devient le transmetteur des blagues entendues dans un autre contexte et par d'autres individus. Les différences majeures dans le cadre de la transmission par l'Internet relèvent des dimensions des groupes de personnes impliqués (beaucoup plus grands que lors de la transmission orale) et de l'effacement des distances spatiales, qui engendre la globalisation des blagues.

## II. Des Légendes urbaines<sup>11</sup>

« Il semble que 'les légendes urbaines modernes' ne seraient pas au fond des légendes. En outre, elles ne seraient ni modernes, ni urbaines. Plusieurs chercheurs, ont démontré que nombreuses légendes contemporaines représentaient au fond la dernière version, cachée sous l'apparence d'un fait divers récent, des contes beaucoup plus anciens. [...] Les contes ne seraient au fond récemment inventés, seulement récemment recueillis. Ces contes ne contiennent rien exclusivement urbain. Ils ont des équivalences dans les milieux ruraux aussi, où ils circulent... [...] La majorité d'analyses faites au sujet de la circulation de ces « légendes urbaines » mettent en évidence des traits symptomatiques des rumeurs, découverts il y a longtemps. Par exemple, les folkloristes anglo-saxons remarquent le fait que la source du récit est le plus souvent un ami d'un ami (en anglais FOAF, *friend of a friend*). C'est effectivement l'un des traits généraux des rumeurs. En même temps, les folkloristes mettent en évidence le désir de réalisme qui rend compte de la véridicité des affirmations, un autre élément spécifique aux rumeurs. »<sup>12</sup> Ainsi, le sociologue français, Jean-Noël Kapferer inclut les légendes urbaines dans la catégorie des rumeurs du type « histoires exemplaires. »<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Eretescu 2004, p. 298.

<sup>11</sup> « Bien qu'il soit vague et même inexact, le terme de légende urbaine s'est pourtant imposé. Certains récits circulent dans le milieu rural ou ils racontent des histoires de ce milieu, beaucoup de récits modernes sont profondément enracinés dans le folklore traditionnel. En plus, certains conteurs ne croient pas à la vérité des événements racontés. Les légendes sont racontées pour que l'on y croie. » Eretescu 2004, p. 310.

<sup>12</sup> Kapferer 1993, pp. 291-292.

<sup>13</sup> Ibidem, p. 292.

Immédiatement apparentées aux blagues, du point de vue du nombre et de la fréquence de la transmission, les légendes urbaines constituent une espèce folklorique extrêmement productive dans la société contemporaine. « Les légendes urbaines sont des récits qui ont le plus souvent un seul épisode : un événement, une aventure, un incident survenus à un individu commun. C'est effectivement par ce trait qu'elles sont différentes des contes du type traditionnel, dont le héros, doué de qualités hors du commun, s'embarque dans des actions diverses et complexes, qui exigent la présence de quelques éléments surnaturels, pour finir par en triompher et par se marier afin de vivre heureux jusqu'à la fin de ses jours. La brièveté des textes n'est pas nécessairement un élément de la modernité. Les paraboles bibliques-brièves elles aussi- sont des formes narratives anciennes. »<sup>14</sup>

**Exemplification :** Une...histoire

*L'histoire dit, qu'il y a un certain temps, un homme a reprimandé sa fillette de cinq ans qui a gaspillé un papier cadeau doré, très cher. L'homme était en dèche et devint encore plus fâché lorsqu'il vit que la fillette a utilisé ledit papier afin de décorer une boîte et la mettre sous le sapin de Noël. Malgré cela, la fillette apporta le cadeau à son père le lendemain matin en lui disant : « C'est pour toi père. ». Le père eut honte de sa réaction colérique de la veille, mais il se remit en colère lorsqu'il vit qu'en fait, la boîte fut vide. Il la reprimanda ouvertement : « Tu savais pas, Mademoiselle, que lorsqu'on offre un cadeau à quelqu'un, on doit y mettre quelque chose ? » La fillette regarda en haut vers son père, et, les larmes aux yeux, dit : « Père, la boîte n'est pas vide. J'ai soufflé dedans tant de baisers jusqu'à ce qu'elle s'est remplie. » Le père demeura médusé. Il s'est agenouillé et a embrassé sa fillette en la priant de pardonner sa colère inutile. Peu de temps après, la fillette mourut dans un accident et l'on dit que son père a gardé cette boîte-là auprès de son lit pour le reste de sa vie. Et chaque fois qu'il perdait courage ou qu'il avait des ennuis, il ouvrait la boîte et prenait un baiser imaginaire et il se souvenait de l'amour que sa fillette y avait mis. Il est absolument vrai que chacun de nous, en tant qu'êtres humains, nous recevons une boîte dorée avec de l'amour inconditionné et des baisers de nos enfants, de nos familles, de nos amis. Il n'y a pas autre chose de plus précieuse. Maintenant il y en a deux options : 1. Renvoie ce message 2. Efface-le et fais semblant de ne pas l'avoir aimé. Comme tu vois, moi, j'ai choisi l'option numéro un. Les enfants, la famille, les amis sont tels des anges qui te soulèvent sur tes pieds quand tu as des ennuis pour te faire rappeler voler par toi-même...*

Nous avons reçu ce message par l'Internet, dans deux versions, de la part de deux expéditeurs différents, adultes tous les deux, en fait deux femmes, aux alentours de Noël (décembre 2007). La première version présentait l'histoire seule, tandis que la deuxième, présentait en outre « les deux options » finales, avec la consigne de la faire disséminer. Le texte ne mentionnait pas le nom de l'auteur, il

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<sup>14</sup> Eretescu 2004, p. 310-311.

n'était accompagné ni de musique, ni d'images, ayant la forme d'une simple pièce jointe (Word doc.). Nous n'allons pas prendre en compte en l'occurrence les fautes d'expression et de langue (l'absence de la concordance des temps verbaux, des redondances irritantes, des clichés, des calques linguistiques) faits lors de la traduction maladroite du texte d'une langue étrangère (probablement l'anglais) en roumain, ainsi que le niveau culturel précaire de la personne qui l'a rédigé. Il y a pourtant des traits spécifiques des récits folkloriques : la formule initiale (« Il y avait une fois/Il y a un certain temps... »), des personnages génériques (un homme, une fillette) Comme dans toutes les légendes urbaines, les acteurs sont anonymes, mais assez bien définis de point de vue social (un homme qui *n'avait pas beaucoup d'argent*, une fillette *de cinq ans*) pour pouvoir servir de surfaces de projection (l'homme peut être l'incarnation de tout père). Pareillement aux vieux récits folkloriques, le texte contient à la fin un enseignement d'ordre moral. Tout comme la majorité d'histoires exemplaires, ladite histoire recouvre six étapes :<sup>15</sup>

- l'introduction (« Il y avait une fois... »)
- l'écart temporel / spatial (« il y a un certain temps »)
- une scène habituelle de la vie (« un homme a reprimandé sa fillette »)
- une histoire inhabituelle (l'enfant fait cadeau à son père une boîte vide, et peu de temps après, elle meurt)
- l'effet (le père se rend compte de la signification du cadeau)
- l'explication/ la morale : la boîte de la fillette est le symbole de l'amour inconditionné que chacun d'entre nous reçoit de la part de ses proches)

Le contenu du texte a recours, en grande partie, à un vocabulaire symbolique : l'amour filial, la relation parent-enfant, les ennuis matériels (le pauvre), le cadeau et la gestuelle du don, la pureté angélique, la fragilité de l'être humain- des motifs anciens, de large circulation que le texte fait circuler en plaçant dans un décor contemporain (le sapin de Noël, les cadeaux, le papier cadeau en or) et pourtant assez vague, car il ne nous dit rien ni sur le lieu, ni sur le temps, l'indice initial *il y a un certain temps* étant imprécis. Dans le contexte analysé, la consigne de renvoyer l'histoire se superpose avec la morale finale, en étant quelque peu différente (bien qu'il ne soit pas de frontières fermes entre les espèces) de la catégorie des messages « porteurs de chance », qui sont renvoyés à tous, à *chaîne*, dont la formule « Renvoie ce message » représente souvent le noyau qui motive le texte, fréquemment soutenu par tout un système de promesses et de châtiments.<sup>16</sup>

*Les légendes urbaines* (appelées aussi *histoires exemplaires*, *légendes contemporaines*, *légendes modernes*, *asmut*<sup>17</sup> ainsi de suite) font montre de toutes les caractéristiques de la littérature populaire, l'oralité y incluse, car, « raconter, communiquer, s'exprimer verbalement, a toujours une place importante dans les

<sup>15</sup> Voir Kapferer 1993, p. 294.

<sup>16</sup> Voir la section IV de notre étude: Des **Méssages à chaîne**.

<sup>17</sup> *Asmut* est un terme que l'écrivain John Mc Phee a créé des initiales du syntagme *an apocriphal story much told*, apud Eretescu 2004, p. 310.



relations interhumaines. [...] On a rajouté à ce type de transmission, d'autres qui n'existaient pas dans les communautés paysannes. Les légendes urbaines sont aujourd'hui publiées dans des journaux ou dans des livres, elles sont télévisées ou affichées, en circulant sous forme de bandes dessinées et en formant le noyau épique de certains longs-métrages. Leur contenu est discuté dans divers programmes de télévision ou il peut être retrouvé sur l'Internet.<sup>18</sup> Leur circulation exclusivement orale, permettait pourtant une intervention visible de chaque narrateur, qui apportait son empreinte stylistique au texte. Contrairement aux versions orales, celles qui sont écrites et transmises par l'Internet contiennent peu de modifications. Elles peuvent être des images /des morceaux de musique qui accompagnent le texte écrit, et qui l'illustrent, qui l'explicitent, et qui rendent le récepteur plus sensible ; une autre modification est l'introduction de certains rajouts dans l'incipit ou l'excipit du texte, mais jamais à l'intérieur du récit.

### III. Des rumeurs

« Le plus ancien moyen d'information au monde », après l'expression de Jean Noël-Kapferer<sup>19</sup>, les rumeurs sont devenus assez récemment sujet d'intérêt pour les chercheurs qui les observent surtout sous aspect sociologique et psychosociologique. Pour Allport et Postman, les premiers à approfondir ce phénomène, les rumeurs représentent des énoncés liés aux événements à jour, voués à être pris en compte, colportés de personne à personne, d'habitude de bouche à bouche, faute de données concrètes qui attestent leur exactitude.<sup>20</sup> En menant plus loin leurs conclusions, ainsi que celles du sociologue américain d'origine japonaise, T. Shibutani<sup>21</sup>, Septimiu Chelcea propose une formule élargie pour résumer le phénomène complexe des rumeurs:  $Z = f\{Sx [Ix A/P]\}$ . « L'émergence des rumeurs dans un contexte social donné (S) se fait en fonction de l'importance de l'événement (I) et de l'ambiguïté (A), des facteurs qui augmentent l'intensité du rumeurs, ainsi que de certains traits de personnalité (P), qui agissent en tant que frein (la capacité de critique, l'externalisme, etc. »<sup>22</sup> Les recherches de Kapferer ont démontré que la diffusion des rumeurs était fondée sur trois conditions essentielles: la crédibilité, l'apparence de vérité et la désirabilité du contenu de l'information. Leur diffusion apparaît tel un réseau de canalisation de la peur et de l'incertitude par rapport à des situations ambiguës. En même temps, leur diffusion

<sup>18</sup> Ibidem, p. 17.

<sup>19</sup> Voir Kapferer, 1993.

<sup>20</sup> Voir Gordon Allport, Leo Postman, *The Psychology of Rumour*, NY Russell & Russell Inc., New York, 1947.

<sup>21</sup> T. Shibutani considère la rumeur comme « le produit de l'importance et de l'ambiguïté » : si l'importance est 0, il ne s'agit absolument pas d'une rumeur; de même sur l'ambiguïté : les déclarations officielles anulent les rumeurs tandis que l'absence de celle-ci ne fait qu'augmenter leur apparition et leur circulation. Tamotsu Shibutani, *Improved News. A Sociological Study of Rumor*, The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., New York, 1966, p. 29, apud Chelcea 1993, p. 20.

<sup>22</sup> Chelcea, 1993, p. 21.

est mise en corrélation avec la forme, la quantité, la qualité et la crédibilité de l'information officielle ou formelle. Plus celle-ci est pauvre, incomplète ou moins crédible, plus intense est la diffusion des rumeurs. Leur diffusion est restreinte quand il existe la possibilité de vérifier rapidement la véracité d'une information.

En terrain roumain, La rumeur en tant que fait folklorique a été radiographié par Constantin Eretescu.<sup>23</sup> Ce qui est essentiel, quant à cette espèce, c'est la relation entre texte et contexte, plus exactement entre son contenu et le processus de la communication. Dans ce sens, l'ethnologue roumain définit les rumeurs tels des énoncés qui « transmettent une information invalidée, [...] apparaissent et sont diffusés dans des circonstances où les réseaux de dissémination de l'information sont soit bloqués, soit discrédités, au moment où personne ne se trouve en possession des informations complètes et qu'il n'y a aucun moyen de confirmation de la vérité. »<sup>24</sup> Les messages du type « rumeurs » reçus par l'Internet dans la période qu'on a précédemment mentionnée se rapportent à une deuxième (fictive, certes!) déflagration nucléaire du réacteur de Tchernobyl., du 23 mai 2007, à l'enlèvement de quelques enfants pour le prélèvement de leur organes en vue du trafic, aux aiguilles de seringue infectés du SIDA, mises exprès dans des cinémas et des discos, au fantôme de la fillette pendue dans l'armoire qui hante à minuit<sup>25</sup>, à l'imminente inversion des pôles et à la prochaine fin du monde, aux virus létaux pour l'ordinateur personnel, etc.

Les rumeurs relatives aux enlèvements d'enfants ont un caractère récurrent, elles apparaissent périodiquement et engendrent souvent une colère collective.<sup>26</sup> Le thème revient de temps en temps, et ceux qui le colportent ne connaissent la situation que par le truchement de la presse ou par d'autres moyens de communication. D'ailleurs le thème de l'ogre qui enlève des enfants est présent tant dans le folklore roumain que dans le folklore européen. Voici une structure narrative très ancienne, dans une atmosphère et un décor modernes : les trafiquers d'organes, les nouveaux riches, enlèvent des enfants, de manière criminelle, les emmènent dans une ambulance (noire !) et les laissent ensuite traîner dans une chaumière. Un topo qui n'est pas sans rappeler Hansel et Gretel ou Blanche Neige et le chasseur qui, ayant pitié d'elle, rapporte à la marâtre... les organes internes d'un fauve !

L'Internet, le moyen de communication le plus rapide et le plus étendu, fait arriver partout dans le monde toute rumeur lancée et propagée par ce réseau. Et pourtant, le moyen écrit n'est pas le seul, il côtoie souvent le moyen traditionnel.

<sup>23</sup> Eretescu 2004, pp. 300-309.

<sup>24</sup> Eretescu 2004, p. 300.

<sup>25</sup> Voici le texte du récit, qu'on peut encadrer aux légendes urbaines ou aux rumeurs, dans la version que notre fille a reçue sur l'Internet: « Il y a 13 ans juste, un psychopate a pendu à l'intérieur de son armoire une fillette après lui avoir crevé les yeux et il a écrit sur elle le nombre 13... maintenant que t'as lu ce message, tu sera hanté par la fillette qui viendra chez toi chaque nuit à minuit et 13 minutes...pour que tu sois sauvé, envoie ce message à tous ceux de ta liste une seule fois avant 00:13... fais gaffe, cela a été vérifié! Je ne prend pas de risque...vachement bête, mais je me risque pas. »

<sup>26</sup> Chelcea 1993, pp. 14-15.

Par exemple, la rumeur sur la deuxième déflagration à Tchernobyl s'est propagée le même jour tant à l'oral qu'à l'écrit, par l'Internet, avec ce petit détail près que la diffusion orale se fondait sur le texte écrit, estimé comme la « preuve » même du désastre. On a investi l'écrit, comme tant de fois, du pouvoir du fait réel, qu'il certifie de manière absolue, par une superposition- typique de la pensée folklorique- entre le mot et son référent.

Tout comme les blagues, les rumeurs ont une fonction psychosociale essentielle, dans la mesure où elles font défuler des inquiétudes, des troubles, des problèmes très divers, d'une société dans un moment strictement déterminé. « Celles-ci ne font pas diffuser qu'une information, soit-elle vraie ou fausse ; elles expriment à la fois l'état d'esprit des colporteurs, elles se font l'écho de leurs anxiétés et de leurs désirs. La rumeur fait véhiculer une attitude. »<sup>27</sup> Une attitude traditionnelle-folklorique, dans le sens où elles transforment le monde réel en conte de fées, par des processus de narrativisation ou de fictionnalisation. « Pour circuler, les rumeurs n'ont pas besoin de vérité. Leur logique n'est pas celle du raisonnement<sup>28</sup>, mais celle de la narration. Elles mettent en récit des angoisses de l'homme contemporain : les maladies incurables (le SIDA), les virus des ordinateurs, les dangers dont les enfants sont les victimes à notre époque où l'on gagne la richesse par des crimes, etc.

#### **IV. Messages à chaîne**

Les messages électroniques à chaîne sont fréquents aussi, en circulant sous diverses formes. Ils contiennent d'habitude un message qui touche et ils exigent d'être renvoyés à plusieurs destinataires (après l'accomplissement de quelques conditions : un vœu, une prière, etc.), pour qu'ils rappellent ensuite les mésaventures que le destinataire vivra au cas où il cessera de renvoyer le message. Une typologie des messages électroniques à chaîne pourrait comprendre : des messages porteurs de chance ; le schéma pyramidale (la promesse de gains financiers) étant fondée sur une chaîne de personnes qui participent financièrement et qui y rajoutent de nouveaux membres) ; des messages de charité ; des messages de prière ; des légendes urbaines ; des messages anti-chaîne.

Les messages porteurs de chance constituent le plus ancien type de message à chaîne. Il circule depuis longtemps et tient profit des avantages de la forme électronique dès l'apparition des ordinateurs

#### **Exemplification :**

*Si tu effaces la présentation après l'avoir lue...tu auras une année de malchance !  
Mais...si tu l'envoies à deux amis (au moins)...tu auras trois années de chance !*

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<sup>27</sup> Eretescu 2004, p. 303.

<sup>28</sup> Chelcea 1993, p. 19.

*Savais-tu que ceux qui ont l'air imperturbables sont en réalité faibles et plus suspicieux ?*

*Savais-tu que ceux qui passent leur temps en ménageant les autres, sont ceux qui en réalité ont plus besoin d'être ménagés ?*

*Savais-tu que les trois choses les plus difficiles à dire sont : Je t'aime. Je suis désolé. Aide-moi. Savais-tu que ceux habillés de rouge ont plus de confiance en eux-mêmes ?*

*Savais-tu que ceux habillés de jaune sont ceux qui se réjouissent de leur beauté ?*

*Savais-tu que ceux habillés de noire sont ceux qui désirent passer inaperçus et qu'ils ont besoin de notre aide et compréhension ?*

*Savais-tu que lorsque tu donnes un coup de main à quelqu'un, le coup de main redoublera pour toi ?*

*Savais-tu qu'il est plus facile à dire ce que tu sens par écrit que le dire face-à-face ? Mais savais-tu que cela serait plus important que le dire face-à-face ?*

*Savais-tu que, si tu demande quelque chose en en gardant la foi, ton vœu se réalisera ?*

*Savais-tu que tu peux rendre tes rêves réels (tomber amoureux, te porter bien, devenir riche) si tu le demande en en gardant la foi ? Et si tu le savais vraiment, tu serais surpris à voir ce que tu peux faire.*

*Mais fais pas confiance en tout ce que je te dis avant d'essayer tout seul/e si tu connais quelqu'un qui ait besoin de quelque chose de ceux que je t'ai dit et que tu saches pouvoir lui donner un coup de main, tu verra que ce coup de main redoublera pour toi.*

*Aujourd'hui le ballon de L'AMITIÉ se trouve dans ton terrain, envoie-le à ceux qui sont vraiment tes amis (moi y inclus, si je me trouve parmi eux). Sois pas triste si pas un ne te le renvoie à la fin, tu apprendras ainsi que tu dois garder le ballon pour d'autres personnes, qui le veulent.*

### **THE FRIENDSHIP BRACELET- LE BRACELET DE L'AMITIÉ**

*OK, voilà ce que t'as à faire, Envoie ça à TOUS TES AMIS. Mais tu dois le faire dans une heure après la lecture de ce message ! Maintenant... FAIS UN VŒU ! Fais-le maintenant ! C'est la dernière chance ! J'espère que tu l'as fait ton vœu ! Maintenant envoie le message à :*

- une personne ~ ton vœu se réalisera dans un an
- 3 personnes ~ 6 mois
- 5 personnes ~ 3 mois
- 6 personnes ~ 1 mois
- 7 personnes ~ 2 semaines
- 8 personnes ~ 1 semaines
- 9 personnes ~ 5 jours
- 10 personnes ~ 3 jours

- 12 personnes ~ 2 jours
- 15 personnes ~ 1 jour
- 20 personnes ~ 3 heures

Le texte mentionné circule sous forme de présentation en Power Point, accompagné par des images animées assez maladroites qui font temporiser la lecture. Sa circulation est relativement intense, et nous-mêmes, nous l'avons reçu dans notre boîte de réception huit fois le long de deux ans. Construite sur deux paliers- l'un des « enseignements » du type « Savais-tu ? » et l'autre appartenant à « l'arithmétique de la diffusion de la chance » - la présentation contient une série de truismes qu'énoncent des individus de faible niveau culturel et éducationnel. Ce qui est symptomatique est le fait qu'entre les deux paliers il n'y a aucune logique visible, mais un « amalgame qui courtcircuite le raisonnement, en plongeant le mentale dans le 'folklore' ou dans la 'religion' confuse de l'espoir irrationnel. Et cela, d'une part, dans un quelconque contrast avec tout ce que l'on conceptualise en tant que modernité et idéal de l'évolution civilisatrice ; d'autre part, en conformité avec ce que l'on appelle psychisme irrationnel et primitif, culture et mentalité religieuse, magique, folklorique. »<sup>29</sup>

Le message est structuré autour des concepts de *chance* et de *malchance*, spécifiques de la pensée traditionnelle-folklorique, externaliste (pensée qui place à l'extérieur les causes des événements que vit un individu ou des échecs qu'il souffre, en partant de l'idée que ce n'est pas lui, l'individu, le maître de sa vie, mais une instance supérieure et extérieure). Entre les deux extrêmes (la chance et la malchance), le message envoyé accomplit le rôle d'un objet magique : par son pouvoir hors du commun, il est à même de faire des merveilles, de transformer la vie du destinataire, en convertissant la malchance en chance (ou vive-versa). Pareillement à un adjutant charmé dans un conte de fée, le message peut réaliser un vœu, mais sous certaines conditions. Le récepteur doit obéir à ces conditions, semblables aux épreuves dans les contes de fées- envoyer le message à tous ses amis, non pas n'importe quand, mais dans un intervalle strictement déterminé : dans rien qu'une heure depuis la lecture du message- car après, tout comme dans les contes de fées, son pouvoir surnaturel disparaît ! Il s'ensuit après un arithmétique très stricte- et qui manque de toute logique surnaturelle- qui met en rapport le nombre de destinataires auxquels on a envoyé « le message charmé » au nombre de mois, de jours et d'heures où le vœu se réalisera. Des messages de ce type ont été récemment commentés et analysés avec pertinence par Marin Marian-Bălașa.<sup>30</sup> Dans une série d'articles consacrés à *La Lettre ou à la chaîne de la chance*, l'ethnologue observe que, derrière ces textes « se cache toute la logique de l'illogique

<sup>29</sup> Marian-Bălașa, *Scrisoarea sau lanțul norocului* (III) [*La Lettre ou la chaîne de la chance*], în „Săptămâna financiară” [*La Semaine financière*], n° 180, 24.10.2008.

<sup>30</sup> Marian-Bălașa, *Scrisoarea sau lanțul norocului* (I-IV) [*La Lettre ou la chaîne de la chance*], în „Săptămâna financiară” [*La Semaine financière*], n° 180-184/ 10.10.2008 - 07.11.2008, p. 44 de chaque numéro.

et l'irrationnelle croyance, espérance, affliction et absurdité du type magico-religieux. »<sup>31</sup> En regardant le phénomène en diachronie, il remarque le fait que l'existence et la prolifération de ces textes se construisent sur le pouvoir du mot écrit, sur la « vieille croyance des illettrés au pouvoir de l'écrit (lettre, petit mot, livre, etc) de déclencher des événements. Au Moyen Âge, l'écriture et la lecture avaient la patente sacrée (exercée surtout par des moines et des prêtres), le serment ou le maudissement sur le « Livre » étant des pratiques qui confirmaient, amélioraient ou détruisaient des destins. Dans la première moitié du XX<sup>e</sup> siècle, a commencé la diffusion, surtout, dans le milieu rural, d'écrits et de lettres qui offraient des prières efficaces, qui exigeaient des remords ou le respect de certains jeûnes religieux et jours fériés. Leur seule condition : soit les garder, soit les réécrire et les diffuser plus ou moins de manière anonyme, plus ou moins publique. Nous soulignons que leur rôle, leur efficacité ou leur but étaient plus d'ordre religieux que d'autre. De toute manière donc, le *pps* dont on parle n'est que la dernière forme d'un phénomène très ancien. C'est-à-dire, le *spam* traditionnel des lettres porteuses de chance. Celles qui comptaient, certaines, sur la croyance religieuse des pauvres, d'autres, sur la naïveté des superstitieux, des avides ou des accros de « l'économie du don » (ou de l'aumône), d'autres encore, sur l'illusion de quelques solitaires et impuissants qu'ils pourraient influencer ou aider le destin d'autrui. »<sup>32</sup>

Par l'intermédiaire de l'Internet, circulent aussi des textes « nus », c'est-à-dire des messages du type „chain letter” qui ne sont pas accompagnés d'images et de musique, plus apparentés au « classique, traditionnel, typique 'message porteur de chance' qui remplissait les boîtes aux lettres des Roumains le long de la deuxième moitié du XX<sup>e</sup> siècle. Il s'agit d'une lettre laïque, typique de la deuxième moitié du XX<sup>e</sup> siècle, qui avait repris l'idée de la colportation/diffusion d'un texte écrit à caractère religieux pour la première moitié du XX<sup>e</sup> siècle [...] : La lettre du Saint Antoine, un texte [...] voué à porter de la chance par sa multiplication et sa diffusion anonymes et ininterrompues. On jetait ce texte dans les rues, les trottoirs et les sentiers des villages ou même dans les cours des gens. La mode de la colportation et de la diffusion discrète dans les boîtes aux lettres s'est généralisée un peu plus tard, dans les années '60. »<sup>33</sup> Après 1990, on a remplacé les manuscrits par les dactylogrammes ensuite par la photocopieuse. « À l'époque, leurs titres étaient similaires aux *pps* actuels, *Tout est possible avec de l'amour*.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>31</sup> Idem, *Scrisoarea sau lanțul norocului* (I) [*La Lettre ou la chaîne de la chance*], în „Săptămâna financiară” [*La Semaine financière*], n° 180, 10.10.2008, p. 44.

<sup>32</sup> Idem, *Scrisoarea sau lanțul norocului* (II) [*La Lettre ou la chaîne de la chance*], în „Săptămâna financiară” [*La Semaine financière*], n° 181, 17.10.2008, p. 44.

<sup>33</sup> Idem, *Scrisoarea sau lanțul norocului* (IV) [*La Lettre ou la chaîne de la chance*], în „Săptămâna financiară” [*La Semaine financière*], n° 183, 31.10.2008, p. 44.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibidem*.

## Conclusions

On a maintes fois signalé la difficulté de tracer des frontières fermes entre ces espèces néofolkloriques, les chercheurs observant la possibilité qu'un texte fasse migration d'une espèce à l'autre ou qu'il soit situé dans une catégorie ou dans une autre. Ily a des typologies qui classifient les légendes urbaines parmi les rumeurs<sup>35</sup> ou bien d'autres qui les situent parmi les messages à chaîne.<sup>36</sup> De la sorte, des récits tels *Fantoma fetei spânzurate în dulap* [*Le Fantôme de la fille pendue dans l'armoire*] ou *Ambulanța neagră* [*L'Ambulance noire*] peuvent être considérés tant que légendes urbaines que es rumeurs, et un texte tel celui qui profère l'enrichissement rapide par l'envoi des messages peut être considéré une rumeur ou un message à chaîne. Il semblerait que les blagues, de ce point de vue, soient la plus stable des espèces folkloriques, bien que certains textes semblent avoir glissé depuis la catégorie des rumeurs et/ou des messages à chaîne vers celle des blagues. Sur le territoire commun des récits, il y a des espèces plus anciennes et plus nouvelles à la fois : « tant l rumeur que la légende transmettent apparemment un fait en exigeant à l'auditoire de le prendre tel quel. Il est possible qu'une série de récits des personnages historiques eût au début circulée tels des rumeurs, en devenant des légendes après la disparition de la génération qui aurait témoigné de la fausseté de l'information. Encorporées dans les moules de la culture populaire, standardisées, les rumeurs deviennent peu à peu des récits- des légendes historiques. Le héros perd de ses caractéristiques individuelles en faveur des traits généraux du héros populaire : le portrait-robot remplace la photographie. La confirmation de la véridicité des faits nous est offerte par les ballades qui ont comme protagonistes des haïdouks connus, des fois même des bandits ou des larcins. Quelques générations plus tard, dans des chansons épiques qui narrent leurs actions, ils apparaissent invariablement tels des révolutionnaires contre l'oppression sociale, étrangère, etc. La conversion du type «Robin Hood» a été totale et rapide. »<sup>37</sup>

Les exemples sélectionnés font montre de la vitalité du folklore, en contredisant les opinions qui avaient soutenu la disparition de celui-ci, car, on l'a déjà remarqué plusieurs fois, les sociétés contemporaines, telles les sociétés traditionnelles, sont créatrices et porteuses de folklore.<sup>38</sup> Le destinataire de ces messages est «le public populaire, un public qui n'a jamais cessé de raconter et de faire confiance dans le pouvoir du conte de prendre en possession et de faire signifier le réel.<sup>39</sup> La comparaison des récits folklorique-traditionnels avec ceux qui sont envoyés par Internet ne relève que des dissemblances épidermiques : les décors rustiques et médiévaux ont disparus ainsi que les personnages fabuleux et les conflits qui motivaient les actions des héros, les textes n'ont plus la complexité et l'amplitude

<sup>35</sup> Voir Kapferer 1993, pp. 291-295.

<sup>36</sup> Voir <http://www.avira.ro/ro>.

<sup>37</sup> Eretescu 2004, p. 309.

<sup>38</sup> Eretescu 2003, p. 15.

<sup>39</sup> Coman 2003, p. 48.

de vieux contes de fées.<sup>40</sup> En leur essence, pourtant, ils se construisent sur la même logique, d'ordre symbolique, en faisant appel aux mêmes éléments narratifs – des schémas d'action, des personnages, des systèmes de signification, qui existent à l'intérieur du répertoire culturel<sup>41</sup> qu'ils partagent tant avec le public récepteur qu'avec les récits d'antan.

Les textes transmis par l'Internet et qui ont nourri notre réflexion, appartiennent à la narrativité, comprise dans son sens le plus large, non pas de genre littéraire, mais de « catégorie de pensée ».<sup>42</sup> Leur analyse a relevé un *consensus naratif* qui existe dans chaque société. Tels les mythes, les histoires exemplaires, les blagues, les rumeurs, les messages à chaîne, offrent une « matrice d'intelligibilité et un moyen cohérent d'articulation du monde environnant. »<sup>43</sup> Dans leur manière, ils donnent du sens aux événements du monde.

De plus en plus présents dans les boîtes aux lettres électroniques, de tels textes sont reçus, lus, renvoyés, en finissant par appartenir à notre vie au jour le jour. Bien que pas mal d'entre eux soient des messages indésirables (des spams), ils proposent des grilles de lecture possibles du monde où l'on vit.

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<sup>40</sup> Voir Eretescu 2003, p. 15.

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<sup>43</sup> *Ibidem*.



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## POÉSIE ET CONNAISSANCE NOCTURNE CHEZ LUCIAN BLAGA ET YVES BONNEFOY

GISÈLE VANHESE

**ABSTRACT.** The essay *Poésie et connaissance nocturne chez Lucian Blaga et Yves Bonnefoy* presents the profound convergencies between two authors who were able to reconcile poetry with ontology. For Lucian Blaga and Yves Bonnefoy as well, poetry takes first the appearance of a desiring meditation regarding the time when man was not yet separated from himself and from the world, when Unity was reigning before fragmentation into parts and the multiple should appear. By privileging nocturnal knowledge instead of conceptual knowledge, they tend altogether – in spite of the ontic dissolution – to restore the originary being lost by the three instances of the hero, the cosmos and the mythical. They reveal the fact that poetic utterance only is able to acquire and recover the nocturnal knowledge: forming together with the myth, the symbol and the rite an essential series, the image provides the mystery of being and possess an actual force of revelatory illumination at Lucian Blaga as well as at Yves Bonnefoy.

**Keywords:** Poetry, myth, ontology, sacred, cosmos, eros, correspondences, images.

Toute expérience poétique est traversée – nous dit Gabriel Bounoure – par deux chemins qui ont été indiqués par Héraclite : l'un vers le haut et l'autre vers le bas. Certains poètes « suivent le premier, qui s'élève au-dessus de la mort et des images et se dirige vers une Pensée-Forme, une Beauté enfin réelle »<sup>1</sup>. Au contraire, l'autre voie – la voie descendante – entraîne le voyageur vers les régions mortelles de l'Ombre. C'est en suivant cette voie nocturne que, face à une condition marquée par le malheur de l'Histoire, les poètes tentent d'éclairer l'opacité du monde. Ils choisissent de donner un sens à notre destin par l'alliance entre poésie et ontologie.

Lucian Blaga<sup>2</sup> et Yves Bonnefoy<sup>3</sup> témoignent exemplairement d'une poésie de la modernité où l'artiste explore bien souvent les territoires de la blessure, de l'exil et de l'inaccompli. Certes l'œuvre philosophique imposante de Blaga révèle que sa quête

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<sup>1</sup> G. Bounoure, *Marelles sur le parvis*, Paris, Plon, 1958, p. 271.

<sup>2</sup> Notre édition de référence sera pour L. Blaga : *Opere*, 1–2, București, Ed. Minerva, 1974.

<sup>3</sup> Nos éditions de référence seront pour Y. Bonnefoy : *Poèmes*, Paris, Mercure de France, 1978 (P.), *L'Improbable et autres essais*, Paris, Mercure de France, 1980 (L'I.), *Rimbaud*, Paris, Seuil, 1970 (R.), *Le Nuage rouge. Essais sur la poétique*, Paris, Mercure de France, 1977 (N.R.), *Entretiens sur la poésie (1972-1990)*, Paris, Mercure de France, 1990 (E.), *Ce qui fut sans lumière*, Paris, Mercure de France, 1992 (C.Q.F.S.L.), *Les planches courbes*, Paris, Mercure de France, 2001 (L.P.C.).

poétique a été constamment accompagnée d'une profondeur métaphysique imposante alors que la réflexion de Bonnefoy est disséminée uniquement dans ses essais sur la poésie, la peinture et la littérature. Pourtant, on décèle chez eux, même si plusieurs décennies les séparent, une proximité issue de convergences essentielles qui émergent de leur quête d'une parole apte à accueillir et recueillir la connaissance nocturne.

### *L'Un originaire*

La poésie prend d'abord, chez Blaga et chez Bonnefoy, le visage d'une méditation désirante sur le moment où l'homme n'était pas encore séparé de lui-même et du monde, règne de l'Un avant la fragmentation dans l'épars et le multiple. Pour Bonnefoy, le temps de l'origine coïncide avec celui de la société pré-industrielle, pastorale et agricole, qui devient le substrat référentiel de nombreuses images :

Étoiles transhumantes ; et le berger  
Voûté sur le bonheur terrestre ; et tant de paix  
Comme ce cri d'insecte, irrégulier,  
Qu'un dieu pauvre façonne  
(« Le Livre pour vieillir », P., p. 217).

Bonnefoy comme Blaga récuse donc une poésie qui aurait comme centre l'Histoire et ses corollaires comme la *techné* et la ville moderne, pour privilégier un lieu où la conscience divisée retrouverait l'impossible unité. Mais c'est dès le début que Bonnefoy reconnaît la perte irrémédiable du « vrai lieu », d'une terre de plénitude, qui emprunte le schème mythique du Jardin d'Eden. Toujours vécu sur le mode de la nostalgie, il n'appartient plus qu'au mémoriel :

Les étoiles voûtaient les murs du haut jardin  
Comme les fruits de l'arbre au-delà, mais les pierres  
Du lieu mortel portaient dans l'écume de l'arbre  
Comme une ombre d'étrave et comme un souvenir  
(« Le Jardin », P., p. 173).

Chez Blaga, cette rêverie sur l'originaire persiste au contraire dans les premiers recueils, avant de céder la place à la « tristesse métaphysique » (« Tristețe metafisică », 1, p. 224). Le village est le Centre qui aimante toute sa méditation comme le dévoilent avec éclat « Sufletul satului » et tant d'autres textes. On note, écrit Ion Pop, « o diferență netă între satul ca emblemă a existenței organice, "totale", suficiențe sieși ca o monadă, situat "în centrul lumii, în zăriște cosmică și în perspectiva unui destin emanat din veșnicie", și existența citadină modernă, a

omului care trăiește “în fragment, într-o trează tristete și o superficialitate lucidă”<sup>4</sup>. À cause de son développement historique même (que Blaga qualifie de « devenir mineur »), la Roumanie a préservé plus longtemps la vie traditionnelle et ce Grand Temps qui traversera toute la poésie blaguienne : « Eu cred că veșnicia s-a născut la sat » (« Sufletul satului », 1, p. 156). Grand Temps que Bonnefoy évoque dans *Terre seconde* (« Un mode d'existence, pour chaque chose, où son essence retentissait au sein même de sa présence, Idée parfaitement transparente, mariage de la sensation et du sens, du relatif et de l'absolu », L'I., p. 320) et qui irradie de son miroitement la plupart des évocations blaguiennes :

Uite, e seară.  
Sufletul satului filfîie pe lîngă noi,  
ca un miros sfios de iarbă tăiată,  
ca o cădere de fum din streșini de pae,  
ca un joc de iezi pe morminte înalte  
(« Sufletul satului », 1, p. 157).

La poésie de Lucian Blaga a d'abord été une célébration du *Vrai lieu* qui se confond, pour lui, avec le village natal : là où la pulsation tellurique et la mouvance des astres s'accordent aux marées du sang. Royaume de la forêt, de la source, de la lumière qu'elle soit d'aube ou de nuit. Espace ouvert aux transmigrations du cœur. Où l'incandescence des mythes ne s'est pas encore refroidie. Où l'homme est fait à la fois de la « poussière du seuil » (« pulberea pragului ») et de la « sphère lunaire » (« sfera și luna ») (« Monolog », 1, p. 335). La nostalgie pour le village s'est très tôt confondue avec celle de l'enfance, saison sans heures ouverte à l'obscur sortilège de la terre : l'arbre, l'eau, la lune y sont les talismans d'un monde où l'être n'est pas encore exilé de la plénitude première.

### *Une connaissance nocturne*

C'est à partir de ce substrat spirituel que les deux poètes vont privilégier une réflexion sur la connaissance nocturne. En effet, dans la méditation esthétique et éthique de Bonnefoy, le concept, cette « forme apollinienne, froide et universelle de l'esprit »<sup>5</sup>, est l'objet d'une critique sévère. Le concept ne tue-t-il pas ce que nous aimons le plus, l'existence sensible, les vérités de la terre ? Pour bâtir le château de l'Idée, fondé sur la lumière et l'ordre des nombres, il élimine ce qui est le lot de ceux qui, selon Rimbaud, « meurent sur les saisons » : le temps, le hasard, la maladie, le vieillissement, la mort, bref la finitude. « Le mensonge du discours », affirme Bonnefoy, « est qu'il supprime l'excès. Il est lié au concept, qui cherche dans l'essence des choses qu'elles soient stables et sûres, et purifiées du néant » (L'I., p. 31).

<sup>4</sup> I. Pop, *Lucian Blaga în 10 poeme*, Cluj-Napoca, Dacia, 2004, p. 12.

<sup>5</sup> J.-J. Wunenburger, *Philosophie des images*, Paris, P.U.F., 1997, p. 225.

Pour Bonnefoy, le grand art est donc celui qui a su ménager la mémoire de « l'en-soi ténébreux du monde » (R., p. 160) pour un autre salut. C'est Baudelaire faisant se rencontrer, pour la première fois de manière consciente, le « corps blessé » et le « langage immortel » (L'I., p. 34). C'est le temple, qui érige ses belles architectures sur l'épars et le désordre d'ici-bas mais où, dans le secret, « sur l'autel ou dans une crypte, l'imprévisible est présent » : « Rien qu'un reflet sur un visage de pierre, mais tout l'orage à nouveau au sein de la symétrie » (L'I., p. 110).

Toutefois, à la différence de Blaga, la condamnation de la connaissance diurne fondée sur le concept dérive, chez Bonnefoy, d'un choix éthique. En fait, il va aussi renoncer à la tentation édénique au nom d'une fidélité plus haute au réel et à ses blessures que le poète nomme la finitude. Refusant l'« excarnation », qui guette toujours l'homme et en particulier l'artiste, Bonnefoy va choisir une incarnation dialectisée. Il n'emprunte ni la voie offerte par l'idéal désincarné, qui avait été celle de Mallarmé, ni la voie d'un acquiescement sensuel et dionysiaque à une terre maternelle et fusionnelle dont témoignent certains peintres qu'il a étudiés et que Blaga sera tenté de suivre.

On décèle dans la poésie de Lucian Blaga le même reniement de la clarté conceptuelle pour privilégier le sens du mystère, comme il l'écrit dans « Eu nu strivesc corola de minuni a lumii » qui est comme le manifeste de son Art poétique :

Eu nu strivesc corola de minuni a lumii  
și nu ucid  
cu mintea tainele ce le-ntîlnesc  
în calea mea  
în flori, în ochi, pe buze ori morminte.  
Lumina altora  
sugrumă vraja nepătrunsului ascuns  
în adîncimi de întuneric.

Blaga veut fonder sa poésie sur ce qui toujours échappe à la rationalité conceptuelle pour chercher, comme chez Bonnefoy, « un grand réalisme, qui aggrave au lieu de résoudre, qui désigne l'obscur » (L'I., p. 9) :

dar eu,  
eu cu lumina mea sporesc a lumii taină –  
și-ntocmai cum cu razele ei albe luna  
nu micșorează, ci tremurătoare  
mărește și mai tare taina nopții,  
așa îmbogățesc și eu întunecata zare  
cu largi flori de sfînt mister  
și tot ce-i nențeles  
se schimbă-n nențelesuri și mai mari  
sub ochii mei –  
(«Eu nu strivesc corola de minuni a lumii »,1, p. 2–3).

Dans *Poemele luminii*, Blaga oppose la lumière solaire, maculine, ascensionnelle, diaïrétique qui irradie et illumine l'être à la lumière nocturne, féminine, lunaire, mystique qui laisse subsister l'obscur de notre existence et même l'accroît. Cette connaissance « luciférique », pénétrant ce qui échappe à tout savoir, entraîne une descente vers le versant ténébreux de l'être qui affleure, avec toute sa complexité, dans l'œuvre blaguienne et nous fait accéder à un état de conscience plus profond. Avec la poésie de Blaga, c'est la face secrète du monde qui est ici convoquée.

### *La déchirure*

Pour Lucian Blaga et Yves Bonnefoy, la connaissance nocturne dévoile que la poésie traverse une phase apocalyptique car elle vient après la perte de ce que Paul Ricœur nomme la première simplicité provoquée par la prise de conscience que l'homme est dans le temps profane du devenir et de l'usure. Désormais, la simplicité n'est plus que seconde et, comme chez Blaga, la connaissance du mystère va devoir s'actualiser à partir du non-mystère. Paul Ricœur condense en ces termes l'oscillation métaphysique qui caractérise notre modernité : « Oubli des hiérophanies, oubli des signes du sacré, perte de l'homme lui-même en tant qu'il appartient au sacré. Cet oubli, nous le savons, est la contrepartie de la tâche grandiose de nourrir les hommes, de satisfaire les besoins en maîtrisant la nature par une technique planétaire »<sup>6</sup>. Mais aussi dépassement de cet oubli : « comprendre [...], c'est déployer les multiples et inépuisables intentions de chaque symbole, retrouver les analogies intentionnelles entre mythes et rites, parcourir les niveaux d'expérience et de représentation que le symbole unifie »<sup>7</sup>. La tâche du poète est de révéler ce réseau inextricable de liens magiques dans un cosmos où tout se tient. Et les images ont pour rôle, comme nous le verrons, de dévoiler orphiquement l'unité première.

Refusant la fuite dans un Ailleurs idéal, la poésie de Bonnefoy va tendre vers la transmutation alchimique de la vie immédiate dans ses aspects les plus profanes. En un revirement soudain, telle la foudre, a lieu alors cette transfiguration du réel qui prend le nom de *Présence* et que le poète syrien Adonis<sup>8</sup> considère comme la fulgurance de notre relation avec les choses, à travers la création d'un langage qui resacralise l'Ici. Foudroiement qui nous semble très proche de l'émerveillement, du ravissement (« uimirea ») de Blaga. La poésie devient, chez Yves Bonnefoy, plus que parole instauratrice, parole restauratrice : toutes les « choses simples » sont « rétablies [...] sur leurs / Piliers de feu » (*Dans le leurre du seuil*, P., p. 278). Royaume où le sacré est désormais immanent à l'existence.

<sup>6</sup> P. Ricœur, *Philosophie de la volonté*, 2, Paris, Aubier, 1988, p. 480-481.

<sup>7</sup> P. Ricœur, *op. cit.*, p. 484.

<sup>8</sup> Adonis, « Un nuage qui n'est pas rouge », dans *Le temps qu'il fait*, Yves Bonnefoy, n. 11, 1998, p. 264.

C'est l'acte de la Présence qui réunit les deux paradigmes opposés où Yves Bonnefoy fonde sa poétique et son ontologie. D'un côté l'Idéal : fascination pour ce qui échappe à la mort. De l'autre, la finitude, l'acquiescement à la douleur et à la condition humaine, comme le souligne Jean-Pierre Richard en quelques affirmations suggestives :

Au soleil du concept se substituera la nuit de l'existence, à l'ordre trop lisse et trop bien articulé de l'abstraction succéderont le désordre, la fugitivité, le déchirement hagard, mais fulgurant, des intuitions. Dans les architectures éternelles le temps se glissera, introduisant en elles, comme par une fissure, les vérités concrètes de l'instant, de la souffrance ou de la nostalgie<sup>9</sup>.

Quête de la *coincidentia oppositorum* qui traverse toute l'œuvre bonnefoienne, que ce soit dans ses poèmes ou dans ses essais. La poésie aura pour mission de relier le désordre de notre monde et l'harmonie des nombres, l'instant et l'intemporel, l'ici et l'Ailleurs idéal, l'espace profane et l'espace sacré. Il est éclairant que la découverte d'un lieu ouvert à la *Présence*, point de jonction des deux postulats, se fasse toujours à travers un cheminement difficile. La poésie chez Yves Bonnefoy s'offre bien souvent comme un voyage qui « affronte – écrit Jean Starobinski – les terres inexplorées, l'espace nocturne, les lieux de désunion »<sup>10</sup>. Ce passage à travers une épreuve révèle combien cette poésie coïncide avec un parcours initiatique, comme nous le dévoile aussi l'œuvre de Lucian Blaga. Parcours que Bonnefoy aime évoquer à travers les termes d'*errance*, *voyage*, *passage*, *traversée*... que l'on retrouve aussi chez Blaga et en tout premier lieu dans « marea trecere ». Comme Jean-Pierre Richard qui parle d'épreuve du sens, Jean Starobinski reconnaît que

Tous les textes de Bonnefoy – poésie, prose, essais – comportent une suite de moments, comparables à ceux d'une traversée, où veille un désir partagé entre le souvenir et l'espoir, entre le froid nocturne et la chaleur d'un feu nouveau, entre la dénonciation du « leurre » et la visée du but<sup>11</sup>.

Chez Lucian Blaga, la perte de la première simplicité ne se situe pas immédiatement au départ de la quête poétique comme chez Bonnefoy mais a lieu durant son cheminement même quand le dire se brise devant l'irruption de la finitude et le passage du temps. Sortie de l'âge « équinoxial »<sup>12</sup>, grand passage. « În marea trecere » : c'est à partir du recueil portant ce titre que commence la descente vers ce

<sup>9</sup> J.-P. Richard, « Yves Bonnefoy », dans *Onze études sur la poésie moderne*, Paris, Éd. du Seuil, 1964, p. 257.

<sup>10</sup> J. Starobinski, « Préface », dans Y. Bonnefoy, *Poèmes*, Paris, Gallimard, 1982, p. 8.

<sup>11</sup> J. Starobinski, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

<sup>12</sup> C. Teuțișan, *Eros și reprezentare. Convenții ale poeziei erotice românești*, Pitești, Paralela 45, 2005, p. 200.

que nous pourrions appeler la *nigredo* de Blaga, celle de l'« Eul problematizant »<sup>13</sup>. Épreuve des ténèbres que marque la fragmentation du temps et de l'espace, reflet spéculaire d'une conscience irrémédiablement déchirée par la « tristesse métaphysique », maladie (« Boală ») qui transforme les aurores en fontaines aux eaux emprisonnées (« Lumina de ieri », 1, p. 242).

De même si la poésie bonnefoienne est, dès son début, douloureusement marquée par l'athéisme, la poésie de Blaga prend acte, à un certain moment, de la perte du Dieu, qu'il soit absent ou bien caché. Dans l'admirable *Psalm*, il reconnaît la déchirure ontique qui le marque à jamais :

O durere totdeauna mi-a fost singurătatea ta ascunsă  
Dumnezeule, dar ce era să fac ?  
Cînd eram copil mă jucam cu tine  
și-n închipuire te desfăceam cum desfaci o jucărie.  
Apoi sălbăticia mi-a crescut,  
cîntările mi-au pierit,  
și fără să-mi fi fost vreodată aproape  
te-am pierdut pentru totdeauna  
în țărîină, în foc, în văzduh și pe ape  
(« Psalm », 1, p. 134).

A cette phase de *nigredo* et d'épreuves correspond ce qu'Eliade nomme « l'ère sombre », âge de décomposition : « L'époque sombre est assimilée à l'obscurité, à la nuit cosmique. Comme telle elle peut être valorisée dans la mesure précise où la mort représente une “valeur” en soi ; c'est le même symbolisme que celui des larves dans les ténèbres, de l'hibernation, des semences qui se décomposent dans le sol pour rendre possible l'apparition d'une forme nouvelle »<sup>14</sup>. La descente des « marches insoupçonnées » (« Nebănuitele trepte ») de la Mort est pour Blaga promesse de germination et de révélation. À la fois blessure et guérison : de la nuit sortira la lumière, une tout autre lumière.

Après l'épreuve de la *nigredo* du sens, semble luire enfin une aube résurrectionnelle. Chez Bonnefoy, la poésie passe elle aussi par une longue nuit – limite, mort, absence – avant de recueillir, dans le creuset de l'image-palimpseste, des parcelles d'un or invisible, celui de la Présence. Pour Blaga, la poésie devient même prophétie lorsqu'elle annonce que, des plaies et de la boue dont elle se nourrit, naîtra un Dieu. Et ce sont les filles des porteurs de chant malades ou lépreux, qui l'enfanteront :

dar fiicele noastre vor naște pe Dumnezeu  
aici unde astăzi singurătatea ne omoară  
(« Noi, cîntăreții leproși », 1, p. 159).

<sup>13</sup> I. Pop, « Ipostazele eului », dans *Lucian Blaga – universul liric*, Pitești, Paralela 45, 1999, p. 5-76.

<sup>14</sup> M. Eliade, *Traité d'histoire des religions*, Paris, Payot, 1991, p. 162.



*Trois chemins vers l'être*

Bien que Lucian Blaga et Yves Bonnefoy s'attardent davantage sur le moment d'exil, ils entrevoient tous deux les voies privilégiées pour le retour à l'unité perdue, véritable entreprise sotériologique qui se déploie, d'une part, dans l'union érotique et, d'autre part, dans l'union cosmique. En effet, l'Eros est vu comme une réintégration à la plénitude première inoubliée, le couple conçu comme retour à la totalité d'avant la chute dans le temps. « Les mythes révèlent qu'au commencement, note Mircea Eliade, *in illo tempore*, il y avait une totalité compacte – et que cette totalité a été sectionnée ou fracturée pour que le Monde ou que l'humanité puissent naître »<sup>15</sup>. C'est dans cette tentative de combler la nostalgie de l'Un, qui illumine de sa lumière fantasmatique toute leur poésie, que réside la grandeur de l'amour chez Bonnefoy comme chez Blaga où, comme l'a bien montré Călin Teuțișan, « definiția iubirii ca incursiune ontologică și cosmologică apare astfel justificată »<sup>16</sup>.

À l'extase érotique correspondra l'extase cosmique, souvent unies dans une même rêverie. L'expérience du sacré surgit alors devant les forces naturelles (les kratophanies selon la terminologie de Mircea Eliade) qui deviennent les signes révélateurs de l'Invisible. Traces, emblèmes, icônes, « runes » de Blaga que l'homme peut déchiffrer dans son approche apophanique du Mystère et le poète révéler dans sa parole orphique. La réflexion de Bonnefoy sur les éléments naturels s'accorde une fois de plus avec celle de Blaga :

Et il est vrai que dans une poésie véritable ne subsiste plus que ces errants du réel, ces catégories du possible, ces éléments sans passé ni avenir, jamais entièrement engagés dans la situation présente, toujours en avant d'elle et prometteurs d'autre chose, que sont le vent, le feu, la terre, les eaux – tout ce que l'univers propose d'indéfini. Eléments concrets mais universels [...]. On peut dire qu'ils sont la parole même de l'être, dégagée par la poésie. On peut dire aussi bien qu'ils *sont* les mots, n'étant rien d'autre qu'une promesse. Ils apparaissent aux confins de la négativité du langage comme des anges parlant d'un dieu toujours inconnu (L'I., p. 125-126).

L'air, la terre, l'eau, le feu dessinent une quaternité cosmique qui domine le paysage archétypal blaguien et bonnefoyen et engendre une rêverie profonde sur les substances élémentaires. Blaga dit la nuit rédemptrice, la terre désirable, l'arbre maternel, le feu salvifique, l'étoile destinale. Et l'eau et son devenir héraclitéen, comme dans ces vers conclusifs d'« Heraclit lîngă lac » où se cache sans doute un complexe de Charon euphémisé :

<sup>15</sup> M. Eliade, *Méphistophélès et l'androgyne*, Paris, Gallimard, 1962, pp. 165-166.

<sup>16</sup> C. Teuțișan, *op. cit.*, p. 202.

Lîngă ape verzi s-adună cărările [...].  
 Spini azvîrl de pe țarm în lac,  
 cu ei în cercuri mă desfac  
 (« Heraclit lîngă lac », 1, p. 150–151).

Souvenons-nous que pour Héraclite, l'anéantissement aqueux indiquait l'étape ultime de la « voie descendante ». Chez Blaga, l'eau se lève de toutes les ténèbres de notre condition pour communiquer avec les puissances réunies de la Nuit et de la Mort. Son devenir nocturne s'ouvre sur un horizon funèbre. L'eau devient la frontière de l'Au-delà, espace qui s'ouvre sur le monde de la léthalité. Le poète devient un passeur entre les deux mondes. Il s'éloigne alors de l'ordre humain et diurne pour communiquer avec le règne nocturne et caché des morts.

Ces noces mioritiques avec le monde s'inscrivent ainsi dans le schème dramatique des mythologies paléo-orientales fondées sur les cycles des naissances, morts, renaissances, que thématisent l'Arbre et la végétation, témoignages de l'éternel retour des existences transmigrantes. L'arbre, reconnaît Gilbert Durand, est « l'emblème d'un définitif triomphe de la fleur et du fruit, d'un retour par-delà les épreuves temporelles et les drames du destin, à la verticale transcendance »<sup>17</sup>. Mystique agraire archaïque qui intègre désormais l'homme, en particulier pour les grandes religions révélées, au devenir cosmique et rend moins tragique son destin et sa finitude, telle la promesse de « Gorunul » :

O, cine știe ? – Poate că  
 din trunchiul tău îmi vor ciopli  
 nu peste mult sicriul,  
 și liniștea  
 ce voi gusta-o între scîndurile lui,  
 o simt pe semne de acum :  
 o simt cum frunza ta mi-o picură în suflet –  
 și mut  
 ascult cum crește-n trupul tău sicriul,  
 sicriul meu,  
 cu fiecare clipă care trece,  
 gorunule din margine de codru  
 (« Gorunul », 1, p. 10).

La présence de la Mort transmute les mots en intersignes et la plupart des images, par leur séduction énigmatique, semblent émaner d'un univers interdit auquel seul le poète a accès. Chez Blaga, tout se charge d'insolite. Insolite qui « a partie liée avec l'idée d'un Seuil, de limite entre deux mondes »<sup>18</sup>. Chez lui, la

<sup>17</sup> G. Durand, *Les structures anthropologiques de l'imaginaire*, Paris, Dunod, 1969, p. 369.

<sup>18</sup> M. Guiomar, *Principes d'une esthétique de la mort*, Paris, J. Corti, 1993, p. 280.

muse devient Pythie aux longs cheveux obscurs, la poésie devient révélation oraculaire, prophétie onirique et voyance lunaire. Et lui-même meurt et ressuscite dans le verbe poétique, semblable à ces dieux qui descendaient dans la terre matricielle pour renaître à la lumière des « souterraines aurores » (« prin aurore subpămînești ») (« Bunătate toamna », 1, p. 153).

Mais c'est surtout le recours au Mythe qui ouvre une troisième voie à la restauration de l'état ontologique originaire. Bien que Bonnefoy ait tenu longtemps le mythe en suspicion dans la mesure où, nous projetant vers un au-delà gnostique, il nous consent d'abandonner le réel et ce qu'il appelle l'immédiat de notre condition, il lui reconnaît cependant une dimension orphique dans le « réalisme initiatique » (L'I., 130) qu'il désire. Il relève en effet, pour la modernité, une « redécouverte du mythe, irrationnel, transcendant à toutes formules, aveugle autant qu'averti, ouvert aux dialectiques les plus obscures » (N.R., p. 102). Lui-même intègre explicitement cette exploration abyssale à sa propre poétique : « symboles, mythes : vocabulaire et syntaxe de la Présence » (N.R., p. 181).

Blaga est loin de l'oscillation ambiguë de Bonnefoy car dès le début, le mythique apparaît chez lui comme le substrat primordial de sa poésie et de sa réflexion philosophique. La plongée dans les eaux primordiales des mythes, où se condense la mémoire du Grand Temps, s'offre d'emblée chez lui comme l'accès privilégié à l'être et au sacré. En ce sens, le mythe est bien l'une des voies majeures de la connaissance nocturne. Il forme avec le symbole et le rite une série essentielle où s'inscrit aussi l'image poétique qui dévoile, dans sa fulgurance, l'archétype où elle prend sa source.

### *La parole ontique*

« Les images poétiques suscitent notre rêverie, elles se fondent en notre rêverie, tant est grande la puissance d'assimilation de l'*anima*. Nous lisions et voici que nous rêvons »<sup>19</sup>, écrit Bachelard, révélant ici la puissance phanique de l'image qui brille de tous ses feux dans l'œuvre de Blaga et dans celle de Bonnefoy. De son côté, Paul Ricœur note lui aussi que l'image coïncide avec le « moment *extatique* du langage »<sup>20</sup>, celui où la création poétique semble nous projeter dans une dimension autre, initiatique. L'image pressent comme le symbole, fondement du mythe, le mystère de l'être et possède véritablement, dans cette perspective, une fonction d'illumination révélatrice. Les images tentent de dépasser les contradictions et les fractures, qui marquent la finitude humaine, pour reporter, elles aussi, l'être à la plénitude primordiale où se réconcilient la vie et la mort, le conscient et l'inconscient, l'*animus* et l'*anima*, l'ombre et la lumière, la parole et le silence. Elles nous offrent une manière unique d'habiter le poème et le monde.

<sup>19</sup> G. Bachelard, *La poétique de la rêverie*, Paris, P.U.F., 1978, p. 55.

<sup>20</sup> P. Ricœur, *La métaphore vive*, Paris, Éd. du Seuil, 1975, p. 313.

Certes l'image a parfois été considérée par Bonnefoy comme un moyen d'enfermer l'œuvre dans le cercle séducteur de l'Idéal, et en tant que telle soupçonnée comme en témoigne « Dans le leurre des mots » (L.P.C., p. 71-80) où le poète coïncide un moment avec Ulysse et la poésie avec un leurre. De même, pour magnifier la non-parole issue du silence, Blaga refuse lui aussi la parole – ici encore ulyssienne – comme « deșartă născocire » (« Ulise », 2, p. 90) que nous traduirons comme « leurre vide ». Mais les images restent un puissant inducteur pour nous faire pressentir la Présence de ce qui est – toujours donnée sur le mode de la promesse – en portant la terre « à un second degré de l'intensité ontologique » (E., p. 16). Chez Blaga comme chez Bonnefoy, elles accomplissent un véritable acte de connaissance, en particulier par la révélation des correspondances entre microcosme et macrocosme, entre visible et invisible.

« Parole sous la parole », parole extraite du silence originaire, la poésie transmet – par des images qui opèrent un véritable travail d'exhumation du sens – une expérience ancestrale, archaïque. Certaines images s'offrent en fait comme des « signes de "reconnaissance", sorte de traversée de couches d'expérience et d'émotion en profondeur »<sup>21</sup> ainsi que l'affirme Lorand Gaspar. Archéologie mémorielle ou fouille de l'originaire, cette descente vers le primordial prend bien souvent l'apparence d'une initiation. Ce n'est d'ailleurs pas un hasard si le discours détourne – au profit d'une parole rendue plus intense par sa proximité avec le Sacré – certains vocables appartenant au lexique religieux qui surgissent pour transcrire l'expérience du numineux. Pensons au terme même de « Présence » chez Bonnefoy et à ceux de « Résurrection » (« Învierie », 2, p. 54) et d'« Annonciation » (« Bunăvestire », 1, p. 178 ; p. 296) chez Blaga.

Le retour à l'origine coïncide avec la recherche d'une parole que nous appellerons aurorale : celle de la révélation des Mythes. Et pour retrouver la simplicité première, le lexique est volontairement réduit à l'essentiel, dire « pauvre » qui vise l'accès au primordial. Yves Bonnefoy et Lucian Blaga ont réussi à « rendre [leur] parole élémentaire et primitive, presque artisanale, rudimentaire, comme les objets quotidiens des sociétés archaïques »<sup>22</sup>. Par les nombreuses constructions paratactiques, que renforcent les juxtapositions des métaphores *in praesentia* du type « Et tout attachement / Une fumée » (P., p. 279), l'écriture bonnefoiyenne retrouve la transparence d'un discours ne voilant pas notre relation au monde. De même, chez Blaga, le vers « lacrimi de văpaie : licurici » (« Înfrigurare », 1, p. 80) ou le mot « Dogoare » qui occupe la place d'une strophe entière dans « Vară » (1, p. 86).

L'utilisation prépondérante du présent et l'emploi de propositions nominales créent le « présent absolu » (L'I., pp. 126-127) typique de l'énonciation mythique. L'aspect cyclique du texte bonnefoiyen et blaguien nous emporte alors dans le « *Temps de l'origine*, celui qui ne "coule pas" parce qu'il ne participe pas à la durée temporelle profane » et est constitué « par un *éternel présent* indéfiniment

<sup>21</sup> L. Gaspar, *Approche de la parole*, Paris, Gallimard, 1978, p. 64.

<sup>22</sup> J. Thélot, *Poétique d'Yves Bonnefoy*, Genève, Droz, 1983, p. 74.

recupérable »<sup>23</sup> :

Eu zac în umbra unor maci,  
fără dorinți, fără muștrări, fără căinți  
și fără ’ndemnuri, numai trup  
și numai lut.  
Ea cîntă  
și eu ascult.  
Pe buzele ei calde mi se naște sufletul  
(« În lan », 1, p. 93).

On observe chez Blaga et Bonnefoy un « usage formulaire »<sup>24</sup> des mots. Grâce à un processus de condensation symbolique, les substantifs abandonnent leur statut de noms communs pour acquérir le prestige des noms propres et retrouver la face nocturne de la parole, que les textes sacrés, les formules initiatiques, certains fragments des Présocratiques, la poésie de la tradition ont préservée. Ces mots sont bien souvent ceux de « l’essence », par opposition à ceux de « l’aspect » (L’I., p. 254) qui dénotent trop la modernité. Ils ont pour référents les éléments de la nature, les archétypes, les états « se rattachant à des moments ou situations favorables à l’émotion (départ, mort, coucher de soleil, etc.) »<sup>25</sup>, les objets naturels ou anciens. Et, comme dans le mythe, « chacun de ces mots emplis d’un sacré est devenu un *nom propre* » (E., p. 244). Chez Blaga et chez Bonnefoy, le dire poétique recharge les noms du pouvoir numineux que la connaissance diurne leur a retiré et leur restitue le « rayonnement logophanique »<sup>26</sup> perdu. La métaphore, comme l’affirme Blaga, possède bien un statut ontologique et non simplement rhétorique. Chez lui, le dire poétique devient rite :

unde și cînd găsi-voi singurul cuvînt  
în cercul nopții să te-ncînt ?  
(« Ardere », 1, p. 376).

La ressemblance avec l’énonciation rituelle est encore renforcée par d’autres traits formels. « Avec ses prépositions discrètes, avec ses coordonnants oratoires et avec ses si nombreuses juxtapositions, la poésie de Bonnefoy – et nous ajouterons celle de Blaga – s’apparente à la tradition stylistique des textes sacrés : elle tend vers un au-delà de sa propre formule, au-delà plus réel et plus grave qu’elle-même, au-delà dont elle suggère l’intuition et prépare la venue dans les

<sup>23</sup> M. Eliade, *Le sacré et le profane*, Paris, Gallimard, 1979, p. 77.

<sup>24</sup> H. Meschonnic, *Pour la poésie III*, Paris, Gallimard, 1980, p. 21.

<sup>25</sup> M. Riffaterre, *Essais de stylistique structurale*, Paris, Flammarion, 1971, p. 135.

<sup>26</sup> C. Ramnoux, *Héraclite ou l’homme entre les choses et les mots*, Paris, Soc. d’Édition « Les Belles Lettres », 1968, p. 7.

interstices de sa forme »<sup>27</sup>. Pensons à leur utilisation de l'article défini « qui fixe la vision sur le caractère *définitif* des choses, transformant le passé en prophétie, donnant au vers l'allure fatidique des oracles »<sup>28</sup>, aux ellipses ou aux métaphores *in absentia* qui, se référant analogiquement à des signifiés informulés, renforcent le caractère fragmentaire de la parole, trouée de silences et d'énigmes.

Bien qu'ils aient parfois emprunté des chemins différents pour révéler la « terre seconde », terre hiérophanique où l'être se régénère et ne serait plus en exil, Lucian Blaga et Yves Bonnefoy s'accordent dans la restauration d'une parole de l'être grâce au recours constant au substrat mythique et aux grandes images élémentaires, comme le révèlent par exemple deux poèmes très proches : « Les arbres » (C.Q.F.S.L., p. 17-18) et « La cumpăna apelor » (1, p. 268–269). Même présence du couple au seuil de la maturité, même conscience de l'usure du temps profane et de la finitude, même paysage archétypal d'arbres et d'eau qui coule, même lumière mêlée d'ombre comme la condition humaine vouée à la mort.

Nous constatons que les convergences entre les deux poètes apparaissent aussi bien dans les grandes orientations de leur poésie et de leur poétique que dans les détails de poèmes singuliers que seule une analyse précise pourra révéler, ce que nous nous proposons de tenter dans le livre sur Lucian Blaga et Yves Bonnefoy que nous sommes en train de préparer. Souvenons-nous surtout, pour reprendre les mots de Blaga, que les poètes – sur les « chemins du cœur » – en quête de la « parole perdue » (« grai pierdut ») susceptible de dévoiler la connaissance nocturne, se ressemblent non seulement par ce qu'ils disent et écrivent mais aussi et surtout par « ce qu'ils ne disent pas » :

Nu vă mirați. Poeții, toți poeții sunt  
un singur, nempărțit, neîntrerupt popor.  
Vorbind, sunt muți. Prin evii, ce se nasc și mor,  
cîntînd, ei mai slujesc un grai pierdut de mult.

Adînc, prin semînțiile, ce-apar și-apun,  
pe drumul inimii mereu ei vin și trec.  
Prin sunet și cuvînt s-ar despărți, se-ntrec.  
Își sunt asemenea prin ceea ce nu spun  
(« Poeții », 2, p. 62).

<sup>27</sup> J. Thélot, *op. cit.*, p. 97.

<sup>28</sup> H. Meschonnic, *op. cit.*, p. 22.



## UN GRAND ROMANCIER DU COMMUNISME: ION D. SÎRBU

MAGDA CARNECI

**ABSTRACT.** By focusing upon specific cultural and ideological circumstances that surrounded and determined Ion D. Sîrbu's aesthetic profile, the study draws attention to the value of this important Romanian writer from the communist period, whose qualities of novelist, especially, literary history has tended to underrate. The novel *Adio, Europa* is brought under analysis, underlining the Sîrbu's linguistic originality and his great talent of mirroring the depths of the human condition<sup>1</sup>.

**Keywords:** communism, distopia, Europe, history, textual references, human condition.

Dans la culture roumaine d'après 1989, l'impression persiste – fautive à mon sens – que, ce que l'on appelle les révélations tant attendues de la « littérature de tiroir », littérature qui, en raison de son attitude fort critique, n'aurait pas pu être publiée pendant le régime communiste, n'avaient pas été à la hauteur des attentes. Cette impression est discutable à plusieurs points de vue, puisque les mémoires, les journaux intimes et les témoignages qui n'avaient pas pu voir le jour avant la révolution de décembre, ont littéralement envahi le marché du livre roumain dans les années 1990. Mais même si on pense aux romans et aux écrits de fiction de toutes sortes, quelques nouveaux titres d'auteurs connus, parmi lesquels les écrivains exilés ont représenté un contingent important, et surtout quelques nouveaux noms, totalement inconnus ou presque auparavant – comme Nicu Steinhardt, Ion D. Sîrbu, Horia Roman Patapievici – ont réussi à bouleverser non seulement les hiérarchies littéraires en place, mais aussi l'opinion publique au sens large.

De ce point de vue, en ce qui concerne le domaine du roman, Ion D. Sîrbu représente peut-être le cas le plus éclatant. Relativement peu connus avant décembre 1989, ses écrits publiés à titre posthume dans la première moitié des années 1990 l'ont transformé en auteur incontournable de la prose roumaine contemporaine. Sa biographie, terrible, et son parcours intellectuel non-conformiste, ainsi que son énorme talent de conteur, le prédestinaient d'ailleurs à une position à part dans les lettres roumaines. Né en 1919 dans une famille pauvre de mineurs, moitié roumain (gréco-catholique par son père) moitié allemand (par sa mère, saxonne catholique

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<sup>1</sup> Une première version de ce texte est parue dans *La Nouvelle Alternative*, vol.19, n° 63, décembre 2004.



de Transylvanie), Sîrbu, jeune philosophe d'orientation marxiste, disciple du célèbre poète et philosophe roumain Lucian Blaga, commence sa carrière à Cluj. Inscrit au parti communiste roumain en 1941, il est envoyé sur le front soviétique, entre 1941 et 1944, puis sur le front occidental, en Hongrie et en Tchécoslovaquie, de 1944 à 1945. En 1945, il est un des membres du célèbre Cercle littéraire de Sibiu, assistant puis conférencier à l'université de Cluj entre 1946 et 1949. Sîrbu est ensuite exclu de l'enseignement en même temps que d'autres philosophes connus de Cluj (Lucian Blaga, Liviu Rusu, D. D. Roşca), en raison de son « orientation idéaliste ». Arrêté en 1957 pour « omission de dénonciation », il est condamné à sept ans de prison et à quatre ans d'interdiction de signature sous l'accusation de « complot contre l'ordre social ». Il passe ses années de détention dans les prisons et les camps de travail les plus durs de la Roumanie (aux côtés de quelques centaines de milliers d'autres intellectuels). Sorti de prison, il est obligé de travailler dans une mine de charbon puis à de modestes fonctions avant de devenir, en 1964, secrétaire littéraire du Théâtre national de Craiova où il terminera d'ailleurs sa carrière en 1973. Il meurt d'un cancer en septembre 1989, deux mois avant le renversement violent du régime communiste.

Si, biologiquement et littérairement, Sîrbu fait partie de la « génération de la guerre », il illustre plutôt sa « faction sacrifiée ». Promis à une carrière philosophique et universitaire brillante, marxiste convaincu, débutant avec un groupe littéraire qui va donner des noms brillants dans les décennies suivantes, Sîrbu connaît toutes les vicissitudes possibles – le front en première ligne, la détention politique, le travail forcé, le travail à la mine, l'interdiction de signature – qui vont faire de sa biographie l'une des plus tragiques parmi celles des écrivains roumains d'après-guerre. Exclu pendant 17 ans du circuit normal de la littérature, Sîrbu est obligé de débiter de nouveau, à 54 ans, par la publication d'un recueil de nouvelles (*Histoires de Petrila*, 1973), avant de publier une série de pièces de théâtre, genre pour lequel il avait une vraie passion et vocation (*L'Arche de la bonne espérance*, *Simion le Juste*, *Le Seuil bleu*, *L'Hiver du loup couleur de cendre*, etc.<sup>2</sup> En 1983, il publie un volume de proses citadines, *La Souris B et autres récits*, qui lui valent une reconnaissance relative, et dans lesquels l'écrivain aborde déjà, de façon voilée, quelques-uns des thèmes qui constitueront la matière principale de ses romans publiés après sa mort. En 1981-1982 Sîrbu entreprend un voyage européen, grâce à une bourse d'étude du DAAD<sup>3</sup>, voyage qui le marque profondément et qui déclenche en lui des énergies créatives inattendues. Dans les dernières années de sa vie, retiré de la vie publique, Sîrbu travaille uniquement à « son œuvre posthume »,

<sup>2</sup> *L'Arche de la bonne espérance* [*Arca buneî speranţe*] a été jouée pour la première fois en 1970 et a donné son titre à un volume publié en 1982 à Bucarest aux éditions Eminescu. Ce volume, primé par l'Union des écrivains de Roumanie, contient les pièces suivantes : *Simion le Juste* [*Simion cel drept*], dont la première a eu lieu en 1981 ; *Le Seuil bleu* [*Pragul albastru*] et *L'Hiver du loup couleur de cendre* [*Iarna lupului cenuşiu*] dont la première a eu lieu en 1977.

<sup>3</sup> DAAD: Deutscher Akademischer Austausch Dienst, Service allemand d'échange académique. (Fondé en 1925 à Heidelberg.) (*Nde*)

comme il le déclare lui-même dans son journal intime et dans sa riche correspondance, publiée, ainsi que le journal, dans les années 1990 (*Le Journal d'un journaliste sans journal*, [1991-1993] et *La Traversée du rideau* [1994]<sup>4</sup>).

Les « écrits posthumes » proprement littéraires sur lesquels misait Sîrbu, obsédé par la création d'un vrai corps d'œuvre qui le venge et le sauve de son destin peu clément, sont constitués par deux romans, *Adieu, l'Europe !* et *Le Loup et la cathédrale*, deux parties d'une trilogie inachevée. Écrits en parallèle, les deux romans se complètent d'une certaine façon, mais nous n'évoquerons ici que le premier d'entre eux, pour ses éléments fortement auto-biographiques.

Écrit à la première personne et terminé en 1985, *Adieu, l'Europe !* est un roman si terriblement dénonciateur que l'auteur n'a même pas songé à le montrer et à le proposer à une maison d'édition de son vivant (il sera publié pour la première fois en 1992 et 1993, en deux volumes). Sorte de réplique moderne, communiste, au *Candide* de Voltaire, le roman raconte une histoire drôle, compliquée et tragique qui se déroule vers la fin des années 1970, en pleine dictature de Ceaușescu, caractérisée, dans les propres termes de l'auteur, par « l'hyper-nationalisme officiel du sultan et de son harem d'eunuques ».

Le personnage principal, Desideriu Candid, un homme dans la cinquantaine, ex-professeur de philosophie et ex-marxiste convaincu, à la biographie « chargée » par sept ans de prison politique, mène une vie très modeste, à côté de son épouse Olimpia, dans la ville de Isarlîk, capitale d'un département administratif du sud du pays, où il a été exilé après la prison. Petit responsable de l'« orthographe » dans une entreprise vinicole d'État, il provoque toute une série d'embarras et de fracas tragi-comiques pour avoir ri sur une place publique devant une affiche qui annonçait une série de conférences sur la littérature de science-fiction où le nom de Karl Marx apparaît par erreur à la place du nom de Karl May. Son rire ouvert attire l'attention des « mouchards » qui se trouvaient sur place et qui le dénoncent à leurs supérieurs. Cet événement provoque une longue suite de conséquences inattendues et beaucoup plus complexes qu'on ne le croyait : l'affiche avait été approuvée, tour à tour, par une série de chefs locaux – responsables culturels, idéologiques, chefs de la police secrète [*Securitate*] – jusqu'au « secrétaire général » responsable du département qui avait procédé à la « correction » en cause, remplaçant, par inadvertance ou par inculture crasse, le nom de Karl May par celui de Karl Marx. Le rire dénoncé par les informateurs provoque alors la panique dans la hiérarchie politique locale, qui se sent menacée et qui essaie de se sortir d'affaire en se disculpant ou en s'accusant mutuellement au cours de plusieurs longues réunions à huis clos.

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<sup>4</sup> *Le Journal d'un journaliste sans journal* [*Jurnalul unui jurnalist fără jurnal*], Craiova, scriorul românesc, 1991 (vol. 1) et 1993 (vol. 2) ; *La Traversée du rideau* [*Traversarea cortinei*], Timișoara, Editura de Vest, 1994.

Candid, un intellectuel encore « idéaliste » et naïf, qui incarne, on l'aura compris, l'alter ego de l'auteur, participe éberlué à cette folle sarabande de l'establishment local, dans laquelle il est talonné de près par son épouse, la sage Olimpia (dont le modèle est l'épouse réelle de l'auteur). Fille de paysan et modeste responsable du poste de radio interne d'une entreprise de « boissons rafraîchissantes et marmelades », elle est cousine du chef de l'un des deux clans politiques locaux, les Tutilă, opposés au clan Osmanescu/Caftangiu. Par son intelligence, par sa capacité à comprendre les byzantines intrigues locales et par son habileté à manier brillamment la « langue de bois » du régime, Olimpia parvient à sauver pour un temps Candid des conséquences de son rire incontrôlé et dangereux dans un monde clos et contrôlé par un vaste système de mensonges, de terreurs et d'intérêts économiques souterrains.

Mais, l'incendie idéologique lié au nom de Marx une fois déclenché, les misères du pouvoir local une fois remuées, leurs échos parviennent jusqu'à la capitale, d'où un personnage très important est envoyé pour résoudre le conflit local d'intérêts. Ce personnage appartient au clan Tutilă (il est donc parent d'Olimpia) que le héros redoute en raison d'un crime commis envers un membre de la famille au cours de l'instauration par la force du communisme à la campagne. Finalement, après de multiples événements dramatiques, des duels verbaux étonnants, des renversements de situations burlesques, qui nous introduisent dans les différents milieux sociaux de la société locale, Olimpia est tuée par un camion et Candid envoyé dans un asile d'aliénés.

Cette intrigue ingénieuse, assez compliquée, mais tout à fait vraisemblable, donne lieu à des monologues philosophiques, à des digressions politiques et à des dialogues entre les personnages, débordant de verve étincelante et mordante, d'une extraordinaire richesse d'idées et de références culturelles et intertextuelles, pleines d'inventions linguistiques presque délirantes. Par des moyens littéraires très variés (l'essai, le pamphlet, le poème, la blague) et par le déploiement d'une force verbale hors du commun, qui court sur plusieurs centaines de pages, *Adieu, l'Europe !* parvient à peindre une fresque terriblement vive, vraie et accusatrice de la société roumaine sous Ceaușescu, en particulier, et de toute société communiste et totalitaire, en général.

Ce qui fait la drôlerie et l'originalité de ce roman, et pas seulement pour un lecteur roumain, c'est son écriture dans une clé inhabituelle, *turco-fanariote*. Le régime communiste roumain est vu comme un nouveau féodalisme, comme une occupation « néo-ottomane », comme une répétition d'un schéma historique déjà vécu plusieurs fois par la nation roumaine, pour la description duquel l'auteur utilise une riche panoplie de termes militaires turcs ou balkaniques du XVIII<sup>e</sup> et XIX<sup>e</sup> siècles, depuis longtemps sortis de la langue parlée, mais qui gardent encore une sorte de résonance culturelle particulière, tout à la fois archaïque, drôle, surprenante, comique et menaçante. Ainsi, Isarlîk, où se déroule l'action du roman, fait allusion au nom turc de l'ancienne Troie grecque, que le poète moderniste Ion Barbu a utilisé pour intituler un célèbre cycle poétique de l'entre-deux-guerres. Mais Isarlîk renvoie dans le roman à la

ville bien réelle de Craiova, où l'auteur a vécu à la fin de sa vie. Aussi, les noms des personnages négatifs renvoient-ils souvent à des mots d'origine turque (Ilderim, Osmanescu, Caimac, Caftangiu, etc.). Surtout la structure du pouvoir total et le jeu oligarchique rigide mis en place reçoivent des dénominations ottomanes : l'Union soviétique est la « Sublime Porte », la Roumanie est la « Grande/Haute Porte », c'est-à-dire un « pachalik médiéval » ; Ceaușescu est « le Magnifique », le « Génialissime », le « Sultan », tandis que son épouse est la « Sultane » et la « Génialissime » ; le gouvernement est nommé « le sérail du pouvoir », les départements du pays sont appelés « raya » comme les provinces de l'empire ottoman, etc. Une foule d'autres termes de la même provenance couvrent l'écriture extrêmement riche du roman : « janissaires » pour les militaires, « imams et ulémas » pour les membres du corps didactiques, « spahis » pour les informateurs, « cultur bacha » pour les responsables culturels, puis toutes sortes d'« éfendis », de « bachbusuks », « kehâias » et autres « beisadés » (prince), ainsi que de nombreuses expressions ironiques tels les « eunuques de la philosophie », les « icioglar » du pouvoir, les « matérialistes chiites », les « agro-industriels sunnites », les « néo-turquisés », ou les « Turcs de type nouveau », c'est-à-dire l'« homme nouveau », etc. Beaucoup d'autres mots, de la même provenance mais qui ont acquis en roumain des significations particulières, drôles ou poétiques (*muiêrlîc*, *ighemonicos*, *ipistat*, *calemgiu*, *nurlie*, *mazilire*, etc.), étoffent le roman, lui donnant une saveur extraordinaire pour le lecteur roumain, mais peut-être difficilement transposable dans une autre langue.

Sous cet angle stylistique, qui poursuit un courant littéraire productif et original de la littérature roumaine moderne, le « balkanisme », *Adieu, l'Europe !* peut être vu comme une épopée *sui generis* en prose, une *Turciade* (comme l'auteur a voulu le nommer à un moment donné) rappelant la *Tsiganiade* de Ion Budai-Deleanu du début du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle, ou, tout proche de nous, le *Levant* de Mircea Cărtărescu.

En fait, il s'agit d'un roman politique très complexe, parodique et allégorique à la fois, simultanément comique et tragique, combinant le récit avec d'autres espèces littéraires, faisant appel à des confessions autobiographiques, à des digressions de toutes sortes, à des excroissances narratives étonnantes mais toujours passionnantes. Comme l'avouait Ion D. Sîrbu lui-même : « Mon idéal de prose serait une sorte de défoulement philosophique et d'autovendetta satirique. Moi je suis le nouveau Candide. »

Et, en vérité, *Adieu, l'Europe !* est un gigantesque défoulement politique et philosophique, une sorte de revanche morale et esthétique de grande ampleur, que l'auteur prend sur l'histoire et les idéologies qui ont détruit son destin et ont écourté sa vie.

Issu d'une expérience existentielle profondément traumatique, que l'auteur reprend encore et toujours sous des angles divers tout au long de plus de 600 pages, ce roman constitue un énorme cri de désespoir et de révolte, il nous propose le texte comme un témoignage accablant et accusateur, comme une confession totale, « une souffrance lucide pour la vérité ».

Le roman peut être considéré aussi comme une « distopie réaliste », tant est que cela puisse être dit ainsi, qui essaie de témoigner et de faire comprendre l'aberration politique du « socialisme réel » : celui-ci a donné naissance à un monde maléfique, « démoniaque », gouverné par la peur, la bêtise, la bassesse, dominé par la misère, le faux, et les manques de toutes sortes, dans lequel des phénomènes sociaux régressifs font leur apparition en grand nombre, transformant un pays autrefois riche, beau et accueillant, en un territoire peuplé par des bandits du pouvoir, des estropiés moraux, des lâches, des poltrons et des débrouillards minables. « Nous vivons dans une époque d'une gigantesque et fantastique explosion, expansion et intronisation de la Bêtise comme valeur... La bêtise intelligente, "scientifique", rusée, sublime, césarienne, divine », écrit l'auteur dans son roman.

Il ne cesse de vitupérer, sur tous les registres stylistiques, contre l'absurde du système communiste, « bazar d'inanité et de résignation » dirigé par des « aristocrétins », l'endroit où

« les idiots sont devenus intelligents et les intelligents se sont abêtis, où les paysans sont devenus des citadins et les urbains sont devenus ruraux, où les popes sont athées et les athées deviennent de plus en plus croyants ; où les femmes sont hommes et les hommes sont comme les femmes ; où les enfants parlent comme les adultes et les adultes parlent comme les enfants... Quelque chose s'est modifié dans la constitution de l'air, dans le champ "neuronique" de la matière, dans la mystérieuse formule même de la Divinité ; on ne parle pas comme on pense, on n'écrit pas comme on parle, on ne pense pas comme on voudrait, ou comme il faudrait ; le mot "honnêteté" a disparu, tout autant que les mots "bon sens", "urbanité" et ainsi de suite. » (p. 151)

Une grave « mutation ontologique » a eu lieu, qui fait que

« tout ce qui est provisoire devient définitif, que tout ce qui est permis [est] aussi obligatoire, [que] tout ce qui est hybride [est] authentique, et tout ce qui est confus [est] également génial » (p.151).

Cette aberration sociopolitique est d'ailleurs toujours mise en relation avec la modernité et ses déséquilibres, avec les deux guerres mondiales, avec les idéologies occidentales du progrès, de la révolution, de l'homme nouveau, qui ont infesté un monde non préparé à les recevoir :

Tous les changements ne sont pas des transformations ; toutes les transformations ne sont pas des développements ; tous les développements ne signifient pas progrès ; tout progrès ne mène pas à la civilisation ; toute civilisation ne signifie pas "humanisme" ; et tout humanisme n'est pas toujours juste ; pas plus que toute justice n'est toujours démocrate ou de valeur, et les valeurs peuvent ne pas mener vers le bon sens, vers la lumière, vers le salut... (p. 152).

L'Europe ne reste pas exempte de la critique virulente de l'auteur, ex-intellectuel de gauche, qui lui reproche maintes fois la trahison de Yalta, l'aveuglement des politiciens en général et des intellectuels de gauche en particulier, l'embourgeoisement et la perte du sens « des grandes valeurs », ainsi que le fait que « toutes les idées européennes sont arrivées chez nous en tenant dans la main un fouet, un sabre ou un pistolet » (p. 150).

Européen convaincu cependant, Candid se définit lui-même comme « le dernier mohican qui croit encore en les hommes et en les grands mots », un « sous-héros des malchances historiques » dont la « patrie est une bibliothèque ». Disciple du philosophe Napocos (L. Blaga), exilé de Genopolis (Cluj), marxiste convaincu dans sa jeunesse, Candid se voit en « pauvre idiot, gaffeur universel, ex-intellectuel avec, autrefois, un nom et un renom, niais imbibé de cosmopolitisme ». Il se reproche l'idéalisme du début et, surtout, son culte pour Marx dont il a traduit le *Manifeste* et dirigé une première édition rigoureuse et complète du *Capital* en roumain.

J'ai cru en Lui ! Toute ma jeunesse, je l'ai passée parmi les mineurs. Mon père est mort fidèle à la Deuxième Internationale. Tout mon espoir dans un monde meilleur, plus juste, dans un monde sans fascisme, sans boyards, sans Gestapo, sans idiots et vauriens, je l'ai investi en Lui. Comment a-t-il pu nous quitter ? Quel sens garde encore ce terrain vague de la honte et des mensonges ? (p. 146).

Son malheur actuel, toujours provoqué par Marx, en raison de la confusion avec Karl May qui l'a fait rire et qui a déclenché toute l'odyssée du roman, n'empêche pas Candid de constater combien son cher « Karlie » reste peu lu et déformé, comme le déplore l'auteur, dans le monde communiste roumain et soviétique des années 1970-1980. Les pages dans lesquelles un idéologue en chef explique pourquoi Marx est inutilisable à présent et peut même être considéré comme « contre-révolutionnaire » par son « idéalisme irresponsable » opposé à la pratique du réel, restent des pages d'anthologie.

En partant toujours de sa propre expérience dramatique, mais aussi de ses lectures vastes et de ses réflexions philosophiques poussées, Ion D. Sîrbu aborde une multitude de sujets dans les pages touffues de son roman, dont les événements, étonnants, drôles, comiques, constituent autant d'occasions pour de longs détours théoriques, de vrais essais sur des thèmes aussi divers que le rire comme modèle de courage civique, la peur comme moyen suprême de contrôle social, l'ennui des réunions politiques, la misère des queues pour la nourriture et l'enseignement idéologique obligatoire comme autant de formes d'abrutissement et de soumission, le concept balkano-byzantin de *lichea*<sup>5</sup>, les maladies des mots tués par le mensonge, ce que veut dire être et rester de gauche, le mal de l'histoire en tant que sous-histoire et « anti-histoire », et beaucoup d'autres.

Les pages du roman sont truffées de noms et de références livresques les plus diverses, Kant et Hegel, Frobenius, Jung, Levy-Brühl, Foucault, mais aussi Sartre, Glucksmann, Daix, Garaudy, Koestler et d'autres. Le sarcasme de l'auteur n'épargne pas la « trahison des clercs », telle qu'elle est vue depuis un « trou de l'histoire », un « endroit anhistorique » :

Je rêve d'un grand bûcher, constitué de tous les auteurs qui ont écrit sur l'Homme, la Justice, L'Esprit, la Liberté, je veux me donner feu et brûler sur ce bûcher, en chantant "l'Internationale" et riant de tous les poux sorbonnards, de toutes les putains du bordel des démagogies mondiales. (p. 186).

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<sup>5</sup> Terme difficilement traduisible signifiant à peu près « gredin » ou « vaurien »

Même si les personnages du roman sont très divers et pittoresques, par leurs bouches se déploie finalement un même discours, ample et impressionnant, qui crie – et parfois hurle et crache – la révolte de l’auteur contre « l’inégalité comme une immense douleur du monde », contre « la justice définitivement perdue » et « le bien [qui] s’est retiré de ce monde » (p. 223). Sans répit, Ion D. Sîrbu élève une voix tragique à l’encontre du « spectacle de l’océan de trahison et de mensonge sous lequel couchent des centaines de millions d’individus « pesimuși<sup>6</sup> », encore bipèdes, hominoïdes, omnivores (p. 281). Dans des phrases pleines de force, de rage et d’audace, l’auteur parle de la « réalisation alchimique d’une âme sans espoir, sans croyance, sans passé, sans lendemain » (p. 275) et dénonce impitoyablement « l’immense merde qu’est l’histoire moderne et contemporaine » (p. 280).

D’ailleurs, Ion D. Sîrbu est considéré, non sans raison, comme possédant un courage unique dans la prose roumaine des dernières décennies, et peut-être de tout le XX<sup>e</sup> siècle. Son style reste difficilement classable et dans les lettres roumaines et dans le champ de la prose est-européenne, même s’il y a des éléments dans son écriture qui peuvent le rapprocher des romanciers tels que Boulgakov, Konvicki, Hrabal, mais aussi du style débordant du réalisateur Emir Kusturica. Son roman, par son souffle accablant, par ses modalités stylistiques chargées et par sa structure baroque, serait peut-être plus proche de la prose latino-américaine de Mario Vargas Llosa, Augusto Roa Bastos, Gabriel Garcia Marquez ou Alejo Carpentier, sans évoquer George Orwell et son célèbre *1984*.

Personnage histrionique, ayant un tempérament « orchestre » de raconteur, d’humoriste, de dramaturge et de philosophe à la fois, Ion D. Sîrbu pourrait être considéré, d’une certaine façon, comme le personnage le plus complet, le plus illustratif, de sa propre œuvre. Il se définissait d’ailleurs lui-même comme « un écrivain qui débute toujours (sans succès, seulement avec quelques succès), un socialiste sans idéologie, un chrétien sans confession, un philosophe sans système et mémoire, un semi-citoyen toléré, un Transylvain refusé par Cluj mais non assimilé en Olténie, un Roumain austro-hongrois, un philo-russe antistalinien, un communiste contemporain des papillons et de Josef d’Arimathée, un esthéticien est-éthique, un libéral amoureux de ses chaînes, un syndicaliste solitaire, un ex-Don Juan désormais amoureux de sa propre épouse. »

Par sa méditation sévère sur l’histoire et la condition humaine, par son pessimisme eschatologique et son refus du « mal de l’histoire », par son style sarcastico-tragico-drôlatique, par la symbiose du philosophique, de l’esthétique et de la morale, par le pathétisme de son témoignage et le désir de déposer à haute voix devant « le tribunal de l’histoire » du XX<sup>e</sup> siècle, Ion D. Sîrbu appartient, en fin de compte, mais dans un autre registre, à la même famille spirituelle que Mircea Eliade, Ionesco et Cioran. Ne se définissait-il pas d’ailleurs, et dans le même esprit acide et ironique, comme un « simple singe balkanique de Cioran » ?

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<sup>6</sup> Néologisme forgé par l’auteur à partir du terme roumain signifiant « pessimiste ».

## IL DONCHISCIOTTISMO DI UN POSTROMANTICO

*Il centenario della nascita di Eugène Ionesco*

**LAURA PAVEL**

**ABSTRACT.** The study *The DonQuixotism of a Postromantic* focuses on the metatheatrical phenomenon of what I call Ionesco's „donquixotism”, that has to be seen in close connection with the „postromantic” character of Ionesco's oeuvre. I critically argue that Eugène Ionesco deserves to be placed in the filiation of the romantic sensibility of E. A. Poe and E. T. A. Hoffmann, authors of fictions that can be interpreted as both fantastic and parodic. By the term of „donquixotism” I have codified here, metaphorically, the problem of literary and theatrical representation within the ionescian theatre. The specific theme of the metatheatrical representation comes out of the surprising conviction of Ionesco, expressed on more than one occasion, regarding the irreality of the real. The study deals mostly with the primary role of the representation as related to the represented „fact”, of the Illusion as related to the more and more evanescent referent, to the so-called „real”, now denaturalized.

**Keywords:** Donquixotism, postromanticism, fictionalisation, representation, fantastic vs absurd, Anti-World

### **Motto:**

Is this new [romantic, subjective] form of civilization being replaced by another [i.e., postromantic, postsubjective]? In particular, is it being replaced by one in which nothing that happens any longer strikes us as the objectification of subjectivity, as the act of an answerable agent, as the expression and satisfaction of human freedom, of human intention and desire? What has a beginning can have an end. If this future (civilization?) were effected its members would not be



dissatisfied. They would have lost the concept of satisfaction. Then nothing would (any longer) give them the idea that living beings, human things, could feel. So they would not (any longer) be human<sup>2</sup>.

Stanley Cavell, *The Claim of Reason: Wittgenstein, Skepticism, Morality, and Tragedy*

## 1. Rappresentazione e donchisciottismo

Nell'*Improvviso dell'Alma ovvero Il camaleonte del pastore*, Eugène Ionesco appare nel ruolo autoflagellante di personaggio interno del suo mondo fittivo. Un mondo tanto piú fittivo quanto piú è popolato da esseri marionettizzati, cioè dai tre Bartholomeus: Bartholomeus I è l'immagine caricaturale di Roland Barthes, Bartholomeus II è la parodia di Bernard Dort – entrambi studiosi molto in volga, il cui nome si lega a quel tempo alla rivista *Théâtre populaire* –, e Bartholomeus III è il riflesso in caricatura di Jean-Jacques Gautier, cronista di *Figaro*, che secondo Ionesco, infastidito dai suoi acidi attacchi, è emblema dell'ignoranza e della stupidità della critica.

Mescolandosi come protagonista fra le creature della sua farsa di stampo molièriano, Ionesco assume difatti il ruolo paradigmatico del Cavaliere della Mancha. L'eroe di Cervantes si lancia, a un certo punto, fra le marionette del burattinaio Pedro, scambiando quei „poveri volti di cartone” per veri arabi, per esseri in carne e ossa. Il

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<sup>2</sup> Ecco il passaggio di Cavell in traduzione italiana: „È forse questa nuova [romantica, soggettiva] forma di civilizzazione sostituita da un'altra [i.e., postromantica, postsoggettiva]? Piú esattamente, essa viene sostituita da una in cui niente di ciò che accade non ci sembra piú l'oggettivazione della soggettività, come atto di un agente responsabile, come espressione e soddisfazione della libertà umana, dell'intenzione e del desiderio umano? Ciò che ha un inizio può avere anche una fine. Se questa (civilizzazione?) futura si realizzasse, i suoi membri non potrebbero essere scontenti. Per essi si perderebbe lo stesso concetto di essere contenti. Cosicché non gli darebbe piú l'impressione che gli esseri viventi, gli oggetti umani possono sentire. Quindi loro non sarebbero (piú) umani”. Vedi Stanley Cavell, *The Claim of Reason: Wittgenstein, Skepticism, Morality, and Tragedy*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1979, p. 468. Per Cavell, il romanticismo sarebbe, dal punto di vista filosofico, un emblema del „soggettivismo”, ma allo stesso tempo un emblema dell'ontologia dell'*umano*, vista in contrasto con il mostruoso. Non essere piú *umano equivarrebbe* quindi a un abbandono della prospettiva soggettiva, la rivelazione di „orrori”, del mostruoso, poiché la fine dell'epistema romantico porta con sé „the vanishing of the human”. Quel che determina la colpevolizzazione della soggettività, dell'umano, è per Cavell il paradosso di un *next self*, che il filosofo scopre in Emerson, per cui questo *io futuro* costituisce lo scopo del „perfezionismo” emersoniano. Le osservazioni su Stanley Cavell sull'*io* emersoniano andrebbero bene, credo, anche per il „postromantico” *io* – ora colpevolizzato, ora che ritrova la sua straripante soggettività, sentimentalmente romantica – dei testi fittivi o autobiografici ioneschiani. Così, un *next self* presupporebbe, in Emerson, come anche in Ionesco, l'universalizzazione dei valori della soggettività, solo che questa soggettività è *obliqua* e non si può definire riferendosi alla conoscenza trascendentale. È un *io futuro* che smonta ogni interpretazione fissa, metafisica, della stessa idea di soggettività. L'*io* si delinea quindi come un progetto in corso di realizzazione, poiché il fatto di non avere un *io* non implica la presa di possesso di sé, ma „a process of moving to, and from, nexts” (vedi Stanley Cavell, *op. cit.*, p. 12). Non differente è l'*io* ioneschiano, le cui metamorfosi (Bénger, Jean, Primo Uomo ecc.) si confrontano con l'alternativa soggettività esacerbata, strutturalmente romantica – condizione post-soggettiva, „mostruosa”, colpevolizzata, di marionetta grottesca o di gotico morto vivente.

significato del gesto donchisciottesco di Ionesco – allo stesso tempo autore e personaggio – presenta una fertile ambiguità: poiché se l'essere reale del drammaturgo entra nella trappola della finzione e si autofinzializza, anche il „reale” Ionesco distrugge, così facendo, la „capsula” finzionale della scena, rompe la convenzione, provocando la sua lettura errata (e polemica nel sottotesto) di vera realtà. In fondo, in entrambi i casi, paradossalmente complementari, l'effetto è quello di rendere ambigua la frontiera realtà-finzione. Eccolo, in una sbalorditiva confessione al critico Roger Bensky, sull'autore alla Don Chisciotte, meravigliato dalla stranezza e nel contempo dalla naturalezza del suo gesto di aggirarsi, in carne e ossa, per il proprio *scenario* e fra i personaggi di finzione:

Vado a teatro, proprio nei posti dove non ho lavorato come regista e non ho assistito alla regia, e arrivo a riconoscere i miei personaggi; riconosco il mio scenario e sento una sorte di gioia mista a inquietudine, un sentimento di stranezza. Ho camminato così per tanto tempo (adesso mi sono quasi abituato), cioè sono salito sul palco e ho passeggiato nello scenario delle pièce *La lezione* e *La cantatrice calva*; ho passeggiato nel mio scenario e ciò mi è sembrato impossibile e allo stesso tempo naturale. Impossibile che sia così, ma tuttavia vero. I personaggi che avevo descritto – li incontravo; erano lì; erano veri, ho provato davvero un sentimento di riconoscenza e di realizzazione totale, sí, proprio così<sup>3</sup>.

Con il termine donchisciottismo ho indicato qui, metaforicamente, il problema della rappresentazione nel teatro ioneschiano, la priorità di rappresentazione in relazione al „fatto” presentato, dell'illusione in relazione al sempre piú fantomatico referente, al cosiddetto „reale”, adesso snaturato. Questa tematica della rappresentazione metateatrale deriva dalla sorprendente convinzione di Ionesco, espressa piú volte, riguardante l'irrealtà del reale. Nelle *Conversazioni con Claude Bonnefoy*, viene discussa, facendo riferimento alle pièce *La cantatrice calva* e *Che inenarrabile casino!*, nonché al romanzo *Il solitario*, l'idea della rappresentazione non-realista, non-referenziale, quindi di una *rappresentazione* che si mette in evidenza, trascurando i criteri aristotelici di una *mimesis* realizzata ai limiti del verosimile e del necessario. La deviazione dalle norme di tradizione aristotelica della rappresentazione intesa come *imitazione* referenziale viene fatta in nome di un sentimento di *distanziamento*, di *meraviglia* distanziata, che la „realtà”, così derealizzata, diventata illusoria, provoca nell'autore, così come anche in questi personaggi autobiografici:

In breve, [il personaggio] si meraviglia dell'agitazione umana. *Il solitario*, credo, assomiglia molto alla *Cantatrice calva*. Può sembrare sorprendente. Cosa faccio nella *Cantatrice calva*? Mi metto in disparte dalla gente, per vedere meglio come si muove; mi allontanano e guardo gli uomini, e tutto ciò che loro fanno sembra

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<sup>3</sup> Vedi Roger-Daniel Bensky, *Le masque foudroyé. Lecture traversière du théâtre français actuel*, Saint Genouph, Nizet, 1997, pp. 239-265

stupefacente, ridicolo, sconsiderato. La stessa cosa avviene con il solitario. Tutto quello che gli uomini fanno gli sembra avventato<sup>4</sup>.

A proposito delle rappresentazione in stile donchisciottesco, non-referenziale, rigirata su stessa come una sorte di tema guida delle pièce, ci sono anche dei passaggi chiave di *Note e contronote*. In questo, Ionesco confessa che non è stato un vero e proprio amante del teatro, e che addirittura, detestava quest'arte, essendo affascinato, invece, nella sua infanzia – e sarebbe interessante segnalare le affinità involontarie con Jarry, Gaston Bay o Michel de Ghelderode –, dagli spettacoli di marionette:

Lo spettacolo di marionette mi ipnotizzava con la visione di quei pupazzi che parlavano, muovevano, si bastonavano. Ciò che vedevo era il mondo stesso, insolito, inverosimile, ma piú vero che il vero, riprodotto in una forma estremamente semplificata e caricaturale, quasi per sottolinearne la grottesca e brutale verità<sup>5</sup>.

Se il teatro provoca al giovane Ionesco il sentimento di stranezza e di inverosimiglianza del reale, deformato, si potrebbe dire, attraverso la rappresentazione, esso lascia tuttavia, grazie alla semplificazione caricaturale e spesso grottesca del fatto, di ciò che è „naturale”, l'impressione che sia „piú vero del vero”. Non ci sorprenderà, quindi, neanche la richiesta del drammaturgo di amplificare al massimo gli effetti teatrali, di rendere ancora piú visibili gli „artifici”. Poiché lo spettacolo doveva diventare, come nel caso della „crudeltà” sostenuta da Artaud, „un ritorno all'insopportabile”:

Spingere tutto al parossismo, cioè alle fonti del tragico. Fare un teatro di violenza; violentemente comico, violentemente drammatico<sup>6</sup>.

Ma le sentenze dal sapore artaudiano sulle violenze affettive degli spettatori, attraverso la provocazione di un nuovo tipo di catarsi, si colloca nella sfera della problematica donchisciottesca della rappresentazione solo nella misura in cui esse sono volte a provocare la „dislocazione del reale”, e la sua successiva „reintegrazione” nell'atto spettacolare:

Per sfuggire al quotidiano, alle abitudini, dalla pigrizia mentale che ci nasconde la stranezza del mondo, abbiamo bisogno di un vero e proprio choc. Senza una nuova verginità spirituale, senza una nuova purificata presa di coscienza, della realtà

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<sup>4</sup> Eugène Ionesco, *Entre la vie et le rêve. Entretiens avec Claude Bonnefoy*, Paris, Gallimard, 1996, p. 176.

<sup>5</sup> Idem, *Note e contronote. Scritti sul teatro*, traduzione di Gian Renzo Morteo e Giovanni Moretti, Torino, Einaudi, 1965, pp. 23-24; cf. *Notes et contre-notes*, Paris, Gallimard, 1966, p. 53.

<sup>6</sup> Ivi, p. 29.

esistenziale, è impossibile il teatro, è impossibile l'arte; occorre attuare una sorte di stravolgimento del reale, che è premessa indispensabile alla riorganizzazione<sup>7</sup>.

Nella *Politica del postmodernismo*, Linda Hutcheon considera la rappresentazione postmoderna come soluzione critica di compromesso fra il più vecchio mito realista di riproduzione trasparente, mimetica, del referente – un referente che si dimostra tuttavia sempre più, a causa della deformazione provocata dai mass-media, un *simulacro*, come sosteneva Jean Baudrillard –, da un lato, e l'autoriflessività modernista che distrugge il referente e il conseguimento di un valore autonomo, dall'altro: „Difatti, molte strategie postmoderne hanno come premessa esplicita quella di mettere in dubbio la nozione realista di rappresentazione, che presuppone la trasparenza dell'ambiente e, di conseguenza, il legame diretto e naturale fra segno e referente o fra parola e mondo. Di certo, l'arte moderna, in tutte le sue forme, ha sanzionato, a sua volta, questa nozione, ma l'ha fatto deliberatamente, a detrimento del referente cioè, sottolineando l'opacità dell'ambiente e l'autosufficienza del sistema di significati. Il postmodernismo, invece, snatura sia la trasparenza realista, sia la riflessività modernista, mantenendo nel contempo (nella maniera complice e critica che lo caratterizza) il potere di entrambi, attestato storicamente. Questa è l'ambivalente politica della rappresentazione postmoderna”<sup>8</sup>.

E questa è anche la formula ambivalente del donchisciottismo, trattato molto spesso nei testi ioneschiani teoretici, diaristici o drammaturgici. Affermato polemicamente, il culto della marionetta, dell'illusione, presuppone, direi, l'esistenza di un'attrazione tirannica del drammaturgo per l'„irrealtà immediata” (il romanzo di Blecher era molto apprezzato da Ionescu già nel periodo romeno della sua pubblicistica giovanile), attrazione che viene esercitata a detrimento della „realtà” o, più esattamente, della visione realista.

Inoltre, il teatro deve essere sembrato a Ionesco l'arte donchisciottesca per eccellenza, dal momento in cui il suo dominio di manifestazione si situa sempre *alla frontiera*: laddove si incontrano illusione e realtà – per cui la prima viene contagiata dalle apparenze della realtà, e la seconda risulta contaminata dalla „bugia”, dall'ambiguità tipica della rappresentazione teatrale, diventando quindi illusoria; o nel punto di incidenza fra strano e banale, „tragico e farsa, prosaico e poetico, realismo e fantastico, quotidiano e insolito”. Siffatti principi contraddittori – poiché non esiste teatro „se non esistono antagonismi” – formano per l'autore della *Cantatrice calva* „le basi di una possibile costruzione teatrale”<sup>9</sup>.

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<sup>7</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>8</sup> Linda Hutcheon, *The Politics of Postmodernism*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, London & New York, Routledge, 2002, p. 29 sqq.

<sup>9</sup> E. Ionesco, *Note e contronote*, ed. cit., p. 31; cf. *Notes et contre-notes*, ed. cit., p. 62.

## 2. La pièce sovversiva

Per sua stessa ammissione, l'autore del *Rinoceronte* tende alla rappresentazione dell'irrapresentabile (di quel *innomable*, come Beckett) e alla rivelazione del mostruoso. Ciò che, di conseguenza, il teatro ioneschiano vuole legittimare sarà un'estetica di superficie, che accentua l'*inverosimile* (della situazione, del linguaggio, quindi l'inverosimile psicologico e, infine, di quello ontologico), lo strano e il gratuito. Questi sono altrettanti anticodici che mettono in pericolo la rappresentazione, o quantomeno la deviano o la dispergono. Essi sembrano avere nell'opera ioneschiana un peso maggiore dell'assurdo di profondità, che, ad esempio, in Camus proveniva dall'assenza di significazione ontologica, accompagnata dalla rivolta sublime e tragica allo stesso tempo. Attraverso la voluttà dei giochi di parole, sui cui si confessa a Claude Bonnefoy, Ionesco si mostra interessato non tanto all'idea di un assurdo metafisico, quanto alla gratuità di qualsiasi associazione linguistica, sonora ed evenemenziale, di per sé una gratuità significativa, al di fuori di qualsiasi referenza. Le sue dichiarazioni si collocano sulla linea della poetica futurista della „fantasia senza filo” e delle „parole in libertà” di Marinetti:

Date alle parole completa libertà, fate in modo che dicano tutto, senza intenzione, ne verrà fuori sempre qualcosa. Saranno sempre parole legate fra di loro che, grazie a ciò, avranno un significato. Affinché altri s'impossessino di questo significato e dicano: „Ecco cosa ha voluto dire l'autore di queste frasi”, allorquando egli non ha voluto dire assolutamente nulla, non è forse questa la più grande delusione che può provare un autore? (...) Le parole vengono e si associano liberamente. Esiste una certa gratuità. Cosa significa e cos'è, in verità, questa così gratuita gratuità? Essa vuole comunque dire qualcosa<sup>10</sup>.

È esemplare, per un siffatto teatro della *gratuità* paradossale, deliberata, per la sua inspiegabilità e ineffabilità, o solo per il suo gratuito oggetto *gotico*, l'immagine del cadavere di *Amedeo o Come sbarazzarsene*. Questo cadavere vivo cresce e ha, per giunta, „pretese”, in un tipico naturale ioneschiano dell'innaturale, entrato nella routine quotidiana:

*Amedeo*: (...) Ah, potissimo essere sicuri che ci ha perdonati!

*Altro silenzio*.

*Maddalena*: Se ci avesse perdonato non crescerebbe più. Dato che continua a crescere... vuol dire che ha ancora delle rivendicazioni. Ce l'ha ancora con noi. I morti sono talmente vendicativi. I vivi dimenticano più in fretta<sup>11</sup>.

<sup>10</sup> Idem, *Entre la vie et le rêve*, ed. cit., pp. 149-151.

<sup>11</sup> Abbiamo utilizzato l'edizione: Eugène Ionesco, *Teatro completo*, vol. I-II, Torino, Einaudi, Biblioteca della Pléiade, 1993.

Pièce emblematica della creazione ioneschiana, da cui Ionesco non si è potuto mai staccare mentalmente, come lo stesso riconosce, *Amedeo o Come sbarazzarsene* sembra continuare un discorso *sovversivo*, o una pièce *sovversiva*, nascosta senza discrezione, in modo alquanto brutale, di pièce „primaria”, evidente, di trama evenemenziale apparente. Il titolo stesso è sovversivo, poiché il protagonista per eccellenza, il solo vero „vivente”, che trasforma i due coniugi in penose vittime rassegnate alla propria condizione, in morti viventi tormentati dal senso di colpa, è... il cadavere. Ci saremmo quindi aspettati che a quest’ultimo appartenga il nome di Amedeo, che ci viene indicato, in posizione privilegiata, già dal titolo. D'altronde, Leonard Pronko, lancia l’ipotesi che l’amante assassinato non è forse altri che il giovane Amedeo<sup>12</sup>. A sua volta, Honor Matthews identificava in questa pièce un fantasma di sé integrato, nel quale Amedeo accetta la realtà della propria azione – l’uccisione dell’amore – e, assumendosene le conseguenze, trascende i limiti della sua condizione umana, ma al prezzo della vita, o almeno, aggiungerei, al prezzo della sua vita apparente<sup>13</sup>. Queste interpretazioni non possono essere se non semplici speculazioni tuttavia, per tutto il tempo in cui Amedeo Buccinioni, il marito di Maddalena, drammaturgo fallito e possibile assassino – nella cui esegesi ho visto, in modo prevedibile, anche la caricatura di Ionesco –, non ha una propria „realtà” in quanto personaggio. Le sue possibili identità e realtà vengono distrutte dall’Altro, forse il vero Amedeo, il cadavere che „cresce” e si nutre del „primo” Amedeo, alla fine lo rapisce in volo, lo uccide, e quindi lo fa uscire fuori dalla sua vita apparente, da *qui*, portata vicino alla conformista Maddalena. L’Amedeo-drammaturgo (o il falso drammaturgo) non esiste se non nella misura in cui viene „aspirato” dall’energia sovraumana, sovranaturale dell’altro Amedeo – apparentemente una parte del proprio sé, sfaldato, proiettato all’esterno e quindi oggettivato, in fondo, un „oggetto” scenico vivo, insondabile, una possibile metafora dell’*irrapresentabile*, del *mostruoso*, alla rappresentazione del quale tende utopicamente il teatro ioneschiano.

A differenza della maggioranza dei critici, David Bradby sostiene polemicamente, per esempio, che il morto vivente di *Amedeo o Come sbarazzarsene* è un’insistente „presenza concreta”, e tutti i tentativi di razionalizzarla come simbolo di qualcos’altro sono destinati a essere frustrati<sup>14</sup> sin dall’inizio già nella loro eccessiva intenzione esegetica. Accettando l’opinione di David Bradby, MaryBeth Inverso, che trova nelle pièce di Ionesco, Harold Pinter, Tom Stoppard o Sam Shepard un impulso *neogotico*<sup>15</sup>, il cadavere di *Amedeo*... assomiglia al gigantesco fantasma di Otranto, il personaggio di Horace Walpole. Come nel celebre *The Castle of Otranto*, il cadavere del testo ioneschiano è semplicemente *là* – un invasore gotico.

<sup>12</sup> Leonard Pronko, *Avant-Garde: The Experimental Theater in France*, Berkeley and Los Angeles, University of California Press, 1962, p. 94.

<sup>13</sup> Vedi Honor Matthews, *The Primal Curse: The Myth of Cain and Abel in the Theatre*, London, Chatto & Windus, 1967.

<sup>14</sup> David Bradby, *Modern French Drama, 1940-1980*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1984, p. 64.

<sup>15</sup> Vedi MaryBeth Inverso, *The Gothic Impulse in Contemporary Drama*, London, UMI, Research Press Ann Harbor, 1990.

Se accettiamo di poter parlare di una determinata impronta gotica della visione ioneschiana, bisogna presupporre altresì un'accentuata *inverosimiglianza* – dell'immaginario e, quindi, del „reale” teatrale. I due prigionieri volontari nella propria camera-sepolcro, insieme con il frutto – immaginario e reale in ugual misura – della loro colpevolezza di assassini (reali o, nuovamente, immaginari), il cadavere invade il loro spazio vitale, come anche lo spazio psichico da incubo, interiore, poiché l'enorme corpo è un argomento „palpabile” dell'irrealtà del reale. Amplificando la colpa immaginaria, l'angoscia dei due, il cadavere rappresenta l'evento del tutto strano, insolito, che rompe la cellula domestica della loro banale esistenza. Si capisce, quindi, che la sua presenza non provoca loro solo la sofferenza di una vita di frustrazioni e di autocensura, ma anche un evidente e difficilmente irrefrenabile fascino. Per esempio, la luce dalla bizzarra bellezza che Amedeo sorprende negli occhi di quel morto di quindici anni prima ricorda l'analogia visione del cadavere acquatico dell'antologia di racconti *L'annegato più bello del mondo* di Gabriel García Márquez, in cui il motivo della morte veniva anche in questo caso recuperato esteticamente nella sfera del fantastico. Ma il cadavere della pièce ioneschiana non è solo l'invasore gotico che provoca orrore, o solo un oggetto paradossalmente estetizzato, ma anche un oggetto morale, che rappresenta, alla fin fine, l'unica „realizzazione” – nella sofferenza e nella colpevolezza –, l'unico evento non mediocre, eccezionale, che agisce sui due con la forza di un *destino*. Amedeo e Maddalena se lo contendono, così, e la colpevolezza che provano non è solo quella nei confronti delle inoffensive e inesistenti autorità poliziesche, ma soprattutto quella nei confronti dell'altro, nel loro comune amore per il morto. È significativo il fatto che quest'ultimo potrebbe essere addirittura loro figlio, assassinato o morto prima del tempo, e non solo, come ci viene suggerito a un certo punto, l'ex amante di Maddalena,:

*Amedeo, approfittando del fatto che la moglie è occupata al centralino, si alza silenziosamente, va verso la porta sinistra, guarda nella camera, fermo sulla soglia, si volta per assicurarsi che la moglie non lo veda, poi entra pian piano nella camera, lasciando la porta socchiusa (...).*

*Maddalena:* (...) Ah! Di nuovo in camera! (...) E te lo contempli...

*Amedeo (fuori scena):* Non ho potuto farne a meno...

*Maddalena:* Non cambierà, a guardarlo. Non vale la pena...

*Amedeo:* Mi era venuto un momento di speranza. Mi sono detto che... che forse era scomparso... (...) Ogni volta che lo guardo... sto così male!

*Maddalena (si avvicina ad Amedeo. Ogni volta che lascia il centralino si leva il cappello, e se lo rimette ogni volta che ci torna):* Sono i suoi occhi che fanno luce. Hai dimenticato di nuovo di chiudergli le palpebre.

*Amedeo:* Gli occhi non sono invecchiati. Sono ancora così belli. Grandi, verdi... Sembrano dei fari. Glieli vado a chiudere, sarà meglio.

*Maddalena:* E li trovi anche belli! Letteratura! Fai troppa letteratura, tu, nella vita. Divertente davvero, la sua bellezza!

*Amedeo:* Non ho detto che sia divertente.

*Maddalena:* Comunque è una bellezza ingombrante. *Dalla camera di sinistra*

*vengono dei leggeri scricchiolii. Senti?*

*Amedeo:* Cresce, è naturale. Ha una crisi di crescita.

*Maddalena:* Ma lo hai preso per un albero? E non fa complimenti, lui! Riempirà tutta la stanza, santo cielo, tutta la stanza! Dove lo metterò? Te ne importa assai, a te! Non devi fare le pulizie, tu!

*Amedeo:* Be', certo ci procura molti fastidi. Però, malgrado tutto mi affascina. Se penso che... Ah, avrebbe potuto essere tutto diverso...

Viene qui rivelato non tanto l'assurdo esistenziale puro e semplice, ma la tensione per *l'evento* che sarebbe potuto accadere o che è già accaduto, in seguito all'uccisione – possibile, non reale – da parte di Amedeo di un ospite che i coniugi Buccinioni avevano avuto quindici anni prima. Un ospite la cui identità è comunque ambigua, incerta, così come anche l'identità del suo assassino, che può e può non essere Amedeo. Il pseudo-intrigo, da giallo-parodia, cattura l'interesse del lettore attraverso ciò che Colin Duckworth definiva, a proposito di Ionesco, „fantasia inconsequente” e „parodia distruttiva”<sup>16</sup>.

Questa parodia mette in evidenza l'artificio della poetica ioneschiana, visibile a ogni passo, nell'arbitrarietà e nello svolgimento non-causale degli incidenti scenici, e affermato polemicamente attraverso la presenza di alcuni costrutti fittivi innaturali, svuotati dell'umanità, e tuttavia animati, come il Golem o Frankenstein, o ancora come i mostri di Urmuz, in parte uomini, in parte piante, animali o semplici meccanismi, come Ismail, Turnavitu, Algazy o Grummer. Il cadavere di *Amedeo o Come sbarazzarsene...* è un essere animato di questo genere, la cui crescita continua sarà eccessivamente e grottescamente interpretata dai coniugi Buccinioni quale perpetuo rimprovero al loro morto che sembra reclamare, vendicativo, i propri diritti:

*Improvvisamente dalla camera di sinistra si sente un colpo violento contro il muro. Amedeo che si stava sedendo si rialza, lo sguardo fisso a sinistra. Lo stesso fa Maddalena. (...) Muti dallo spavento, vedono due piedi enormi uscire lentamente dalla porta spalancata e avanzare d'una cinquantina di centimetri.*

*Maddalena:* Guarda!

*Questo naturalmente va detto con angoscia, ma con un certo distacco. Quel che accade deve sembrare spaventoso, certo, ma soprattutto seccante. È un fatto imbarazzante, ma non deve affatto sembrare fuori dall'ordinario, perciò la recitazione deve essere molto naturale. È una „grana” notevole, certo, ma nient'altro che una „grana”.*

*Maddalena:* Ma cosa combina! Cosa vuole!

*Amedeo:* Cresce sempre più in fretta!

*Maddalena:* Allora! Fa' qualcosa!

*Amedeo (desolato, disperato):* Non c'è niente da fare, niente da fare! Non c'è più niente da fare, ti dico! Gli è venuta la progressione geometrica!

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<sup>16</sup> Vedi Colin Duckworth, *Angels of Darkness. Dramatic Effect in Samuel Beckett with Special Reference to Eugene Ionesco*, New York, Barnes & Noble Books (a division of Harper & Row Publishers, Inc.), 1972, pp. 105-106.



Mostrandosi, con sorprendente naturalezza, informato sulle manifestazioni dei morti, sulle loro malattie, i loro capricci e le loro manie, Amedeo diagnostica che questi soffre della malattia incurabile della progressione geometrica; poiché la moltiplicazione in progressione geometrica, così come la proteicità e l'ubiquità erano caratteristiche di un „morto”, come Bobby Watson della *Cantatrice Calva*.

Il terrificante stato di „morto vivente” è, di conseguenza, nella drammaturgia ioneschiana, sovversiva rispetto allo stato puro e semplice di vivo (a sua volta, il falso stato di essere vivo appartiene al piccolo borghese eterno, personaggio ioneschiano, reificato), e la distruzione del vivo non è se non una sineddoche per sovvertire la realtà convenzionale, scaturita dal ricorso donchisciottesco alla poetica dell'illusione e dell'irrealtà teatrale. Ma la reificazione e la mortificazione dei personaggi ioneschiani sono, anch'esse, metafore della soggettività demiurgica di stampo romantico detronizzata, accompagnata tuttavia da ripetuti segni di una lacerante nostalgia per la regalità di un tempo di questa strabordante soggettività; una soggettività ipertrofica, „hugoliana”, che manovrava e dosava, a suo piacimento, attraverso la magia onirista della parola-immagine, l'illusione e, allo stesso tempo, la „realtà” finzionale.

### 3. L'evasione onirica e metafisica dell'Antimondo

La fondamentale propensione ioneschiana alla „realtà” dell'irrealtà è confermata sia dal canovaccio quasi-onirico (simile, per l'accento grottesco, a quello della prosa di Max Blecher o di Urmuz) di alcuni testi come *Le sedie*, *Assassino senza movente*, *Il nuovo inquilino*, *La fame e la sete*, *Amedeo o Come sbarazzarsene*, *Il pedone dell'aria*, *Che inenarrabile casino!*, *L'uomo con le valigie*, *Viaggio tra i morti*, così come per la scelta teoretica di Ionesco, più volte confessata, del sogno lucido (scelta caratteristica anche dell'onirismo programmatico della letteratura di Leonid Dimov e Dumitru Tsepeneag).

Un personaggio – alter ego dell'autore – dell'*Uomo con le valigie*, chiamato genericamente il Primo Uomo, afferma paradossalmente, e non meno apoditticamente: „Per essere lucido, si vede che bisogna passare tutta la vita in sogno”. Questo paradosso viene spesso teorizzato dallo stesso Ionesco: „Solo il sogno o l'incubo hanno il potere di tenervi svegli”<sup>17</sup>, dichiara sentenziosamente colui che si propone di realizzare, in *Briciole di diario*, una cronaca dei propri sogni, alcuni solo narrati, altri analizzati dal proprio psicanalista, e altri ancora analizzati dallo stesso Ionesco. I frammenti di sogni antologizzati evocano sia l'euforia – sensoriale e spirituale allo stesso tempo – della luce, sia immagini deplorable di case umide che sprofondano, di muri e monti (simboli thanatici, o di una censura trascendente) impossibili da scalare, o conflitti traumatizzanti fra la propria madre (nel ruolo di vittima innocente) e una figura paterna terrificante (Shäfer o Shaeffer). Tali

<sup>17</sup> E. Ionesco, *Briciole di diario*, in *Passato presente*, traduzione di Gian Renzo Morteo e J. Morteo, Milano, Rizzoli, 1970, p. 82; cf. *Journal en miettes*, Paris, Gallimard, 1973, p. 99.

sequenze prese in prestito dall'immaginario onirico ritornano nelle sue pièce, poiché il sogno è per Ionesco un modo di conoscere se stesso e allo stesso tempo un discorso paradigmatico per la creazione letteraria, con valore archetipico, rilevante quindi, come anche per Jung, a livello individuale solo nella misura in cui ha, in primo luogo, un significato universale.

Quando afferma che il sogno sarebbe volto per eccellenza a mantenere sveglio lo spirito, Ionesco non lo fa tanto per il desiderio orgoglioso-giovanile, specifico un tempo dell'autore di *No (Nu)*, di scioccare con paradossi gratuiti. Al contrario, egli esprime adesso con raccolta serietà un profondo credo, estetico e sovraestetico, tipico di una metafisica ioneschiana rigorosa e addirittura mistica del sogno. Benché il freudismo impregni in modo sostanziale le sue pagine dell'opera drammatica o della sua prosa (incluso i diari e le memorie), Ionesco vede il sogno non come una diserzione totale dai procedimenti del pensiero cosciente, ma come un tipo di percezione della realtà in un linguaggio differente da quello quotidiano, ma i cui simboli si concatenano, spesso armonicamente, con una coerenza logica (anche se non quella della logica cartesiana).

Respingendo a loro volta una letteratura del delirio a favore di una letteratura perfettamente razionale e lucida, gli oniristi degli anni '70 e, in special modo, i nostri teorici dell'onirismo estetico, Dumitru Tsepeneag e Leonid Dimov, vedono il sogno come un criterio, un termine limite di comparazione per la creazione di un mondo analogo al mondo reale<sup>18</sup>. Cosicché il gruppo degli oniristi romeni potrebbe comprendere anche Ionesco, che, nelle sue conversazioni con Claude Bonnefoy<sup>19</sup>, riconosce al sogno, oltre alle paradossali virtù di organizzazione fantasmatica lucida, rilevante esteticamente, anche quelle di un drammaticismo intrinseco. Esso sarebbe, nella definizione ioneschiana, un *evento essenzialmente drammatico*, cioè lo stesso dramma, dal momento in cui in sogno l'uomo è sempre *in situazione*, in primo piano. Teatralmente strutturale, l'universo onirico si fonderebbe su un pensiero addirittura più lucido di quello elaborato nello stato di coscienza, un pensiero superiore nell'ordine della plasticità visionaria, che viene concepita attraverso immagini.

In *Avvenimenti dell'irrealtà immediata*, Max Blecher, autore che Ionesco, nel suo periodo romeno della saggistica degli anni '30, elogia senza ritegno, difende quella stessa lucidità dell'esperienza onirica: „Mi dimeno adesso nella realtà, grido, imploro di essere svegliato, di essere svegliato in un'altra vita, nella mia vera vita. (...) Intorno a me la realtà esatta mi tira sempre più giù, tentando di farmi sprofondare. Chi mi sveglierà?”<sup>20</sup>. Il narratore blecheriano, collocato spesso in una zona ambigua, ipnagogica, che sogna la propria veglia come il proprio sogno, è, come l'io che racconta se stesso in *Briciole di diario* o in *Passato presente*, rappresentativo della

<sup>18</sup> Vedi Leonid Dimov, Dumitru Tsepeneag, *Momentul oniric*, antologia a cura di Corin Braga, Bucarest, Editura Cartea Românească, 1997.

<sup>19</sup> Vedi E. Ionesco, *Entre la vie et le rêve*, ed. cit., p. 12.

<sup>20</sup> Max Blecher, *Întâmplări în irealitatea imediată*, antologia e prefazione di Dinu Pillat, Bucarest, Editura Minerva, 1970, p. 120.

situazione meta- o sovra-onirica descritta da Jung. Se Freud parlava del sogno del sogno, Jung invece si riferisce al ruolo polivalente di colui che, sognando, è nel contempo attore, regista e persino spettatore del proprio sogno, detentore di una prospettiva del sogno inevitabilmente critica e decostruttiva.

Come l'autore della *Cantatrice calva* (pièce che André Breton apprezzava con entusiasmo in quanto realizzazione di ciò che i surrealisti avevano tentato di fare 20 anni prima), Blecher si ricollega alla poetica surrealista dell'allucinazione volontaria e della realtà irreale, della paranoia-critica (usando il ben noto termine di Dali), risentendo pienamente di ciò che Nicolae Balotă definiva, in relazione alla sua prosa, „la crisi del reale”, con il suo naturale corollario, „la crisi d'identità”<sup>21</sup>. Il carattere indistinto degli stati onirici e di quelli di veglia provocano nell'epidermide della realtà – ora così fragile, sotto la pressione dell'irrealtà – un abisso, una faglia, da cui nasce, come anche nella drammaturgia e nella prosa ioneschiana, *la stranezza* della normalità, mescolata impercettibilmente, mostruosamente, a elementi *feerici*. Bisogna notare – per quel che riguarda Blecher, Urmuz, Ionesco, Beckett o Pinter – il segno di una vocazione per il gotico, come mostrerò in seguito. Le seguenti parole del narratore che si confessa nella *Tana illuminata* (*Vizuină luminată*) potrebbero essere benissimo quelle di Ionesco nei diari, così come di alcuni eroi ioneschiani in maggioranza autobiografici, come Bérenger-il drammaturgo del *Pedone dell'aria*, il protagonista „senza qualità” di *Che inenarrabile casino!*, quello di *Alle navi* (*La vase*) o del romanzo *Il solitario*, ma anche Jean – sia quella della *Fame e la sete* sia quella di *Viaggio tra i morti* –, o „l'uomo con le valigie” dell'omonima pièce: „Credo che sia la stessa cosa vivere o sognare un fatto – afferma l'autore blecheriano –, e che la vita reale, quella di tutti i giorni sia ugualmente allucinante e strana come quella del sogno. Se volessi, per esempio, definire in modo esatto, in che mondo scrivo queste righe, ciò mi sarebbe impossibile”.

Rieditando il ruolo indeciso dell'io blecheriano, situato nell'interregno di un *no man's land*, alcune frasi finali di *Passato presente* possono fungere da testo allo specchio di quello appena citato:

Non so troppo bene se sogno o se ricordo, se ho vissuto la mia vita o se l'ho sognata. Il ricordo, come il sogno, mi fa sentire profondamente l'irrealtà, l'evanescenza del mondo, immagine fuggitiva nell'acqua mossa, fumo colorato. Come può disperdersi ciò che sta chiuso in contorni solidi? La realtà è infinitamente fragile, precaria, tutto ciò che ho vissuto aspramente diventa triste e dolce. Voglio trattenere tutto ciò che niente può trattenere. I fantasmi. Sono un fantoccio di neve che sta sciogliendosi. Scivolo, non posso trattenermi, mi separo da me stesso. Sono sempre piú lontano, un profilo e poi un puntino nero<sup>22</sup>.

<sup>21</sup> Vedi M. Blecher *și realitatea mediată a creației*, in N. Balotă, *Romanul românesc în secolul XX*, Bucarest, Editura Viitorul Românesc, pp. 119-127.

<sup>22</sup> E. Ionesco, *Passato presente*, ed. cit., p. 353; cf. *Présent passé, passé présent*, Paris, Mercure de France, 1968, pp. 272-273.

Carico di immagini tipicamente oniriche, che ricordano le visioni telescopiche dell'eroina di Lewis Carroll, Alice, il passaggio ioneschiano contiene in concomitanza, come in una densa professione di fede, la confessione del donchisciottismo programmatico dell'autore, della sua predilezione per l'evanescenza dei „fantasmi” del reale, per l'alienazione del proprio sé „sveglio”, quotidiano, fino all'apparizione e alla contemplazione a distanza del doppio, e, infine, la visione di una calma e apparente apocalisse universale, che non fa altro che confermare ancora una volta l'irrealtà di tutto ciò che sembra esistere.

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Blecher credeva nell'esistenza di un „deposito sconosciuto” della realtà, che nasconde tenebre e sorprese e governa con leggi occulte il mondo diurno, al di qua della sfera del sogno. Questa fede, condivisa, come dimostrerò di seguito, anche da Ionesco, può essere seguita all'indietro nel tempo, fino alla letteratura fantastico-onirica di Edgar Allan Poe e dei romantici tedeschi. Per Poe, esiste un nucleo ineffabile del tutto, che si manifesta spesso in modo terrificante, e può essere intuito solo grazie a un sogno quasi investigativo, programmato:

Coloro che sognano a occhi aperti avvertono molte cose che sfuggono a chi sogna soltanto di notte. Nelle loro grigie visioni essi afferrano squarci d'eternità, e svegliandosi vibrano intimamente allo scoprire di essere stati sul limitare del gran segreto<sup>23</sup>.

Ma il grande autore romantico a cui Ionesco si avvicina strutturalmente in maniera più pronunciata mi sembra sia E. T. A. Hoffmann, poiché per entrambi il sogno si dimostra non solo un mondo parallelo alla realtà, ma anche un *testo* dell'Altro, di un principio spirituale nascosto, del tutto straniero e innaturale, che interviene a volte inaspettatamente e – soprattutto – *parodicamente* in questa realtà, distruggendone le leggi e il senso e inoculandogliene altri, assurdi. Il solo „naturale” accettato nell'universo hoffmannesco, uno spesso gotico e artificiale con premeditazione, è quello dell'innaturale, del fantastico onirico, dell'orribile, del feerico o del burlesco. Il mago Abraham delle *Considerazioni filosofiche del gatto Murr* rimprovera a un certo punto il maestro di cappella Kreisler di non sapere dei miracoli e dell'artificio che si possono intuire al di là delle cosiddette leggi naturali<sup>24</sup>. Quello che in Hoffmann porta il nome di „anima del mondo”, „esistenza superiore” o „principio spirituale a noi straniero” si tradurrebbe in Ionesco nella visione dell'Antimondo, che Bérenger ha nel *Pedone dell'aria*. Il tanto misterioso principio spirituale hoffmannesco così come l'Antimondo ioneschiano popolato da

<sup>23</sup> E. A. Poe, *Eleonora*, in *The Complete Stories*, with an Introduction by John Seelye, London, David Cambell Publishers Ltd., Everyman's Library, 1992, p. 530.

<sup>24</sup> Vedi E. T. A. Hoffmann, *Considerazioni filosofiche del gatto Murr*, traduzione di F. Frei, Milano, Felinamente & C, Publighold, 1991.

passanti-vampiri („vampiranti”) diventa percettibile nell’aldilà solo attraverso il sogno; un sogno privilegiato, visionario, simile all’allucinazione lucida, volontaria, promossa dai surrealisti. E questi universi onirico-sovversivi sono in entrambi gli scrittori previsti con intenzioni parodiche all’indirizzo del mondo convenzionale indicato quale reale. Lo spirito dell’aldilà si prende gioco in sogno della nostra normalità meschina, o, usando le parole dell’autore del *Vaso d’oro*, l’esistenza superiore si mostra cinica con il nostro mondo „cattivo”, o quantomeno „ironizza con amarezza su questa vita”<sup>25</sup>.

In Ionesco, questa fondamentale *manca*za di serietà nel rapporto con l’Antimondo viene, comunque, intuita da Joséphine nel *Pedone dell’aria*. Sul Signore dell’Antimondo, che sembra avere per quelli di *qua* un’esistenza intermittente, mostrandosi di tanto in tanto alla famiglia Bérenger e agli inglesi a passeggio e lasciando l’impressione di giocar loro una farsa, Joséphine afferma:

In ogni caso, non possiamo prendere in considerazione la sua esistenza. Anche se si trattasse di un essere reale. Non può essere una relazione seria.

Fra i passanti di questo mondo e quelli dell’aldilà esiste un contrattimo affettivo, morale, assiologico e, alla fin fine, esistenziale, o un’essenziale incongruenza, un situarsi a un livello ontologico differente, poiché il nostro rapporto con l’Antimondo assomiglia, in questo caso, al rapporto fra l’esistenza diurna della coscienza e quella onirica, con le sue leggi piuttosto incoscienti e alogiche.

Allo stesso tempo, questo mondo strutturato sembrerebbe in modo onirico e governato da leggi quasi-occulte è un universo speculare. Così, sempre nel *Pedone dell’aria*, un personaggio definito, impersonalmente, Prima inglese parla di alcuni paesaggi che ha visto allo specchio „in Irlanda, in Scozia”. Paesaggi che, poiché indescrivibili, non appartengono al „nostro” mondo. Una simile specularità dell’Antimondo potrebbe provenire dalla disposizione creatrice manierista di un demiurgo nascosto, che si manifesta spesso arbitrariamente alle sue creature, o parodicamente, o, quantomeno, con cinica indifferenza. I paesaggi intravisti allo specchio dalla Prima inglese non sarebbero altro se non immagini mentali prodotte da questa forza o energia parodica, di provenienza occulta, che crea decostruendo l’universo degli uomini comuni, crea, cioè, in negativo, o in altre parole, *anticreando*. Tentando di elaborare, pedagogicamente, per gli altri, una teoria dell’Antimondo, Bérenger sostiene che „noi fatalmente vediamo la sua immagine [di quello dell’aldilà] al negativo”.

Il tono di Bérenger è non a caso didattico, con prestantza apodittica, poiché l’Antimondo e i suoi abitanti possono essere interpretati come segni di un *aldilà* del testo, rilevanti, in altre parole, sul piano di un metatesto secondario, teorico, della pièce. Su un primo piano, dell’universo finzionale „inglese” che viene istituito

<sup>25</sup> Vedi, a tal proposito, Albert Béguin, *L’âme romantique et le rêve. Essai sur le romantisme allemand et la poésie française*, Paris, José Corti, 1991, p. 412.

inizialmente dalla pièce, l'Antimondo è, probabilmente, un territorio dello speculare onirico. Mentre nel gioco scenico secondario, riflesso, di un teatro che si specchia e si teorizza da sé, esso assume il senso di spazio metaforico, dovuto a un certo paradigma letterario: quello del *fantastico*, ibridato adesso con il gotico, con il miracoloso surrealista, con il tragicomico parodico e con il melodrammatico. Facendo sentita la propria presenza grazie ai fenomeni inspiegabili accaduti nell'Antimondo, la categoria del fantastico provoca a Joséphine, a Martha, e agli inglesi andati a passeggio – ma in misura minore al consapevole Bérenger, dotato di acuta coscienza metatestuale e teoretica –, un „disorientamento intellettuale di fronte all'impossibilità di chiarire”<sup>26</sup>.

Riprendendo l'opinione di Roger Caillois, secondo cui il fantastico implica la presenza dell'elemento sovrannaturale, come la „rottura” nella coerenza universale, Matei Călinescu precisa che questa rottura non si produce esclusivamente nel sentimento della realtà, ma piuttosto „nell'ordine del significato”. Nel caso del fantastico si scontrano, quindi, due o più sistemi di significati, uno facilmente decifrabile, l'altro o gli altri – oscuri. „Non si tratterà quindi – aggiunge il critico –, nel fantastico, di un'inserzione (immotivata, allarmante, brutale) dell'irreale nel reale, ma di un cortocircuito fra intellegibile e inintellegibile (entrambi ugualmente reali)”<sup>27</sup>. Giocando ironicamente – con lo spirito dell'ironia romantica trascendentale, specifica della letteratura fantastica di Hoffmann, Poe e Adalbert von Chamisso – con i limiti troppo umani della capacità di comprensione di alcuni fenomeni inusuali, *Il pedone dell'aria* può essere considerata una pièce allo stesso tempo fantastica e apparentemente „positivista”, pseudoscientifica. In essa coesistono, *impermeabili* una rispetto all'altra, quelle due „realtà, quella del *miracoloso* occulto e quella della *meraviglia meccanica*, „scientifica”, di cui parlava il giovane Ionescu nel suo articolo del 1931, dedicato al melodramma.

È stato sottolineato che è possibile che Ionesco abbia fatto riferimento in questa pièce alla teoria dell'antimateria del fisico Heisenberg, come anche della pseudoscienza della patafisica di Jarry. D'altronde, insieme a Jacques Prévert, Raymond Queneau e Boris Vian, l'autore del *Rinoceronte* ha fatto parte dell'Istituto dei Patafisici, fondato dopo l'ultima guerra mondiale da un gruppo di ammiratori di Jarry. Il creatore di *Ubu* definiva la patafisica la scienza che oltrepassa la metafisica nella stessa misura in cui quest'ultima si estende oltre la fisica. Inoltre, la patafisica esaminerebbe le leggi che governano le eccezioni, e spiegherebbero un universo al di là di questo, comune, visibile. Nella sua monografia dedicata alle personalità ioneschiane, il critico britannico Ronald Hayman<sup>28</sup> sostiene la parentela fra il Signore dell'Antimondo, lo strano personaggio, a volte invisibile, del *Pedone dell'aria*, e il

<sup>26</sup> Matei Călinescu, *Despre conceptul de fantastic*, prefazione in *Antologia nuvelei fantastice*, Bucarest, Editura Univers, 1970, p. 7; vedi anche idem, *Conceptul de fantastic*, in *Eseuri despre literatura modernă*, Bucarest, Editura Eminescu, 1970, p. 168.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>28</sup> Ronald Hayman, *Eugène Ionesco*, London, Heinemann, 1972, pp. 150-160.

„patafisico” Dr. Faustroll del romanzo „neoscientifico” di Jarry. L’Ottavo libro del romanzo *Gestes et opinions du docteur Faustroll pataphysicien* inizia con una lettera telepatica a Lord Kelvin, da cui veniamo a sapere che il Dr. Faustroll non è morto, ma si trova in un altro luogo che non è sulla Terra.

Se in una pièce come *Che inenarrabile casino!* Il protagonista accede a genuini stati metafisici, nel *Pedone dell’aria*, invece, la possibile tensione metafisica del volo di Bérenger si diluisce in una visione „scientifica” parodica, l’accento parodico venendo dato dalla doppia prospettiva patafisica e fantastico-onirica del testo. Ugualmente, concetti di un sostanziale carico metafisico – vuoto, morte, vita – sono adesso sgravati dal loro grave senso e diventano nozioni vuote, fantocci verbali, la cui invocazione nel testo ioneschiano, se non è totalmente gratuita, non ha piú però un intento ludico. Cosí come, per esempio, nell’universo di Faustroll l’eternità era concepita come un etere immobile e Dio veniva inteso come punto tangenziale fra zero e infinito, nel *Pedone dell’aria* il vuoto sarà, per Bérenger, niente piú che „un’ipotesi cosmica di lavoro”. Questo tipo di vuoto svuotato da ogni connotazione metafisica „non è né bianco, né nero. Esso non esiste. È dappertutto”. La pseudoscienza ludica del patafisico Bérenger è, come la definisce la figlia di Marthe, una „contabilità pluri-universale”, conformemente alla quale bisogna mantenere permanentemente gli equilibri mondani e oltremondani, tenendo conto che esistono „piú infiniti, tuttavia dentro ogni infinità esistono finiti”. Poiché tutti gli oggetti sono oggetti numerati del cosmo, per Bérenger non c’è da meravigliarsi se, quando appaiono, per esempio, la pipa e il piede del passante dell’Antimondo, scompaiano in concomitanza, come aspirati dalla pompa del vuoto, sia la colonna mirifica, fiorita, sia l’albero e il cespuglio scaturiti poco prima, miracolosamente, nel mondo visibile.

Il fantastico è identificabile qui in ciò che Tzvetan Todorov definiva „l’esitazione del lettore”, che deve capire ciò che accade di negativo, ma né allegoricamente, né poeticamente. Parafrasando il poeta e saggista bulgaro, si potrebbe affermare che, allorquando l’intrusione dell’elemento soprannaturale viene alla fine spiegata, come nel caso del teorico dell’Antimondo, Bérenger, il fantastico si converte in *strano*, mentre se la manifestazione soprannaturale viene accettata come una convenzione, prima della sua interpretazione, come nel caso degli inglesi e della moglie e della figlia di Bérenger, la categoria del fantastico si sovrappone a quella del *miracoloso*. I numerosi „piccoli esseri” dell’universo ioneschiano, per esempio, sono personificazioni fantasmatiche di questo miracoloso (come nelle due *Elegie per piccoli esseri*, intitolate *Animismo*), di cui è rappresentativa la deliziosa Josette dei *Quattro racconti per bambini piú piccoli di tre anni* (fra cui, nel primo, la serva Jaqueline ha la stessa illusoria ubiquità di Bobby Watson, l’uomo e la donna, il giovane e il vecchio, il morto e il vivo...). „Quindi, il fantastico – conclude Todorov – porta una vita piena di pericoli e può sparire in ogni istante”<sup>29</sup>, poiché i suoi labili „confini” estetici sono assediati dalle categorie che si trovano nella sua prossimità

<sup>29</sup> Tzvetan Todorov, *Introduction à la littérature fantastique*, Paris, Seuil, 1970, p. 46.

semantica, *lo strano* e *il miracoloso*. La sentenza di Todorov è sempre piú verificabile in farse o in fiabe oniriche come *Amedeo o Come sbarazzarsene* e *Il pedone dell'aria*, dove il motivo dell'invasione del soprannaturale, segnalata da fenomeni di imponderabilità e invisibilità, viene elaborato non solo nella griglia del fantastico postromantico, ma anche in quella del miracoloso con accenti surrealistici, del gotico e del melodrammatico. È rilevante in questo caso la metamorfosi stavolta kafkiana, feerica quindi, vissuta da Bérenger.

Liberata, come attraverso un miracolo di origine occulta, dal peso di alcuni costrutti culturali dicotomici come vita / morte, esistenza / vuoto, qui / là, piú / meno, finito / infinito, l'essere di Bérenger arriverà a essere dotato, come un tempo Amedeo, di ciò che Serpentina, la figlia della salamandra della novella hoffmannesca *Il vaso d'oro* aveva scoperto nel suo amante, lo studente Anselmo: un „animo infantile e poetico”. Grazie a quest'animo privilegiato di cui è dotato, ed essendo entusiasta della visione fantastico-onirica di un luminoso ponte d'argento apparso inaspettatamente sull'abisso, Bérenger si sente all'improvviso incredibilmente leggero, inizia a saltellare, comicamente e allo stesso tempo emozionata, eccitata da una gioia oltre natura, e alla fine spicca il volo, con l'accondiscendente o ammirativa meraviglia degli altri. Fino al momento in cui ha la rivelazione che il volo è uno stato naturale dell'uomo, che questi ha da lungi dimenticato, come ha dimenticato la sua vocazione per il „bambineggiare” – per ricorrere a un termine arghezziano –, Bérenger si trova sotto una maledizione simile a quella che si abbatte sullo studente Anselmo, il protagonista hoffmannesco. Quest'ultimo, colpevole di infedeltà nei confronti della serpe verde Serpentina, in altre parole della sua temporanea incredulità nel mondo archetipico del sogno, si vede condannato per il suo filisteismo a vivere chiuso in una bottiglia.

E chiusi sotto una campana di cristallo vivono anche gli abitanti dell'universo eugenioneschiano. Sono emblematici, per esempio, „gli inglesi” del *Pedone dell'aria*, la cui automatica passeggiata, meccanica, marionettizzata, come da cadaveri ambulanti o di bambole a cui è stata data la corda, si potrebbe trasformare facilmente in un „giuoco dell'epidemia”, come accade nella pièce omonima.

#### 4. La luce – féerie o apoteosi negativa

Gli elementi fantastici che tessono i testi drammatici ioneschiani, ibridati con il grottesco parodico, con il gotico e con il melodrammatico, lasciano spazio, nelle pagine memorialistiche, a quelli feerici, miracolosi. La disposizione affettiva dell'io che si confessa, un personaggio-narratore di tipo autobiografico, è per lo piú, se non oscuro-scettico, da sogno quasi-mistico. Essa provoca visioni luminose, feeriche, in cui il passato ritrovato attraverso l'evocazione diventa un tempo secondario, inevitabilmente finzionalizzato. Ma questa finzionalizzazione degli avvenimenti passati, che acquistano dimensioni miracolose, in quanto rivelatori di fantasmi con valori archetipici, viene fatta sul modello della fiaba, attualizzata quasi involontariamente, tirata fuori con naturalezza da ciò che potrebbe definirsi l'incoscienza testualizzata dell'autore. *Passato presente* può essere letto come un diario romanzesco in cui, come suggerisce



la parafrasi proustiana del titolo, Ionesco tenta di fare una sorta di archeologia psichica, anamnestic, allo scopo di „dissotterrare” la luce originaria:

In quali profondità cercare questa luce sepolta? Molti cicli di vita sono trascorsi da allora. Secoli e secoli. E secoli mi separano da me stesso. Qua e là, un relitto che marcisce e si decompone. Ricordare, cercare nel caos. Scavo in una terra dura per trovarvi i relitti della mia preistoria. (...) Una catena di montagne mi separa da me stesso<sup>30</sup>.

La vita passata che il narratore desidera recuperare come presente, per crearsi una sorta di illusione e persino il miracolo temporale della gioventù come antidoto alla decrepitezza e alla morte imminente, diventa *presente* tuttavia solo in quanto riflesso retrospettivo, come rappresentazione secondaria, al quadrato, in primo luogo tramite il ricordo, poi attraverso la scrittura – attraverso il ricordo trascritto, passato cioè attraverso il filtro della finzionalizzazione, anche involontaria –, i ricordi scritti un tempo vengono adesso riletti e in tal modo rivissuti, in maniera iniziatica, attraverso il ri-ricordare:

Rileggo le pagine che ho scritto su lontani ricordi. Già a quel tempo non mi restava più molto del mondo dell’infanzia, briciole di mondo, frammenti. Qualche pezzo di uno specchio annerito. Vi potevo ancora scorgere il mio viso. Non mi resta ormai che il ricordo dei ricordi, il ricordo di qualche ricordo. Cerco di ricostruire i ricordi<sup>31</sup>.

Il sintagma „ricordo dei ricordi” accentua l’allontanamento irrimediabile, attraverso il doppio filtro del ricordo e della trascrizione, del „reale” vissuto un tempo, adesso sepolto nel profondo insondabile dell’essere e appena intravisto come attraverso un specchio offuscato. La riflessione mistica e, quindi, il passato dell’esperienza arrivano persino a sostituire l’*assenza* del reale. Il solo reale rimane alla fin fine proprio il paravento speculare del ricordo trascritto, cioè *lo specchio* che capta – ed è visibile qui l’equazione plotiniana del pensiero ioneschiano – l’*Idea* persistente, la *forma interna* del reale, o, usando l’espressione metaforica di *Passato presente*, „la luce sepolta” in profondità.

Le visioni luminose, invocate molto spesso, di comunione estatica, quasi-mistica fra uomo e universo, provocano a Ionesco il privilegiato stato di *meraviglia* di fronte l’esistenza. Poiché esse sono le sole che contano – visto che possono allontanare temporaneamente lo spettro della morte –, le sole *reali*, poiché essenziali. Allo stesso tempo tuttavia, per la loro perfezione inumana, la cui contemplazione induce nell’uomo il sentimento della bramata eternità, le apparizioni luminose sembrano non meno irreali, come fantasmi donchisciotteschi, o reali solo nell’ordine archetipico, come Idee platoniche. „Avversario dell’esistenzialismo, Ionesco sa – afferma l’esegeta Nicolae Balotă – che l’essenza precede l’esistenza. Un gatto (a

<sup>30</sup> E. Ionesco, *Passato presente*, ed. cit., p. 193; cf. *Présent passé, passé présent*, ed. cit., p. 36.

<sup>31</sup> Ivi, p. 194.

questo emulo del Filosofo piacciono gli esempi con i gatti) non *diventa* gatto, ma è sin dall'inizio, dalla nascita, gatto, e nulla può alterare la sua natura di gatto. Ionesco crede nel gatto «aprioristico». Per questo motivo – logicamente – non pensava che saremmo potuti essere staccati del tutto dalla possibilità dell'«immortalità»<sup>32</sup>.

Al di là dell'idealismo neoplatonico che prende il posto dello scetticismo di un tempo, ma anche al di là del donchisciottismo del gioco fra reale e irreale finzionale, dell'ambiguità fra stati di ispirazione libresca e stati realmente vissuti, simili momenti luminosi possono essere letti come rivelazioni epifaniche, o solo come sogni archetipici. Essi rendono evidente la presenza di una categoria estetica sensibilmente diversa dal fantastico: quella del *feerico* che, a differenza della violenza con cui il fantastico irrompe nel quotidiano, non provoca alcuno „scandalo” ontologico o alcuna rottura significativa nel mondo reale, ma istituisce pacificamente *la meraviglia* come legge. Il feerico caratterizza quindi un „universo miracoloso” – come in *Amedeo...*, *Il pedone dell'aria*, *La fame e la sete*, *Che inenarrabile casino!* –, che, nell'opinione di Roger Caillois, „si sovrappone al mondo reale, senza provocare alcun danno o distruggerne la coerenza”<sup>33</sup>. Le esperienze della luce sono, così, in Ionesco rappresentazioni *eidetiche* di un mondo degli archetipi eterni a cui rivendichiamo, logicamente e anche misticamente, come nel tema ontologico di Sant'Anselmo, questa possibilità della vita eterna.

*Briciole di diario* contiene la sequenza di riferimento in cui Ionesco evoca un momento della sua adolescenza trascorsa in Romania, quando ebbe, euforicamente, la „rivelazione dell'essenziale” grazie alla visione del mondo scaldato dalla luce, e divenuto così reale e irreale – un mondo in cui, proprio come nelle fiabe con mirabolanti fate e draghi, la distinzione reale-irreale non ha più alcun senso:

Tento ancora una volta, di descrivere questo stato d'animo, quest'evento. Mi trovavo in una cittadina di provincia, dovevo avere circa diciott'anni. Era una giornata luminosa, un po' prima di mezzogiorno. Una giornata di giugno, al principio di giugno. Passeggiavo davanti alle case basse e tutte bianche della cittadina. Quel che accade fu del tutto inatteso. Una trasformazione subitanea della città. Tutto divenne nello stesso tempo profondamente reale e profondamente irreale. Era proprio così: l'irrealtà mescolata alla realtà, entrambe si intrecciavano strettamente, indissolubilmente. Le case erano diventate ancora più bianche, immacolate. Qualcosa di completamente nuovo nella luce, di virginale nella luce, un mondo sconosciuto che mi pareva di conoscere da sempre. Un mondo che la luce dissolveva e ricostituiva. Una gioia straripante sgorgava dal mio intimo, anch'essa calda e luminosa, una presenza assoluta, una presenza; mi sono detto che tutto ciò era la „verità”, senza sapere come definire quella verità. (...) È quel che si dice un **sartori**, un'illuminazione<sup>34</sup>.

<sup>32</sup> N. Balotă, *Literatura absurdului*, II<sup>o</sup> edizione, Bucarest, Editura Teora, 2000, p. 348.

<sup>33</sup> Roger Caillois, *De la féerie à la science-fiction*, préface à *l'Anthologie du fantastique*, tome I, Paris, Gallimard, 1966, p. 8.

<sup>34</sup> E. Ionesco, *Briciole di diario*, in *Passato presente*, ed. cit., pp. 80-81; cf. *Journal en miettes*, ed. cit., pp. 97-98.

Le esperienze della luce, vissute euforicamente dal futuro drammaturgo nell'infanzia e nell'adolescenza, così come vengono rievocate anche nelle pagine del diario *Printemps 1939. Les Débris du souvenir*, hanno determinato il prematuro interesse di Ionesco, alla ricerca del sacro, per gli scritti mistici. Riferendosi alla „nostalgia del paradiso” in Ionesco, Mircea Eliade mostrava che l'avversione di questi per il cartesianismo e per le regole della logica classica ha rafforzato il peso che le influenze mistiche del buddismo, del neoplatonismo e dello gnosticismo hanno avuto su di lui<sup>35</sup>. In virtù di alcuni stati privilegiati di beatitudine luminosa, lo stesso Ionesco confessa le proprie affinità con autori francesi, come Valéry Larbaud, Charles du Bos, Flaubert o Alain Fournier, che hanno in comune, secondo lui, „un style de lumière”: „Chez tous, j'ai retrouvé cette présence de la lumière”<sup>36</sup>.

La luce è quindi per Ionesco più di una semplice metafora, un tratto stilistico o una nota di accuratezza formale. Essa diviene, nel „romanzo” della memorialistica e nei saggi ioneschiani e, in seguito, nelle pièce come *Il pedone dell'aria* e *La fame e la sete*, un radicale tematico che può segnalare la presenza ineffabile del *soprannaturale*, sia esso di natura divina, sia appartenente al numinoso occulto. L'irreale soprannaturale entra, come nell'universo fiabesco della fiaba, nell'ordine del naturale. In altre parole, „una volta accettate le qualità insolite di questa soprannatura, tutto rimane particolarmente stabile e omogeneo”<sup>37</sup>. Solo che, per il maturo Ionesco, la presenza della luce non mantiene se non apparentemente qualcosa dell'aura miracolosa e addirittura mistica che questo fenomeno spirituale aveva per il bambino e adolescente Ionescu. L'universo luminoso invocato dallo scrittore nelle sue pagine di drammaturgia o di prosa (incluso quella diaristica) non è più il frutto di autentiche visioni ed esperienze mistiche, ma un costrutto artificiale, come il quartiere luminoso di *Assassino senza movente*. La luce eccessiva diventa sospettosa nell'ordine morale, a cui si legano spesso pulsioni impure, sovversive, thanatiche persino. Nelle pagine finali di *Passato presente*, per esempio, Ionesco evoca l'immagine di un'improbabile chiarezza e purezza, di un mondo appena nato, i cui attributi principali sono la trasparenza, la „grazia lieve”, la fragilità. Una frase sembra tuttavia volta a rompere, a scombussoolare l'irreale perfezione di questo mondo originario in cui tutto era „solo luce e acqua”.

<sup>35</sup> Vedi Mircea Eliade, *Eugène Ionesco and La Nostalgie du Paradis*, in *The Two Faces of Ionesco*, by R. C. Lamont and M. J. Friedman, New York, The Whitston Publishing Company Troy, 1978.

<sup>36</sup> E. Ionesco, *Entre la vie et le rêve*, ed. cit., p. 30.

<sup>37</sup> Roger Caillois, *op. cit.*, pp. 8-9. Commentando e differenziando le distinzioni concettuali di Caillois, che svelano la dicotomia fiabesco (miracoloso) – fantastico, Matei Călinescu precisa, riferendosi alla magia della fiaba e del racconto, che „l'inaspettato e l'aspettato, anche quando si producono, hanno il carattere di una conferma”. Nel fantastico, da un lato, „l'inaspettato si sposta dalla dimensione narrativa a quella significativa” (vedi *Despre conceptul de fantastic*, in *op. cit.*, pp. 10-11). Nelle pièce ioneschiane che ho analizzato in questo articolo – *Amedeo...*, *Il pedone dell'aria*, *L'uomo con le valigie* –, coesistono sia il fantastico, sia il fiabesco o il miracoloso, e l'„inaspettato”, gli elementi-sorpresa sono rintracciabili sia a livello superficiale, come effetto immediato, come nell'estetica del gotico postmoderno, sia a livello profondo del significato, o più esattamente dell'intelleggibilità, della capacità o dell'incapacità del lettore di creare il significato.

Nell'equilibrio dello stato dell'increato si insinua un'inquietudine, poiché il calmo universale apparente non è altro che l'attesa di qualcosa che non può essere se non opposta alla trasparenza e alla purezza dell'inizio:

L'universo diventa completamente trasparente, come il velo di una sposa. L'aria si muove come onde leggere. Forse l'avvenimento accadrà. Il solo avvenimento per cui il mondo sia stato creato<sup>38</sup>.

E anche se, in questo caso, l'*evento* potrebbe consistere nella possibile esplosione in una luce più grande („...gli sguardi sono fissi all'orizzonte, per sorprendere il momento in cui la luce si fonderà in una luce più grande”), la visione apparentemente feerica ha un colorito catastrofico, apocalittico. L'ossessione per un'apoteosi negativa, anche se luminosa, risale, in Ionesco, al periodo romeno. In un testo del 1938, l'autore di *No* si soffermava sintomaticamente sul tema della catastrofe lenta, una quasi impercettibile, insinuata nel banale quotidiano, ma non così terrificante:

Il mondo si è spezzato in due: un giorno fa, un'ora fa, un attimo fa, in questo momento, il territorio della vita è andato lontano. Siamo sul territorio della morte, della catastrofe, della fine apocalittica, Il territorio della vita è così lontano (si è allontanato in un attimo), che non lo vediamo più, ce ne ricordiamo appena. Viviamo tuttavia anche adesso come allora. Ci organizziamo, sotto il sole, per la morte come ti organizzi per la vita, per una partita di piacere.

(...) A volte, quando cammino per strada, mi ricordo che il mondo non è così come lo vedo, come lo odorò, come lo sento. Un suono interno di campana, e tutto sembra disfarsi in onde, in ondeggiamenti. Un'immaterialità vibrazione! Nel caos, sprofondo in un mare<sup>39</sup>.

Questa profezia apocalittica paradossale, grottescamente feerica, per cui l'universo si fonde in pura trasparenza e immaterialità, riappare anche in *Passato presente*:

Il mondo gelerà. Un'insensibilità polare ha cominciato a stendersi sopra di noi. E poi ci sarà un gran sole che farà sciogliere i blocchi di ghiaccio, e poi ci sarà un vapore, e anche la bruma si dissiperà nella luce azzurra. Non resterà più alcuna traccia<sup>40</sup>.

La contemplazione di un universo dell'insicurezza ontologica, che nasconde in esso il morbo dell'autodistruzione, provoca in Ionesco, come egli stesso confessa in *Note e contronote*, uno stato di meraviglia rivelatrice, meraviglia la cui

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<sup>38</sup> Eugène Ionesco, *Passato presente*, ed. cit., p. 351; cf. *Présent passé, passé présent*, ed. cit., p. 269.

<sup>39</sup> Idem, *Război cu toată lumea. Publicistică românească*, vol. I. Edizione a cura di Mariana Vartic e Aurel Sasu, Bucarest, Editura Humanitas, 1992, p. 109.

<sup>40</sup> Idem, *Passato presente*, ed. cit., p. 353; cf. *Présent passé, passé présent*, ed. cit., p. 273.

natura è tuttavia ambivalente – al contempo euforica e angosciante<sup>41</sup>. Ed è proprio lo stato paradossale vissuto da Bérenger nella città luminosa che cela il crimine, emblema utopico dell'alterità interiore del drammaturgo. Le visioni euforiche del giubilo nella luce originaria, feerica, da un lato, e quelle angoscienti della catastrofe imminente e dell'impercettibile passaggio nel territorio della morte universale, dall'altro, vengono messe in opposizione in maniera ostentatamente schematica, manicheista. E l'associazione contrastante del bello all'orribile e al grottesco e la loro relazione agonale, reciprocamente esclusiva, ha nell'autore di *Amedeo* un accento patetico a parte.

Questo patetismo del paradossale rapporto dualistico con il mondo, strutturalmente romantico, ritorna più volte nelle sue pièce, e non meno nelle pagine di diario, segnalandone in maniera dimostrativa, quasi polemica, la presenza di un essenziale nucleo generativo del proprio immaginario, e accentuando i riflessi metafisici che questo immaginario spesso riceve. È questo un possibile nucleo generativo di stampo gotico o, piuttosto, „neogotico”. *Il mito personale* del drammaturgo, parlando in termini di psicocritica, sembra essere la molto invocata luce, con il suo duplice significato, demiurgico ed escatologico, ma anche con il suo duplice riverbero affettivo, di tranquillità e terrore. Lo stato paradossale di piacere-nonpiacere provocato dalla contemplazione della luce ricorda la rottura o l'incongruenza affettiva inerente alla catarsi, ma anche alla categoria transestetica del *sublime*.

L'immaginario del romanzo gotico di un tempo non era, d'altronde, meno estraneo al processo affettivo e allo stato metafisico presupposti dal sublime. Anche le pièce ioneschiane non sono prive, del soprannaturale di stampo gotico di una continua minaccia, che induce il *sublime*, inteso come perdita di sé e caduta nell'impersonale e nell'oggettività della soggettività un tempo demiurgica di tipo romantico; un sublime postmoderno, che si sovrappone alla categoria del *mostruoso*, specifica, nell'opinione di un filosofo scettico contemporaneo, Stanley Cavell, dell'era „postsoggettivista”, „postromantica”. O un *mostruoso* che segnala di fatti, anche nelle farse tragiche ioneschiane, la sparizione progressiva della tradizionale ontologia dell'umano („the vanishing of the human”, come direbbe Cavell), denunciata non solo parodicamente, ma anche trasfigurata, attraverso l'epifania del sublime numinoso<sup>42</sup>.

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<sup>41</sup> Nicolae Balotă evidenziava „l'opposizione, il conflitto fra forze contrarie” che sta all'origine della farsa tragica ioneschiana: „Le coppie antitetiche, appetenze simultanee divergenti turbano l'economia del suo spirito. (...) Il faretto dei colori, lo spegnimento graduale delle luci quale esperienza tipica della maturità che si proietta su di sé all'indietro, verso un passato che si illumina man mano che il presente si oscura, è abbastanza comune. La sua eccezionale acutezza, il carattere ossessivo e evidente, la sua trasposizione su altri piani che non quelli dell'esistenza immediata fanno di essa – nel caso di Eugène Ionesco – un'esperienza privilegiata, la memoria e l'immaginazione del drammaturgo funzionano sotto l'impero di una bipolarità buio-luce” (vedi *op. cit.*, p. 339). Aggiungerei che, al di là del carattere *privilegiato* delle visioni dualistiche, luminose-oscurate, Ionesco evoca queste metafore ossessionanti anche a causa della loro natura „abbastanza comune”. In parte, poiché è tentato a mitizzare e a demitizzare, in modo concomitante, la banalità, i truisimi sentimentali e comportamentali, „l'intero patetico” della vita comune, ma anche grazie al melodrammaticismo strutturale, così come al suo immaginario gotico, strutturato manicheisticamente.

<sup>42</sup> Traduzione dal romeno in italiano di Maria Luisa Lombardo.

**WORKSHOP**

**PARADIGMS OF THE “SPIRITUAL MASTER” IN THE  
ROMANIAN MODERN LITERATURE  
(THE SCHOOL OF TÂRGOVIȘTE, THE SCHOOL OF PĂLTINIȘ)**

**LAURA ROȘCA**

**ABSTRACT.** The purpose of this article is to circumscribe the theme of the master-disciple relationship during the 20<sup>th</sup> century as configured by the Romanian cultural background, as one of the processes of preserving and transmitting its “spiritual and material specificity” from one generation to the other – the education or the formation as *paideia*, being the very principle of every human society, according to Werner Jaeger. The case-studies we will consider are *The School of Târgoviște* and *The School of Păltiniș*, and our approach will partly focus on three major works concerned with the problem of *paideia*: *Maeștri și discipoli* by George Steiner, Michel Foucault’s *Hermeneutica subiectului* and Joachim Wach’s “*Master and Disciple, Two Religio-Sociological Studies*”, the latter being a well-known historian of religions whose essay proves to be an advantageous source even for other cultural contexts such as philosophy or literature. (However, it is possible to ask if these authors are essential to a mainly literary investigation. An argument to sustain our frequent reference to their works would be the interdisciplinary quality of the theme of “discipleship”, manifesting an almost ubiquitous character). Thus, our object is to observe these modern *paideic* experiences by starting with a general view on the master-disciple relationship as a recurrent pattern. We believe that the comparison between two phenomena belonging to different categories such as *The School of Păltiniș*, where the problem of education has been explicitly posed, and *The School of Târgoviște*, where the problem of formation is not necessarily more diffuse but present in a rather atypical formulation, might bring new analytical dimensions.

**Keywords:** School of Păltiniș, School of Târgoviște, the master-disciple relationship

**The master-disciple relationship – a general outline**

We shall refer to the way in which the master-disciple relationship in configured by means of placing it against yet another form of educational relationship as is the pedagogue-student relationship. The School, the group, the cenacle exist in a relation which promotes distinct personalities, and have an ideology in accordance to which the elites of the world are formed. Besides the sociological connotations and significance, the literary cenacle may be defined as the periodic gatherings among writers, bound to one another by the collaboration to

the same literary magazine. The Literary School is a more complex phenomenon, comparable – in so far as its value is concerned – with the literary movement. It has a certain amplitude and duration, and it represents the angle of incidence for the principles of artistic, ideological or philosophical nature, specific for a group of writers who have a common vision and belong to the same historic moment. At the same time, the school represents a general tendency of an epoch, and is specific to certain literary traditions, differing from one nation to another, which does not establish the identity of different literatures but instead, reveals their comparable essence<sup>1</sup>. The School of Târgoviște, as an exemplification for the signification of what has been called literary school, does not conform to a common program, and does not have *cenacle*-like meetings. Mircea Horia Simionescu – one of its members, along with Radu Petrescu, Petru Creția, Tudor Țopa, Costache Olăreanu and Alexandru George – establishes this explicit distinction (difference) when answering to the question “Why *school* and not *cenacle*?” “For the simple reason that nobody has ever tried to formulate an artistic program, nor have they been tempted to impose on their fellow writers any of their “discoveries”. Everybody was happy to see another facet of their personality in the other one, to feel the annexation as very natural and benefic”<sup>2</sup>. Generally speaking, any literary school becomes the utopia within which an elite exercises a distinct, identifiable and classifiable poetics. This is the perspective we have chosen for the analysis of *The School of Târgoviște* and *The School of Păltiniș*.

When the problem of “apprenticeship” arises in a determined cultural area, one has to consider the intervening social implications as well as the manner in which a distinct environment influences it, claiming or rejecting its presence. For the latter case, once the coordinates have been traced, the master-disciple relationship is analyzed in the light of the socio-political implications (its political, institutional signification), this overstepping the bound of our investigation.

In the volume George Steiner consecrates to the master-disciple relationship, entitled *Maeștri și discipoli*<sup>3</sup> he mentions a number of typologies, passing from that of the anti-model – the teacher who annihilates the pupil’s very soul – to that of the charismatic spiritual master. In both cases the fact that authentic teaching reaches the core of the disciple’s being/person is of great importance. As the author says, the master grasps the sensitive nature of his disciple’s personality, and after a prolonged *paideic* process he reconstructs it. The essential questions regarding this relationship are concerned with the “mystery” of the act of teaching, with the “authority” and its source, and with the disciples’ possible reactions. Consequently, the master-disciple relationship must be viewed as a constantly interactive process, of an “osmotic”

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<sup>1</sup> See AL. Săndulescu (coord.), *Dicționar de termeni literari*, Editura Academiei R. S. România, București, 1976, 494 p., pp. 108-109.

<sup>2</sup> See Mircea Bentea, *Radu Petrescu: farmecul discret al autoreflexivității*, Editura Dacia, Cluj-Napoca, 2000, p. 218, (our translation).

<sup>3</sup> George Steiner, *Maeștri și discipoli*, translated by Virgil Stanciu, Compania, București, 2005.

character, where authority subtly passes from master towards disciple and in the opposite direction, as a type of paideic reciprocity, never knowing for certain who is the "deliverer" and who, in his turn, is the receiver (Léon Bloy). In regard to the types of apprenticeship, George Steiner distinguishes between three major scenarios or relational patterns. First, the master is in the position to literally destroy the disciple, both physically and psychologically. There are masters who broke their disciple's spiritual impulses, "consuming" their hopes, taking advantage of their personality as independent human beings. Secondly, George Steiner says, the disciples have betrayed and ruined their masters, annulling their commitment. Thirdly, this type of pedagogic community can be defined by a deeper understanding of the term "exchange", of "mutual" faith and "affection". This type of exchange, as an interactive association encompassing the personality of the master and his disciple, is one in which not only the disciple is subject to the teachings of the master but also the master is likely to learn from his disciple. Thus, the "handing over", the transmission, has a double meaning in so far as apprenticeship is concerned: the teacher is simultaneously the bearer of knowledge and the one who learns while teaching (this subtle play of authority will become the motto for Constantin Noica's school ideal, where, as Léon Bloy affirms, "there is no knowledge of he who gives and he who receives"<sup>4</sup>). Another fundamental question in order to describe the master-disciple relationship, with its infinite range of shades and possibilities, refers to "transmission", a concept mainly involving the master's authority. What does transmission mean, George Steiner asks, and what circumstances validate it? And, further on, mentioning the possible connection and semantic similitude of the term "translation" with "tradition", the author discusses the hypothesis whether teaching is indeed a transfer or a translating modality, transmission being the essence of tradition. Most importantly, the act of teaching is the imitation of a transcendental act: a divine, revelatory one. The teacher's authority is comprised in his power to present himself as an example. The master has the power to prove his ability, his skill and familiarity with a given theme or dexterity to the disciple. This is the exemplary handing over. Socrates and the saints made their very existence an instrument for their lessons, as George Steiner concludes, this being another argument for J. Wach's socio-religious approach, whose main theses is that the master's teaching and activity must necessarily receive an existential signification.

For Michel Foucault<sup>5</sup>, the act of teaching is more or less an outspoken unfolding of the relationships of power. The French philosopher speaks of three types of authority owned by the master, namely the authority based on the example (the master is the embodiment of a behavior model transformed into rule, norm, for the disciple, this model being proposed and transmitted to the apprentice, novice, as a mandatory aspect for his formation). Secondly, there is an authority founded

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<sup>4</sup> See Constantin Noica, *Jurnal filozofic*, Humanitas, București, 1990, p. 27; Gabriel Liiceanu, *Jurnalul de la păltiniș*, Cartea Românească, București, 1983, p. 35, (our translation).

<sup>5</sup> See Michel Foucault, *Hermeneutica subiectului*, Traducere din franceză de Bogdan Ghiu, Polirom, Iași, 2004, pp.



on competence, the one which validates the transmission of cognizance, principles, aptitudes, and dexterities. Thirdly, there is the Socratic authority, which corresponds to the teaching strategy of establishing or encountering difficulty and solving it during the dialogue between master and disciple: this is the method of controlled discovery. These three types of authority exist on the grounds of a dispute among ignorance and memory. The young novice is pulled out of his ignorance as a result of his gratitude toward his master. According to the Socratic type of authority, he needs to know that he is ignorant, and, at the same time, that “he knows more than he thinks he knows”. Thus, basically, the master-disciple relationship represents the transition from ignorance to knowledge, and more, the conversion from a “rectifiable”, correctable, status to an improved, corrected or rectified one, this implying the presence of the teacher. This occurrence, so to say, is impossible without a master, for knowledge cannot sprout from ignorance all by itself, M. Foucault says. This is the reason why the master is a “teacher of remembrance”: he knows what the other one does not; also, he knows how to show the other one that he knows what, in fact, he does not know<sup>6</sup>. This intricate formation process, described in terms of ignorance, knowledge and remembrance (*anamnesis*) puts forward the idea that the master is more than a teacher of remembrance; he is an “operator” of the self reformation of the individual, he is constantly educating and guiding the disciple towards what might be called his “improved personality”<sup>7</sup>.

If looked at from within, the master-disciple relationship will always be compared with the teacher-student relationship, in order to establish their similitude and the specific differences when the ways in which the specificity and the essence of a culture is transmitted from one generation to another are in question. Moreover, as Joachim Wach asserts in his essay “*Master and Disciple: Two Religio-Sociological Studies*”, “the disciple is always associated with a master, the student with a teacher”. However, while the teacher-student relationship is primarily based on a common subject matter and, hence, a collaboration founded on a given topic, and the pupil has high regard for his pedagogue as the bearer and the holder of certain aptitudes, of a skill, or knowledge put at his disposal, or offered unconditionally, while he admires the moral and intellectual greatness of his teachings, the disciple and the master, organize their relationship not only on the grounds of their interest for a subject matter, but also

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<sup>6</sup> Plato’s dialogues concerned with the problem of education as remembrance (*mathesis=anamnesis*) are *Menon* and *Phaidon*, where the thesis that our knowledge as well as everything else we seek to know are nothing but remembrance (*Menon*, 81 d), is demonstrated. Perhaps this is the reason why M. Foucault mentions the name “professor of remembrance”, for Socrates can show the other one that he knows what in fact he ignores – this is the case of Menon’s slave solving a geometry problem with the help of Socrates’ skilful questions - or that the one who thinks is the possessor of knowledge is, in fact in the contrary situation - the case of Menon himself.

<sup>7</sup> The conversion of the personality, referred to as initiation, or as a change of the ontological status, as formulated by Mircea Eliade, is a theme directly connected to the master-disciple relationship.

by considering their personality, their specificity as individuals, going further than the common domain of research. The significance of the master-disciple relationship is existential. It has more depth than the relationship established on a mere cultural foundation, it reaches beyond the theme-centered connection among the pupil and his pedagogue. If the subject matter is fundamental for the teacher-student relationship, if it depends on the successful outcome or the failure of the student's effort to accustom to a theme or acquire certain dexterities, then, in contrast, the master and his disciple build their relationship as a fundamentally personal one, that is to say, the master's personality and the individuality of the disciple gains central significance for this type of pedagogical community. Joachim Wach stresses the importance of the master's individual qualities, stating that in so far as the disciple's viewpoint is concerned, the significance of this relationship lay basically in the master's unique, irreplaceable personality, character and activity. The master's authority is apprehended by the agency of these three distinctive features of the spiritual master. It is the reason why the master-disciple relationship implies themes such as "the calling", or the "vocation" for the role of the spiritual master. Even the disciple is carrying on his calling. A pupil's activity consists more or less of his individual effort. Conversely, a disciple is called, summoned to understand his master: he is the chosen disciple. Hence, the master's authority is validated and conditioned by his relationship with the disciple: "[...] it is the disciple who ordains his master to mastership. The master reads his calling in the eye of the disciple, just as the disciple hears destiny speak in and through the master"<sup>8</sup>. The pedagogue passes over a task; he introduces the pupil to a given topic and serves as a model for the pupil's inclinations, or his aptitudes and profession. The spiritual master has something in addition to offer: all his teachings must be perceived existentially, they are "existentially significant". Consequently, "the teacher gives of his knowledge, of his ability; the master gives himself"<sup>9</sup>. It is the sacrificial thought that inspires this sort of *paideic* scenery, the continuous renunciation, the vivid consciousness that whoever comes to the master must be inevitably oriented in the opposite direction, toward the anticipation of his improved self. "The most sacred moment in the relation of the master to his disciple comes when the master finally turns the disciple back to himself; it reveals the significance of the master for his disciple; it is the moment in which the relationship is most intimate. Yet, at the same time, it is the moment in which the master appears most remote: above the relationship of master and disciple is written the word «farewell»"<sup>10</sup>.

The significance of the master-disciple relationship is an existential one, the educational quality becomes an *axis mundi* for those who guide their existence according to it, its axial function reveals the real meaning of the spiritual master's message, which must be viewed as "exemplary" from this perspective, not only for the disciple's intellectual formation, but also as a message, transmission, or reaching

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<sup>8</sup> Joachim Wach, *Master and Disciple. Two Socio-Religious Studies*, [www.jstor.org](http://www.jstor.org), p. 2.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3.

into the depth of the disciple's conscience, concerning his structure as a human being. The so called "mystery of renunciation", so characteristic for the master's attitude toward his disciple is, thus, the only aspect which requires understanding, not necessarily needing to be passed forward, transmitted. This is altogether the tragic moment of the relationship, since to fully, thoroughly understand the "mystery of renunciation" might signify that the disciple himself has reached a level of accomplishment naturally accessible only for the master, in other words, that he has arrived at that limit embodied by the master. Nevertheless, the master always turns his disciple away; he turns him towards himself, always towards a new beginning. The proximity and the distance remain, in so far as the master-disciple relationship is concerned, in this perpetual equilibrium, composing and at the same time bestowing this defining tragic quality upon it, as Joachim Wach argues.

There are at least two specific scenarios for this relationship. First, the disciple follows in the master's footsteps until the very end of their relationship, denying his own personality and choosing to continually remain in the service of his master. This would represent the failure of the master-disciple relationship, where the master's attitude results in a futile effort; the disciple must turn away at some point, his destiny must take its course. This brings us to the second type of relationship, when, by leaving the master, the disciple discovers the true meaning of their connection, but, most importantly, one of his most significant duties: that of being the master's witness. The master knows the final purpose of his life: to make the others understand that the single path toward self – knowledge is the other, (the sacrificial thought, the renunciation, the awareness that his teachings will never be completely understood, that, in fact, he has no successor) is maintained by the conflicting nature of a perpetually awakened and operative conscience, but also by the inherent, inevitable solitude the master takes upon himself. This attitude might be intuited by the others; the disciple is the only present witness, he must assume the role of the "confessor".

### **Paradigms of the "spiritual master"**

The most representative manifestation of the master-disciple relationship during the 20<sup>th</sup> century in the Romanian cultural framework is *The School of Păltiniș*. In his "Cătarii de la Păltiniș" ["The Cathars from Păltiniș"] (an essay published in the annexes of the *Epistolary* – a volume which appears three years after the *Păltiniș Diary*, published in 1983, and which contests the advocated elitism of the group of intellectuals formed around Constantin Noica, a paideic community which seemed to be impassive to the political scene, while showing a profoundly polemic character with regard to literary criticism – N. Steinhardt mentions the teacher without a curriculum, who nevertheless continues to preserve his exigency, requesting attention, rigor, even essay papers, who therefore teaches, but without dissimulating his "vulnerability, hesitations, apprehensions". The master appoints lecture plans, renders the detailed programme of a working day,

transforms philosophy into “the single preoccupation worthy of retaining one’s thought and wakefulness [...]”<sup>11</sup>. The same accents of presumed confinement in the closed circle of philosophical culture is accused by N. Steinhardt, namely the tendency to consider high culture as the single possible way for the spirit/intellect, while the rest (essayistic writing, literature) is “vain-gloriousness” or “a deficiency of the spirit”; in this way Păltiniș becomes for many a man “the fortified town of exclusivist vainglory”<sup>12</sup>. Hence, the utopian character, the fundamental insularity of *The School of Păltiniș*. The utopian attempt to save oneself through culture and philosophy is a subject discussed both by Sorin Antohi<sup>13</sup> and Andrei Cornea when referring to Constantin Noica as an example, and to “the Păltiniș of philosophy and authentic friendship”, as though it were “a new Castalia spectacularly rising on the face of an ocean of imposture, of physical, moral, social, intellectual misery – in short, a redoubt of the spiritual ideal eluding somehow, as by a miracle, the demonic world of national-communism left «beneath»”<sup>14</sup>. The spiritual master forms a closed circle of friends or disciples, an hierarchically organized pedagogical community, in a way an “anti-modern” world (Andrei Cornea). The autonomy, the liberty, the impersonal communication, characteristic to the “open society” become improper, inadequate for it; in fact, they come in conflict with the narrowed, personal, hierarchically differentiated framework of the type of pedagogical community formed by the master and the group of disciples. If, for some critics (including Mariana Șora, Eugen Simion or Alexandu Paleologu), Constantin Noica’s teaching method seems a haughty ascent above the plurality, the real diversity, found “beneath” and a manifestation of an elitist, one-sided system, for others such as Gabriel Liiceanu or Andrei Pleșu, the philosopher’s system is quite the opposite, assuming, perhaps, a forbidden educational and existential fluidity, in the sense of its being discharged of the “dogma” and, as such, lacking the too accentuated assertion of its beliefs.

The most important aspect of Constantin Noica’s pedagogy, having in view the fact that, generally speaking, the master is not necessarily the holder of an “absolute competence”, or of answers, is, paradoxically, the theme of the person who determines the disciple to “fall ill”, to prolong a state of crisis (which, according to T. Baconsky, is the single authentic frame of discernment, or “state of judgment”). For his disciples – the firm “nucleus” of the *School of Păltiniș* is formed by Andrei Pleșu and Gabriel Liiceanu, as Mihai Șora points out, and the strength, the

<sup>11</sup> See N. Steinhardt, “Cătarii de la Păltiniș”, in Gabriel Liiceanu, *Epistolar*, Ediția a II-a, Humanitas, București, 1996, p. 337 (our translation).

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 338, (our translation).

<sup>13</sup> Sorin Antohi, “Navetiști în Castalia – Școala lui Noica: putere și cultură în România comunistă –”, în *LA&I*, Litere, arte, idei, Supliment de cultură al ziarului *Cotidianul, Jurnalul de la Păltiniș după 20 de ani*, număr special, Nr. 34 (290), Anul VIII, 29 septembrie 2003, 16 p.

<sup>14</sup> See Andrei Cornea, *De la Școala din Atena la Școala de la Păltiniș sau Despre utopii, realități și (ne)deosebirea dintre ele*, Humanitas, București, 2004, p. 198 (our translation).

“solidity” of this nucleus consists in their “radical difference”<sup>15</sup> – Constantin Noica is the person who provokes a state of crisis, regardless of their mental or emotional condition. What receives a problematic profile in the economy of the Păltiniș paideic scenario is Constantin Noica’s statute itself, an oscillating “rank” in between the role of philosopher, pedagogue and “spiritual master”. His teachings are neither strictly philosophical, nor pure pedagogy. However, if the circumstances might allow the naming of the pedagogical category to which Constantin Noica belongs, the philosopher would be, essentially, the one who “brings about” an opportunity, the indirect master, who represents a reference point in relation to which any beginning becomes possible.

Interpreted from the viewpoint of the quality of the pedagogical, intellectual project, C. Noica’s system is suited to a different kind of analysis. In Andrei Cornea’s opinion, the Romanian intellectual frequently tends to live a double, “amphibious” life, owing to the modern society he lives in, his existence having as a central point both the professional, vocational quality of his activity and the power to exercise his authority someplace else than the institutionalized, public sphere. Besides one’s existence as a professional, one can lead the existence of a “prophet” as well, a “guru”, or a “spiritual master”, finding oneself in this inextricable mixture which determines the outline of his vocation. The *epistemic authority*, by which we understand the professional authority, the competence, is doubled by the “*deontic*” authority, namely the charismatic quality of the master, usually found as a typical element for the community in which tradition is orally transmitted among a relatively small circle of individuals, taking into account a collective welfare, as in the case of the interpersonal relationship of the master and the circle of chosen disciples (A. Cornea). The distinction between these types of authority belongs to J. M. Boschenski (*Ce este autoritatea? [What is authority?]*), and is analyzed by Andrei Cornea in the context of a broad discussion about the amphibious model of the modern intellectual, whose life seems to evolve simultaneously on two different levels: on the ground, where he is socially anchored, and aquatically, releasing through his activities an “ancient spiritual fluid, a charismatic river, somehow springing out of the ancestral tribal life, characteristic of the small archaic, closed communities, of the «*Gemeinschaft*» (community) type - essentially based on the *face-to-face* communication of a reduced number of individuals [...]”<sup>16</sup>. Consequently, this quality of imposing one’s very existence as a worthy, influential example for a disciple is characteristic of the spiritual master. He does not represent merely the personality who possesses a number of technically correct answers to the disciple’s questions, but, in addition, he conveys an authentic and “honest”, “ascetic” way of existence. For this reason, the master is often given the qualities of a “holy man”, “shaman”, or “saint”, rather than the attributes of a technically efficient person, as

<sup>15</sup> Mihai Șora, “Școala de la Păltiniș”, în *Viața românească*, iunie-iulie 2006, Nr. 6-7, p. 11.

<sup>16</sup> A. Cornea, *op. cit.*, pp. 182-182, (our translation).

Andrei Cornea emphasizes. Constantin Noica seems to have been the possessor of this second type of authority, as proven by the exercise of the so-called “high culture”. Nevertheless, Andrei Pleșu renders a new nuance to the matter of C. Noica’s position as a spiritual master: a certain way to miss the sense of the philosopher’s authority is the refusal to consider what the author calls his “secondary qualities”. Besides his philosophical production one is likely to come across the charismatic *personality* of C. Noica, his “elitist-esoteric” image, in the words of Andrei Cornea – he himself being one of C. Noica’s attendants at Păltiniș, together with Andrei Pleșu, Gabriel Liiceanu, Victor Ieronim Stoichiță, Sorin Vieru and Petru Creția (the latter being a well-known member of the *School of Târgoviște*), and who, due to the almost monastic studying discipline, has created a suitable place for the “performance culture” (“cultura de performanță”, one of the names given by the philosopher for the master and the disciple’s main purposes; hence, the master’s activity as a sort of “trainer”, who dedicates himself completely to one disciple, who continuously watches and guards him<sup>17</sup>). When speaking of the secondary qualities of the spiritual master, Andrei Pleșu describes Constantin Noica’s fundamental “good spirits”, thus marking the “tonic cordiality” as a guideline for each of their meetings, but inferring that the connotations of the word “good” reach beyond the ordinary sense, seeking to appoint an essential attitude: it is at the same time “goodness” and “a good disposition”, or an “adequate agreement” with the world<sup>18</sup>. The “befriending” and the conversion of the text into something which “accompanies”, as well as the rhythm, the tonality, the accuracy and “expressiveness” of the phrase as “guide marks” for a “good stylistic disposition” (Andrei Pleșu), are all encompassed by the same genuine category of “good spirits”, as explained by the author. And he continues by saying that for Constantin Noica the concept anguish or the non-being are not perceived as “the themes of the spirit”, but rather as “the heresies of «the soul»”, this sort of detachment indicating, in fact, the philosopher’s *pedagogical* skills rather than his extended “qualification” for the condition of the “spiritual master”<sup>19</sup>. Thus, the pedagogue-spiritual master distinction (or that between a pedagogical relationship and a meta-pedagogical one, the latter implying spiritual affiliation, initiation, conversion or a change of the ontological status) occurs again, only to point out that Constantin Noica, as a cultural “trainer” – a title he himself ascribed to pedagogues, or teachers – imposed and regarded the term “culture” and its “diaphanous hierarchies” (Andrei Pleșu) as the central project, the elitist ideal of the School. The *School of Păltiniș* is more than just an ordinary school of philosophy, it is a *paideia* in the sense that it leads to a reformation of the self. It is not formation as “Bildung”, growth, or

<sup>17</sup> See Constantin Noica, “Cei douăzeci și doi sau cultura de performanță”, in *Despre lăutărism*, Humanitas, București, 2007, p. 79.

<sup>18</sup> Andrei Pleșu, *Limba păsărilor*, Second edition, Humanitas, București, 1994, 1997, pp. 197-198.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 199.

progress that this school refers to, but rather to “the idea of reformation for an initiating deformation” (Mihai Șora<sup>20</sup>).

The extent to which the role of the spiritual master might be defined when it comes to the other major cultural group known as *The School of Târgoviște* (Dan Culcer was the first to use this expression), remains, basically, a questionable issue. *The School of Târgoviște* initiates a paideic relationship among friends – a “society” where the role of the master successively or arbitrarily belongs to each member of the group, having neither cenacle meetings, nor a specific literary program, or a specialized review. Stylistically “mature” even early in his career, as M. H. Simionescu points out<sup>21</sup>, Radu Petrescu is, however, the official mentor of the group. Still, he is far from being the holder of what has been called “*deontic*” authority, the hierarchy of the group being, in its turn, extremely flexible. Thus, the influence this literary group exercises on the members of the '80 generation, manifesting itself at the stylistic and thematic level, as well as with regard to the universal literature, becomes most important. The impact the *School of Târgoviște* had on the '80 generation in the Romanian literature owes its efficiency to the revival and the recurrence of the diary as means of producing literature. The diary is a matter of interest for its documentary and literary side, and at the same time, for the fact that it represents the point of support for the inauguration of a common poetics. It follows, as Radu Petrescu states, an epical course, having a *composition*, characters, a “hero” in the person of the author himself, a plot and a message; it conveys an idea. Radu Petrescu combines these constituent parts of a literary text, of a fictional text in order to create a program which will continuously be followed throughout all his daily written notes, explaining and theoretically supporting it. The apparent monotony of the diary is converted in a subtle, ever changing, melodic literary text. Radu Petrescu's diary is first and foremost the result of a cultivated observer, a cultivated onlooker. To contemplate is for the prose writer, an attempt to grasp, to perceive the real, the immediateness with its entire constellation of alternations of the accidental and of change, to perceive it in motion, so as to detach the materiality of the objects and to ultimately succeed in describing and conceptualizing the invisible, the air among the examined objects, the “airy architectures” and the ideas, the immaterial, the ineffable element which generates the consistency of the world. Thus, the diaries become the translation into words of all that is unseen of the world, the author's writing being the “hypostasis of an expert view, its plenary, sublime form”<sup>22</sup>. In fact, the group poetics of the *School of*

<sup>20</sup> Mihai Șora, *op. cit.*, p. 7, (our translation). Moreover, even if the Platonic model might be considered as a pattern for Constantin Noica's School (where the front position did not necessarily belong to knowledge but rather to the transmission of “states of mind”), there is also a Romanian precursory model, namely Nae Ionescu's school, that gave “Vulcănescu, and Eliade, and Noica, and Cioran” (*ibid.*, p. 14), Mihai Șora being one of the disciples as well.

<sup>21</sup> See Mircea Horia Simionescu, “Jocuri de-a vocația”, in *Ziarul de duminică*, 22 februarie 2008, p. 3.

<sup>22</sup> See Ion Pop (coordinator), *Dicționar analitic de opere literare românești*, Vol I-II, Casa Cărții de Știință, Cluj, 2007, (our translation).

*Târgoviște* is a poetics of contemplative inquiries. Radu Petrescu's passionately examining painting is not accidental. His eye successively modeled by Van Gogh and Cézanne, Bruegel or Pallady, converts the diary into the optimal place for this "rhetoric of silence" as painting has been named. To write just as Cézanne composed his pictorial spaces, to give a certain structure to the used shapes, to the general composition, so as to grasp the "pictorial logic" (Mircea Bentea) of writing and of the events that constitute a specifically cézannean "illusion of depth", architectures of "chromatic tones and shapes" (Mircea Bentea), all these establish and confirm the literary *paideia* of *The School of Târgoviște*, one which seizes and depicts the transference between the atmosphere of the painting and the landscape itself, as Mircea Bentea suggests, each author producing a new "personal page with this indefinable new substance"<sup>23</sup>. The diary is understood as "scale model of the universe". This quality draws it nearer, annexing it to the novel, besides its qualification as "*imago mundi*", and as a required literary exercise. One of the most important aspects of the diary consists in its presenting and putting into words the author's interiority. Radu Petrescu spends his time in this agonizing struggle to convey coherence and significance to his subjectivity, when the world as the author perceives it seems to fail in doing so, or seems to simply overlook the weight of such measures. The diary is evidence for the author's need of unity, of perceiving the composite and fragmentary universe as unitary, this being one man's fundamental needs. Incoherence and dispersion are thus outdistanced, and the writer perceives himself as a coherent whole. This is the main function of the diary for Radu Petrescu and, extensively, for all the members of the *School of Târgoviște*. "The paper being" ("ființa de hârtie") as Radu Petrescu has named it, discovers the way and the instruments to escape the homogenous and undifferentiated character of time, finding a center, the required equilibrium. Secondly, the purpose of the diary is that of an attempt to "retain the unique vibration of each moment" (Mircea Bentea), to convert "historic time" into a "fictional time", where the stages of the literary creation and its "meteorology" are recorded. The stylistic novelty of Radu Petrescu's prose and daily records should also be noted, along with its diversity, its uninhibited style, its irony and ludic character (from Radu Petrescu's cultured ludic to Mircea Horia Simionescu's "monstrous" – apocalyptic ludic), the auctorial fictionalization, or the way the authors refer to "bookishness" (*The School of Târgoviște* is, in this respect, a reading workshop). The members of the *School of Târgoviște* re-invent literature, in a sense: a self-centered literature, an "internal intertextualization", a mannerist, hyper-textual, "almost deliberately «initiativ»" literature, according to Ion Buzera<sup>24</sup>. One might assume the fact that *The School of Târgoviște* saved the Romanian literature of the years 1948-1989, because it succeeded in imposing its own literary system. Moreover, it can get through the interpretative exigencies of the present day, as I. Buzera observes. This literary

<sup>23</sup> Mircea Bentea, *op. cit.*, p. 201, (our translation).

<sup>24</sup> Ion Buzera, *Școala de proză de la Târgoviște*, Paralela 45, Pitești, 2007.



movement avoids certain aesthetic standards preserving its insular, unconventional character with regard to the external literary circumstances, without emphasizing the political but strictly the literary implications of their creative endeavor. Thus, it may be considered unexpected, mainly experimental, with a canonic strategy of its own, always aiming at re-configuring its assumed “morphology”. Mircea Bențea mentions this “underground movement” of the group’s reading, meetings, dialogues – a prolonged, programmatic “exercise of literary friendship”<sup>25</sup>.

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<sup>25</sup> Mircea Bențea, *op. cit.*, p. 219.

## A THROW OF DICE GENERATES A SECOND GAME

ELIZA DEAC

**ABSTRACT.** The aim of this article is to offer a close reading of Ion Barbu's last volume – *Joc secund* – in parallel with *Un coup de dés* (which can be seen as the peak of Mallarmé's poetics). Starting from the obviously common aspects (such as the reference to Poe's work or some major themes: the reflection and the constellation) we intend to bring into relief a few elements of continuity which may not have been sufficiently stressed, as well as to underline the particularities of each of these works.

**Keywords:** *Joc secund (Second Game) / Un coup de dés*

The comparison between Ion Barbu's and Mallarmé's poetry is quite a common leitmotiv in Romanian literary criticism no matter if it consists only in a casual remark or if it develops into a more extended analysis. However, an explicit correlation between Mallarmé's *Un coup de dés* and Barbu's last volume of poems – *Joc secund (Second Game)*<sup>1</sup> – has not been elaborated so far and it may seem a dead end from the beginning for several reasons. First of all, the two works differ in terms of both metaphorical and physical condition. *Un coup de dés* is an individual poem aspiring to the status of the book, while *Joc secund*, despite its remarkable conceptual unity, is definitely a collection of poems put together in the most traditional manner. That is why the terms of the analogy must be clearly stated: should the comparison be made between *Un coup de dés* and a particular poem from *Joc secund* or between *Un coup de dés* as the equivalent of a book and the volume *Joc secund* as a whole? None of the alternatives seems to yield a perfectly round result, so they will be present in turns in this essay. The first one will be adopted during the attempt to highlight the common and the diverging points of the two works seen as coherent projects which answer a regularly reiterated problem: the renewal of poetry. The second one consists in bringing to the forefront the thematic similarities between *Un coup de dés* and the concluding poem from *Joc secund* – *Înceiere (Ending)*.

Another major reason which could discourage this enterprise is the lack of direct and overt connection between Barbu's work and *Un coup de dés*. In fact, judging by the statements of the Romanian poet, the entire relation to Mallarmé's

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<sup>1</sup> All the quotations of poems which appear in this essay are taken from Ion Barbu, *Opera poetică*, vol. I-II, text established by Mircea Coloșenco, Bucharest, Cartier, 2002. Their translation belongs to us.

work seems to be of secondary importance. Barbu explicitly favours other models: “I feel awe only for one poet: Edgar Poe and admiration for three other poets: Mallarmé, Rilke, Rimbaud”<sup>2</sup>. In matters of poetic reform he seems to prefer Jean Moréas, although he acknowledges Mallarmé’s and Valéry’s original contributions to the same project. It is in this context that Barbu makes the only explicit and at the same time dismissive reference to *Un coup de dés*: “There have been some totally arbitrary reforms such as the ‘instrumentalism’ of the unfortunate René Ghil or the graphic innovation of *Un coup de dés jamais n’abolira le hasard*. They did not contribute at all to the contemporary tendencies of the spirit; that is why they did not survive the momentous stir they generated”<sup>3</sup>.

In this context, the links between Barbu’s last volume and Mallarmé’s last poem seem to remain hidden. They are restricted to a diffuse type of intertextuality which, nevertheless, should not be overlooked. Firstly, the common goal of the two works – the recommencement of poetry – made it possible for them to reach similar conclusions formulated in strikingly resembling terms. A second level of interaction is represented by the discrete presence of Mallarméan echoes and motifs in Barbu’s poems. Thus, the motto of the second manuscript of *Joc secund – Ochean II (Spyglass II)* – consisted in a line selected from the famous *Sonnet in – yx*. It is true that, in the final version of the volume, this motto is replaced by another quotation – “... *ne fût-ce que pour vous en donner l’idée*” (from the conference dedicated to Villiers) – whose original meaning is deviated because the term “idea” acquires in this new context the lexical values specific to Barbu’s theoretical vocabulary. However, the reference to the sonnet, even if erased, provides an indirect thematic link with *Un coup de dés* since the latter takes over the main motifs of its predecessor. But the poem which bears the closest resemblance to *Un coup de dés* is the last one – *Încheiere* – which brings together the most important constituents of *Joc secund* just as Mallarmé’s last poem explores the main themes of its author’s work. Moreover, in a very concentrated manner, *Încheiere* appropriates two significant points of *Un coup de dés*: the death of the master followed by the appearance of the constellation.

In order to understand the peculiarities of each creation and of the elements which favour a comparison between them, it is necessary at first to become aware of their innovative value in the context of their authors’ work.

The first aspect which Barbu and Mallarmé have in common is the fact that they both attempted (and succeeded) to renew the poetic form by reinterpreting the traditional components of versification and not by breaking away from it as the practitioners of the free verse did. In Mallarmé’s case, this attempt did not represent a clearly cut objective right from the beginning. As Michel Murat

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<sup>2</sup> Paul B. Marian: *de vorbă cu Ion Barbu*, in Ion Barbu, *Pagini de proză*, Bucharest, Editura pentru Literatură, 1968, 53.

<sup>3</sup> Jean Moréas, in Ion Barbu, *Pagini de proză*, 130.

convincingly proves in the first part of his study – *Le Coup de dés de Mallarmé*<sup>4</sup> – it was at a very late stage of his theoretical itinerary that Mallarmé acknowledged the occurrence of the verse crisis. At the same time, he skillfully avoided taking a definite attitude towards the use of free verse by his contemporaries. Murat minutely reconstructs Mallarmé’s oscillatory theory regarding the contemporary innovations, a theory formulated in ambiguous and figurative terms which usually favour contradictory interpretations. Two of his most quoted interventions concerning the verse deserve special attention not only because they represent the basis on which *Un coup de dés* is built, but also because they have easily recognisable equivalents in Barbu’s theoretical articles. What Murat unveils while analysing these two definitions is that they function as antanaclases, lending themselves both to literal and to more general or abstract interpretations. Thus, a radical shift in made possible under the cover of seemingly unchanged principles.

The first instance is the famous definition of the verse as the reunion of “several lexical units recreating a total word”, which appears for the first time in the preface to René Ghil’s *Traité du Verbe* (published in 1886) and which, in this context, clearly refers to the regular verse, despite its non-metrical implications. This fact enables Mallarmé to extend the definition retroactively to other types of verse – namely to the free verse – as its reproduction at the end of *Crise de verse* proves. This aspect confirms that<sup>5</sup> “Mallarmé’s thinking was formed on this unchanging basis: the ‘old dogma’, to which he gives a radical interpretation, and its achievement in the modernists’ works”<sup>6</sup> by which he understands mainly Banville’s and his own creation. Thus, “The antanaclasis facilitates the emergence, in a probably unforeseen manner, of a new and non-metrical conception of the verse, in other words of a radical alternative to tradition without a total break with it”<sup>7</sup>.

The same ambiguity is characteristic to another well-known definition of the verse: “Similitude between the verse and the old proportions, a sort of regularity will continue to exist because the poetic act consists in the sudden realisation that an idea divides itself into several equally valuable motifs and in their grouping; they rhyme; as external seal – their common measure, which resembles the final blow”<sup>8</sup>. This definition also favours a more abstract reinterpretation: “The metric structure is thus maintained, but is this still the metric structure? Yes, because the principle of equivalence remains: ‘similitude’, ‘proportion’, ‘common measure’. No, because nothing says or obliges us to suppose that this equality is of a numerical nature. The assertion that the idea divides itself into ‘motifs of equal value’ refers to the meaning and not to the syllabic measure. The same holds true for the ‘rhyming pattern’ of these motifs, which does not necessarily imply homophony.

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<sup>4</sup> Michel Murat, *Le Coup de dés de Mallarmé (Un recommencement de la poésie)*, Paris, Éd. Belin, 2005.

<sup>5</sup> All the following translations from French belong to us.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 51.

<sup>8</sup> *Apud ibid.*, 52.

The conceptualization of the metric structure, which has become ‘spiritual’, removes it from the linguistic area”<sup>9</sup>. This process becomes all the more obvious when, in the preface to *Un coup de dés*, Mallarmé uses practically the same definition he employed while describing the traditional metre in order to underline, this time, the innovative aspects of the new verse. Thus, the verse of his last work is meant to represent: the “prismatic subdivision of the idea”.

The conceptual fluidity of the definitions favours the recommencement of the verse on a more abstract basis. In *Un coup de dés* the readers can identify dissipated regular structures or reconstruct perfectly viable alexandrines but such attempts would totally miss the original point of the poem since these potentially metrical structures are subjected to typographical breaks and rearrangements which obliterate their traditional provenance almost to indistinction and make the customary rules of poetry reading (such as the unstressed ‘e’ sound in final position) completely superfluous. Thus, the metrical lines are replaced by autonomous typographic units functioning as “total words” of various length, which do not comply with any syntactic or logical rules, the rhyme is substituted by “couples” of single or “total words” and the regular beat gives way to a freer interpretation of rhythm which comes and goes for short periods<sup>10</sup>.

The two Mallarméan definitions which served as a bridge between the traditional forms and the new ones can easily be recognised in Barbu’s theoretical writings where they are formulated in similar terms. Thus, in *Poetica d-lui Arghezi* (*Mr. Arghezi’s Poetics*) he makes the frequently quoted assertion: “It has been admitted lately that the verse wants to be a word in itself. The simple parts of a poem are not the words but the verses”<sup>11</sup>. It is difficult to decide if this formulation is indebted directly to Mallarmé or if it is the result of his own meditations on the nature of the verse. Nevertheless, the beginning of this statement seems to indicate that the poet summarises and subscribes to a common belief instead of expressing a personal conclusion. Barbu’s adhesion to this perspective is also proved by the fact that he returns to it in the article on Jean Moreas’s poetic reform. What Barbu appreciates above all in this poet’s work is the way in which the individuality of the words seems to be attenuated by the surroundings. The words acquire unforeseen meanings as a result of their appearance in a poetic context able to enhance their potentialities.

The other description of the verse which can be connected with Mallarmé’s second definition seems to take a more personal turn. In the same article, Barbu declares that “the verse to which we bow proves to be a difficult liberty: the purified world which mirrors only the figure of our spirit”. The word “figure” is a key term in Barbu’s theoretical system and it is related to another basic notion – the “figuration” which the poet borrows and adapts from mathematics. The antonymic

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 52-53.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 121.

<sup>11</sup> *Poetica d-lui Arghezi*, in Ion Barbu, *Pagini de proză*, 66.

pair of this concept is the allegory. While the figurative process resembles the mathematical operation, which involves transformation or free permutation within the same groups, the allegorical method is similar to the application of the same formula, which is the written record of that particular operation, over and over again. In other words, there are two ways of putting together the poetic elements: the first and the most simple one is to use one-to-one semantic equivalents or traditionally established symbols as well as syntactic structures which have been successfully employed by the predecessors; the second and the more risky one is to invent both the symbols and the patterns which organise them. As Ioana Em. Petrescu demonstrates, this is in fact the core of Barbu's project: the various stages of his work correspond to the "mutations of the poetic language with which Barbu experimented in order to discover an initiatic diction as free as possible from the narrative support of the myth or from the discursive structure of language, which does not produce the revelation but only limits itself to its communication by means of notional mediation. The narrative prop (the myth) is present in the first period of creation when the poems assume the typical form of 'mysteries', which usually follow the Eleusinic scenario. The narrative prop is maintained in the balkanic cycle, except that the 'myth' is no longer inherited but created with the help of some folkloric elements. The reminiscences of the metamorphic myth are reduced to some isolated motifs during the following two stages of creation (...). The metamorphic story tends to assume trans-notional forms, of musical nature in *Uvendenrode* and of syntactic nature in the hermetic cycle, which attempt to dissolve the object (that is abolished or hidden) and replace it with the enactment of the process of its metamorphoses"<sup>12</sup>.

Barbu also shares Mallarmé's aim of grasping the essence of the verse and of creating according to its most general principles. In consequence, his poetry embarks upon "the rare adventure of a truly essential verse"<sup>13</sup>. The similarity between Mallarmé's and Barbu's conclusions regarding the nature of the verse does not lead, however, to similar results. Since Barbu perceives *Un coup de dés* as an arbitrary experiment, he does not use it as a model for the application of his theory. Despite the fact that he draws a very clear line between the practices of his contemporaries and his own activity, Barbu does not believe in the efficiency of avant-garde attitudes. Therefore, he does not abandon the traditional metre but tries to change it from within by means of fluctuating rhythms and by developing a syntactic distribution of his own. At this point it is significant to notice that while in Mallarmé's last poem the alexandrine is only "quoted" in order to be deconstructed<sup>14</sup>, the closing poem of *Joc secund* (the volume which officially symbolizes the end of Barbu's poetic career) is built according to the regular beat of the 12 syllable line. Nevertheless, it is the same poem that hints to a possible

<sup>12</sup> Ioana Em. Petrescu, *Ion Barbu și poetica postmodernismului*, Bucharest, Cartea Românească, 1993, 168.

<sup>13</sup> *Poezia leneșe*, in Ion Barbu, *Pașini de proză*, 86.

<sup>14</sup> Michel Murat, *Le Coup de dés de Mallarmé*, 120.

graphical innovation which reconnects Barbu's poem to *Un coup de dés*. This innovation is not as marginal as it may seem and it draws heavily on Barbu's preoccupation with the relation between the poetic language and the geometric one. The elliptical aspect of the last stage of creation is analogous to the concentration of the geometrical figures: "the formulas reduced to a bare minimum should have a role similar to that of the geometrical figures, that is to say, the role of fixing ideas without essentially participating in the internal network of reasoning"<sup>15</sup>.

From this point of view, the definition of the verse as "the purified world which mirrors the figure of our spirit" must be interpreted in the larger context of Barbu's references to mathematical concepts: "As a method of possible comparison it is therefore allowed to examine a prosodic reform in the light of the modifications suffered simultaneously by the mathematic ideal"<sup>16</sup>. The "total word" in Barbu's vision can be equated at this point with the figure: they are both emblems which imply a very complex series of operations.

Not only does the poem decline to linearly unfold each logical operation, but it also refuses to be a direct expression of feelings in line with the Romantic tradition: "There is a stage of poetic experience beyond which the verse proves to be rigour and fervour and not extended interjection or a more or less harmonious celebration"<sup>17</sup>. This proves that Barbu's line of thought bears many similarities with the innovative process initiated by the French symbolists and in which *Un coup de dés* represented again an important stage.

Barbu's view on the nature of the verse, and by extension on poetry, corresponds to a recent and very convincing perspective concerning the role of the first modernists in the change of poetic paradigm at the turn of the XX<sup>th</sup> century, which is developed by Laurent Jenny in *La fin de l'intériorité*<sup>18</sup>. It is true that his examples come only from the area of French literature but the model they illustrate can be easily extended to other literary zones in which similar phenomena appeared under the more or less direct influence of the French literary trends. According to Jenny, the eclectic nature of the symbolist literary ideology, more precisely the paradoxical combination of metaphysical views (of Schopenhauerian origin) with ideas generated by the physiological approach (borrowed from Bergson) threw a shadow of confusion on the central notion of interiority – treated by both philosophers as a rather passive entity open to all sorts of influences – and consequently undermined the definition inherited from the Romantics, namely that poetry was the expression of the self. This symbolist view of the self as a submissive entity contradicts the very notion of expression which implies that behind a particular creation there is a strong will able to exercise conscious control over the text, to organise and to select carefully what is to be transmitted. The

<sup>15</sup>  *Direcții de cercetare în matematicile contemporane*, in Ion Barbu, *Pagini de proză*, 226.

<sup>16</sup> *Jean Moréas*, in Ion Barbu, *Pagini de proză*, 130.

<sup>17</sup> *Cuvânt către poeți*, in Ion Barbu, *Pagini de proză*, 106.

<sup>18</sup> Laurent Jenny, *La fin de l'intériorité*, Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, 2002.

forms invented by the symbolist writers – the internal monologue and the free verse – while being explained by means of the theory of expression, actually paved the way for a new paradigm of which their creators were not aware at all. One of the first to understand the implications of the new forms was Mallarmé and *Un coup de dés* is the result of this realisation. What he accomplishes is, in Valéry's terms – taken over by Jenny and transformed into a large-encompassing concept – “the figuration of thought”, which means that the poet gives up the pretence of supreme control over signs by granting them the right to freer distributions and combinations on the page. It is true that Barbu's poetry does not take this visualist turn – or when it does, it is in order to replace poetry with geometry – but his ideas (as opposed to the symbolist ones) are consciously against the expressive approach to literature. He openly condemns the poetry built on the direct expression of feelings. Valéry's description can be extended to Barbu's views of a possible process of “figuration” (in the mathematically connoted sense described above) all the more so since his project also involves the organisation of the poetic elements according to perpetually renewed possibilities of combination disregarding the already used formulas. This fact is the most visible at the syntactical level and the last poem is a good example of how this operation is accomplished.

As far as *Înceiere* is concerned, Ioana Em. Petrescu has already noted that this poem uses the thematic elements of the poetic cycle dedicated to the city of Isarlâk and applies the syntactic principles of the hermetic cycle. In fact, the poem brings together the main motifs of all the three cycles of the volume. *Înceiere* can therefore be seen as the emblem of the whole volume in the sense that it has a sort of auto-intertextual aspect. The first two stanzas focus on the main subject of the last group of poems – Isarlâk – the out-of-history capital of the balkanic world. Some of the symbols are directly quoted from the poem bearing its name – *Isarlâk*: “inima – raiaua”<sup>19</sup> (*Înceiere*, line 5) echoes the following lines from *Isarlâk*: “ – Isarlâk, inima mea, / Dată-n alb, ca o raia”<sup>20</sup>, while “Răcoriți ca scuții zonele de aer,/ Resfirați cetatea norilor în caer”<sup>21</sup> (*Înceiere*, lines 15 and 16) call to mind “La fundul mării de aer / Toarce gâtul, ca un caer”<sup>22</sup>. “Sonoră vale”<sup>23</sup> may be a reminiscence of the poem which lends its name to the second set of poems – *Uvedenrode*. The second line of the fourth stanza – “Lame limpezi duse-n țara lui norvegă!”<sup>24</sup> explicitly introduces another main symbolic space: the northern world of the spirit – the opposite of the balkanic world – which is a major theme of several poems belonging to the same group. The third stanza of *Înceiere* strongly evokes the second stanza of *Grup (Group)* – a poem belonging to the first cycle of

<sup>19</sup> “The heart – the rāyā” (the Turkish word “rāyā” designated the Christian territories administrated by the Ottoman army).

<sup>20</sup> “Isarlâk, my heart/ Painted white as a rāyā”.

<sup>21</sup> “Chill as the icicles the zones of air/ Dissipate the city of the clouds in tresses”.

<sup>22</sup> “On the seafloor of the air/ Spin the gullet as a tress”.

<sup>23</sup> “Sonorous valley”.

<sup>24</sup> “Limpid blades conveyed to his Norwegian country”.



the volume (which is actually the last in a chronological order): they both express the search for the perfect patterns that underlie the aleatory proliferation of individual forms. Apart from the intertextual relations with the rest of the volume, the third stanza and the first two lines of the next are in fact the linguistic equivalent of the geometric symbol which appears at the end of the poem: “Vis al Dreptei Simple! Poate, geometria/ Săbiilor trase la Alexandria,/ Libere, sub ochiul de senin oțel./ În neclătinatul idol El Gahel.// Inegală creastă, sulțată cegă,/ Lame limpezi duse-n țara *lui* norvegă!”<sup>25</sup>. Two types of languages are thus confronted – the linguistic one and the mathematical one. Both try to answer the same difficulty – to express in a synthetic form the complexity of their message. It is at this level that one of the most important differences between Mallarmé’s *Un coup de dés* and Barbu’s *Înceiere* occurs: while Mallarmé exploited the support itself, Barbu ignored the support and imported the language of another type of discourse. In Barbu’s text the linear description of the verse is complemented by the cyclic distribution of the elements which form the image. While the first remains an inevitably extensive approximation, the second embodies the suggestions of the metaphors and seems more adequate to put the author’s figurative project into practice. This is the model towards which Barbu’s artistic production tends, as the progressive unfolding of the poem demonstrates. What separates the two moments – the projected description of the stellar symbol (“vision”) and its actual appearance (invoked in the last stanza: “Fie să-mi clipească”<sup>26</sup> and actually materialized in the shape of the heptagonal figure) is a distich which is contrasted with the rest of the poem in more than one way. Apart from its shortness, what makes it most striking is the fact that it is the only part of this elliptic poem in which the poet uses a perfectly common syntactic structure. As Ioana Em. Petrescu observed, it is a regular habit of the poet to avoid the use of the nominative case mostly by replacing it with a vocative construction. In *Înceiere*, two entities are identified by means of “indirect” designations: the addressee – the second person indicated by the vocatives – and the first person. The latter constantly appears in the dative case: “Dovediții, *mie*”, “să *mi*-i culci”, “Fie să-*mi* clipească” (our italics). In the distich, however, a first person in the nominative case assumes the strong position at the beginning of the first line: “Eu, sub piatra turcă, luat de Isarlâk,/ La o albă apă intru – bândâbâc”<sup>27</sup>. Moreover, this distich is a notable exception to another structural principle of Barbu’s poems – the avoidance of the verb – with which the rest of the poem complies. In *Înceiere* the verb is employed as rarely as possible and when it does appear it is usually in a non-personal tense (mostly participle with a strongly adjectival value) or in the imperative. The distich contains the only assertive verbal form – a present tense narrating an event in process – the death of the narrator himself.

<sup>25</sup> “Vision of the Straight Line! Maybe, the geometry/ Of the sabres wielded in Alexandria,/ Free, under the gaze of undisturbed steel,/ Of the unrelenting idol El Gahel.// Asymmetric apex, perforated sterlet./ Limpid blades conveyed to *his* Norwegian country”.

<sup>26</sup> “May they shine on me”.

<sup>27</sup> “Under the Turkish stone, taken by Isarlâk, I/ sink into the whitish waters – plop”.

This aspect strongly brings to mind Mallarmé's technique employed in *Sonnet in -yx* and, more obviously, in *Un coup de dés*. The same syntactical changes identified in Barbu's poem are undelined by Lübecker<sup>28</sup> in his study of *Un coup de dés* (in comparison with the sonnet) and it may not be superfluous to recall here that the second parenthetic line of *Sonnet in -yx* was the initial motto of Barbu's volume. Lübecker's interpretation of the poem is built precisely on the parenthetic episodes: more precisely in the case of *Un coup de dés* on the episode of the mermaid and its appendix. From this point on, *Înceiere* and *Un coup de dés* evolve in very similar ways. In *Un coup de dés*, according to Lübecker's view, the rock which blocks the access to the absolute and which the mermaid impatiently hits with her tail is the fist of the Master, the only visible trace of his former struggle against the waters. The appearance of the constellation is the consequence of the Master's disappearance and Lübecker interprets the whole episode as "the image of a thinking process – not the simple calculation of the little virile reason but the excessive and non-scientific thinking which managed to turn the absence (the obscurity) into an integrating part of its structure. In other words, the constellation represents this complex, symbolic and twisted thinking which is called fiction"<sup>29</sup>. The same scenario is attentively followed in Barbu's poem, although in a much more synthetic form. The poet-master is submerged in the foamy waters under the "Turkish rock" presumably as a result of the influence exercised by the mirage city of Isarlâk and his disappearance is marked only by the interjection – "plop" ("inférieur clapotis quelconque"). This discreet and undeniable presence of (in a quasi-paradoxical formulation) key-details from *Un coup de dés* proves that it is not too preposterous to suppose that Barbu's overt denial of the poem's effective novelty did not prevent him from further exploring the issues it brought up and from trying to answer it in a more or less direct manner. Barbu's poem also has in view the mechanisms of the poetic thinking, the most obvious argument being offered by the last stanza in which the constellation ("Eptagon cu vârful stelelor la fel"<sup>30</sup>) is presented as the abstract product of the poet's mind ("Din culoarea minții"<sup>31</sup>) projected to last long after his disappearance, probably forever ("Fie să-mi clipească vecinice"<sup>32</sup>). It is at this point that the two poets depart again from each other. While Mallarmé's fiction is meant to disguise the central void which underlies the individual forms, Barbu's work reflects his constant search for the eternal essences which exist beyond the diversity of the actual world. In Mallarmé's poems, the sacrificial episodes give access only to the disquieting nothingness, but in Barbu's poems they represent a way of uncovering

<sup>28</sup> Nikolaj d'Origny Lübecker, *Le sacrifice de la sirène («Un coup de dés» et la poésie de Stéphane Mallarmé)*, University of Copenhagen, Museum Tusulanum Press, 2003.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 80.

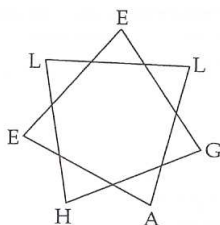
<sup>30</sup> "Heptagon with vertex similar to stars".

<sup>31</sup> "Out of the colour of the mind".

<sup>32</sup> "May they shine on me forever".

the plenitude of the Being. However, this distance is diminished if one becomes aware that Mallarmé's void actually borrows the attributes of the existence<sup>33</sup>.

In conclusion, the comparison which seemed quite a risky attempt at the beginning proves to be a fruitful adventure in the end. The relation between Barbu's work and Mallarmé's most innovative poem is much deeper than one can guess at first sight and it mainly concerns two points: on the one hand, the renewal of the poetic language and, on the other hand, the perspective on goal of the human existence as envisaged by poetry. The Romanian critics have frequently wondered why Barbu organised the poems from *Joc secund* in a reversed chronological order. At a closer look, *Înceiere* recapitulates the main poetic nuclei of Barbu's work and, more important, reestablishes the normal order (as if the poem were the mirror image of the entire volume): from individual to Being, from the narrative pattern to the "figurative structure", from the inevitably descriptive and linear aspect of the verse to the synthetic and dense visual symbol of




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<sup>33</sup> Nikolaj d'Origny Lübecker, *Le sacrifice de la sirène*, 77/ 82.

## INSIDE AND OUTSIDE DUBLIN JAMES JOYCE'S DOUBLE VISION

ELENA VOJ

**ABSTRACT.** The present paper is aimed as an insight into the multiplicity of meanings attached to cultural geographies and cultural memory. Joyce's Dublin has the reputation of opening up to the semantics of mutability and transfer from history to fiction and back again.

**Keywords:** Mapping, Territorialization, Exile

Dublin's participation in the construction of a fictional space is undeniably consistent and defining; moreover, fictional space is allotted much of the "writing space", a fact which determined some of the critics to say that a fourth protagonist of the Joycean novels is the City itself. Dublin survives critical analyses focusing on the fictional elements in Joyce's writing and goes as far as gaining realistic dimensions and historical consistency. Reconstructing Dublin out of Joyce's novels would mean less than deconstructing it in order to state its binary nature, its realistic details surviving alongside fictional distortions. If his use of realistic details regarding some of his characters had the aim of transgressing purely mimetic technicalities, the appeal to realistic space reference is meant to foreground fragments of Irish life rather than create the background of his narrative. Bringing place names, streets, crossroads and buildings to the front accounts for staging Dublin with a view to finely blending fiction and reality, to mapping reality inside fiction and vice-versa. It is perhaps another way of saying that Joyce's "sense of reality was expected to overwhelm mundane reality (and certainly the polite reality of his Dublin critics)" (Benstock in *JJQ* 1972: 100) or that the functionality of its rendering gives way to its stylistic participation. Certainly, Joyce's novels bring to light one of its most lively, animated and socially-conditioned protagonists, but it is also true that "*Ulysses* is no more about Dublin than *Moby Dick* is about a whale – although no less." (Benstock in *JJQ* 1972: 100) Its being inside and outside the text, its double nature and double disposition make it easier for the reader to follow both ways of looking at it, according to either the centripetal or the centrifugal movements of the reading eye.

Dublin's fictional importance is summarized in a brief passage speaking of a shift in thematic preference:

Each of my books is a book about Dublin. Dublin is a city of scarcely three hundred thousand population, but it has become the universal city of my work.

*Dubliners* was my last book of that city. Then I looked at the people around me. *Portrait* was the picture of my spiritual self. *Ulysses* transformed individual impressions and emotions to give them general significance. *Work in Progress* has a significance completely above reality; transcending humans, things, sense and entering the realm of complete abstraction. (Joyce qtd. in Harding 2005: 5)

Whatever the change in particular interest, the Dublin of the previous books is a constant element foreshadowing its later framing as the urban habitat of Joycean protagonists engaged in their dromomaniac activities. From books portraying “that city” to others portraying artists and human nature at large, Joyce presents Dublin from a double perspective: from outside its walls, in exilic retrospective, and from the inside of its well-defined architecture.

#### a. MAPPING DUBLIN IN *ULYSSES*

“He flung back pages of the files and stuck his finger on a point.

- Take page four, advertisement for Bransome’s coffee, let us say. Have you got that? Right.

The telephone whirred.

A DISTANT VOICE

- I’ll answer it, the professor said, going.

- B is parkgate. Good.

His finger leaped and struck point after point, vibrating.

- T is viceregal lodge. C is where murder took place. K is Knockmaroon gate. (...) F to P is the route Skin-the-Goat drove the car for an alibi, Inchicore, Roundtown, Windy Arbour, Palmerstone Park, Ranelagh. F. A. B. P. Got that?” (*U* 7.653-69)

Comprising and compressing the historically eventful in just a few lines imply imposing suggestive textual markers that should function as recognizable items in a written topography. Mapping space inside the economy of the text, as in the above-quoted fragment - in an episode reminding the audience of the Phoenix Park Murders of 1882 – requires skilled linguistic essentialization, accompanied by a coherent matching of parts in a small-scale whole. The quotation is taken from *Aeolus* and stages Myles Crawford’s efforts to repeat a gesture of mapping the route of the killers involved in the Phoenix Murders. The sequence of initials each send to actual place names inside and around the parkside and are meant to verbally reconstitute the route as it is drawn on an advertisement taken from a newspaper. Detectivistically pinning down each landmark, Crawford is actually mimicking typing techniques of building a larger text by pressing one letter at a time. His discourse – always careful to check understanding from time to time and interrupted by phone calls – figures parts of a familiar geography in one eventful day. Spatial suggestions and directions bear a theatrical weight in that the sequence of verbs used to describe them (“stuck”, “flung”, “leaped”) borrow gestural hints at

escaping, fleeing from the crime scene. Acting out the killers' adventurous escape also helps at retracing spatial details that host something more than were political drama; they are tools contributing to the configuration of a fictional spatial form. "Spatial form" has been theorized by Joseph Frank and has come to mean the reading of textual markers which give fiction a form, which make it recognizable at a stylistic level. He quotes Worringer for a better clarification of what spatial form in literature should refer to:

"Space filled with atmospheric light," Worringer writes, "which binds objects together and cancels out their individual self-containedness, imparts a temporal value (*Zeitlichkeitswert*) to things, drawing them into the cosmic merry-go-round of appearances." (Worringer qtd. in Miles; McKenzie 1948: 391)

In Frank's view, spatial forms are often employed by modernists like Joyce, Pound or Eliot who aim at helping the reader perceive their works as a whole, not sequentially. From this point of view, Joyce's fiction (especially *Ulysses* with its focus on what the critics have named as "the dailiest day possible") is a proper example for the way in which space is given a form (either through extensive descriptions or concise encapsulation), but also for the way in which form is spatialized and fiction is lent authenticity in an exercise of realistic dramatization.

#### b. MAPPING IRELAND IN *FINNEGANS WAKE*

"Full of my breadth from pride I am (breezed be the healthy same!) for 'tis a grand thing (superb!) to be going to meet a king, not an everynight king, nenni, by gannies, but the overking of Hither-on-Thither Erin himself, pardee, I'm saying." (*FW* 452.24-8)

"Numerous are those who, nay, there are a dozen of folks still unclaimed by the death angel in this country of ours today, humble indivisibles in this grand continuum, overlorded by fate and interlarded with accident, who, while there are hours and days, will fervently pray to the spirit above that they may never depart this earth of theirs till in his long run from that place where the day begins, ere he retourneys postexilic, on that day that belongs to joyful Ireland" (*FW* 472.28-35)

Space expansion – just as space contraction – is yet another instance of *trompe l'oeil* in which the strategies of fictional representation select just parts of an insinuated whole that is displayed and anticipated or merely hinted at in between the limits of the page. Hither-on-Thither Ireland, an island expanding over the sea and covering most of the world, speaks of Irish emigration, of a centrifugal disposition as colonial dispersal. The opposite is suggested in the "postexilic" return to an Ireland to which Joyce also referred in *Exiles*, with a somewhat tender overtone<sup>1</sup>, a return that is not envisioned in idyllic lights, but rather in the skeptical perspective of one who experiences and renders exile and emigration in the space of fiction. That is why "Irish writers and intellectuals in the twentieth century have returned to Joyce's exile out of a need as well as a desire

to rationalize their own diasporic existence” (Wim van Mierlo in Gibson; Platt 2006: 195). Any attempt at mapping exile would become ambitious projects of formulating a history and a map of the world in its entirety.

The feeling that texts have the power and the structure of world-generating is encountered by readers such as Joyce’s close friend Jacques Mercanton, who once confessed of having experienced the apprehension of an entire creation by merely looking at the surface level of manuscript pages of *Work in Progress*:

When I perused a page of the manuscript of “Work in Progress”, I did not imagine the unfolding of history but rather a foreshortened image of the creation of the world. Certain passages remained intact, just as they were written at the beginning, like particles instantaneously crystallized and fixed in their eternal forms. Other areas were in a state of continual flux and fusion, and it seemed that nothing would work to stabilize them; one sentence had recently been split up by a few new words, which in their turn had engendered a new sentence. (Mercanton in Potts 1986: 221)

This certainly reminds us of Crawford’s symbolic mapping of Phoenix Park in the margins of a newspaper; the impression of both frozen and dynamic elements building up the picture of a world stems in the reader’s own photographic eye, in his mapping of the map. Trying to give a certain spatial form to such a form-preoccupied novel as *Finnegans Wake* could signify framing fiction in a manner that to a certain degree imitates an authorial gesture. Reading is once again a form of writing, a technique of reforming and rearranging the space of fiction with all its data.

Spatial dissolution and coagulation in the act of reading are other ways of saying that “the book is not an image of the world. It forms a rhizome with the world, there is an aparallel evolution of the book and the world; the book assures the deterritorialization of the world, but the world effects a reterritorialization of the book, which in turn deterritorializes itself in the world.” (Deleuze; Guattari 2004: 12). Since territory is prone to several modifications when shifted from historical to fictional, it can be understood that holding on place as a centre of reference is merely a utopian belief. Joyce’s Dublin is a constant, not a variable in his writings, but its perpetual expansion or contraction, its mapping, so to say, account for its instability and mutability.

The “foreshortened image of the creation of the world”, as a result of mapping techniques, requires a constant revisitation of an outside / real geography and a permanent interplay between various degrees of appropriation. Zooming in and out of the specific place provides a better view of both the details and its overall image. It is precisely from afar that space is foreshortened in its entirety and for a wholesome comprehension. Ireland’s contraction and expansion in two of Joyce’s novels are the results of a spatial distantiation and an aesthetic close-up to a reality that is frequently conveyed in varying linguistic registers.

Mapping spatial distance as exile can be performed with the help of aesthetic means which betray the existence of an aesthetic distance. Joyce’s spatial

distantiation from Ireland was doubled by his aesthetic looking back on a country as foreshortened in the image of Dublin, also known as the writer's "universal city of the mind". Labeling it as a "city of the mind" means leaving its historical value at the background of a larger story about the definition of an artistic identity:

The aesthetic distance that Joyce introduced into his autobiographical narrative after his exile, then, extends the need for distance represented by the exile into the very method of his book: just as he needed the actual distance between Dublin and Trieste in order to return to his past to rewrite, Joyce came to need the aesthetic distance he finally created in his autobiographical narrative between his protagonist and himself in order to "recreate" himself as an artist. (Jay 1984: 122-123)

Abstracted from the reformed space of his writing, Joyce's authorial voice echoes his participation in the creation of fictional worlds from "behind", "beyond" and "above" their limits and above the margins of his own biographical individuality. His creative self clings on, returns to Dublin as to a centre of his fictive projections, in order to sequentially rewrite, refashion it and himself with it. This strategic self-absorption beyond the historical reality and its fictive rendering justifies critical evaluation in terms of "transhistorical", "transcultural" (Harding 2005: 57) narrative with reference to Joyce's elusive political or ideological belief. By balancing the real and the fictive, the author relativises both and claims none as fundamental narrative.

Both fictive and real, historical and imagined, Joyce's Dublin essentialises in-betweenness at various levels: social, political, ethnic, aesthetic. Dublin is the "dear, dirty" city, the paradoxical blend of provincialism and metropolitan dynamics, the loathed site of parochial stereotypes and the reimagined home of exiled artists. Conveying its in-betweenness can only be completed by positing the reader both inside and outside Dublin, both in its social network and underlying urban mechanisms and outside its geography, its walls and limitations, with the help of a foreshortened image, with an artifice that turns Dublin into a "map". In doing this, Joyce chooses to become part of a series of writers whose allegedly modernist aesthetics creates narratives of the city, of urban space, thus mapping cosmopolitan places and internationalist spirits of artists and individualities:

Most other modernist authors of cities of Joyce's era seem embedded in a particular city: Proust in Paris, Kafka in Prague, Dreiser in New York. Yet Joyce's writings both are and are not about Dublin. At first, Dublin is a small town where personal interactions could be studied: "Dublin is such a small city: everyone knows everyone else's business" (*D* 66). But Joyce eventually found in Dublin the quality of all cities: "For myself, I always write about Dublin, because if I can get to the heart of Dublin I can get to the heart of all the cities of the world. In the particular is contained the universal." (Ellmann 1982, 505) (Begnall 2002: 5)

The relationship universal-particular is frequently referred to in modernist fictions, because, in the case of urban novels, it also carries forth the binary existence of cosmopolitanism and provincialism that lie in the background of most Irish fiction as competitive fields of configuration. Dublin's internationalism does not



equal metropolitan prestige, not around 1904, anyway, but it can, nevertheless, be envisioned as universally valid, since it has the ability to stage universal experience, together with fragmentary bits of life. On a supposedly conventional hierarchy of cities and nations as they are represented in the history of countries or in literary history, the number of “secondary nations” that are identified as characteristic for urban prose is known to have been a considerable one:

(...) the culture of ‘secondary’ nations is shown to have been crucial in shaping twentieth-century cosmopolitan art – Strindberg’s Sweden, Sibelius’s Finland, and Picasso’s Spain are not the ‘great powers’ of August 1914. But this indiscriminate listing of small nations and irredentist provinces is really little more than sentimentality. (McCormack; Stead 1982: 99)

Joyce’s Dublin, and through it Ireland - even though less engaged in the political events of the first decades of the twentieth century – come out and act out other socially, ethnically relevant connections between colonizer-colonized, margin-centre, cosmopolitan-provincial. Double-deckered themes and features of urban life and urban prose have basically generated a space of debate for critics who either look for nationalist traces in Joyce’s writing, or general internationalist, transhistorical values that go beyond his Irishness or Irish-Englishness.

No matter how particular or universal, how small or large, how close to the readers’ eyes or how far from critical sight and fictional representation, Dublin has proved sufficiently generous for further exploration, both in fiction (the city appears in all of Joyce’s books, *occasional* writings included) and in theoretical framing and analysis (different critics speak of varieties of Dublin as Hibernian metropolis, Irish capital, European capital of culture, international city if not metropolis, centre of modern and modernist consciousness or perfect display of urban architecture, corner of nationalist manifestoes or place for anti-nationalist, anti-Catholic and anti-institutional creeds). All in all, Dublin remains a “classical city” in that “Ulysses” is also for us the classical, the supreme representation of something like the platonic idea of city life”, due to the fact that it “is not exactly the full-blown capitalist metropolis, but like the Paris of Flaubert, still regressive, still distantly akin to the village, still un- or under-developed enough to be representable, thanks to the domination of its foreign masters.” (Fredric Jameson in McCormack; Stead 1982: 134-5) Despite the ironic dimension of ideologically-framed assertions, it is only right to admit that the Irish capital of 1904, a time when the question of emigration was still problematic, could not have been exploited and explored as aesthetically successful as the cities of other modernist artists on the Continent.

Sketching the features of a “classical city”, one would necessarily bear in mind the model, the urban pattern of the Greek *polis* with its *agora* of intense social networking and philosophical debate. In Fredric Jameson’s understanding of a “classical city”, Dublin is relevant insofar as all the levels of its representation are interspersed, overlapped in cross-sections imitating the actual performance of forms of communication:

The classical city is not a collection of buildings, nor even a collection of people living on top of one another; nor is it even mainly or primarily a collection

of pathways, of the trajectories of people through those buildings or that urban space, although that gets us a little closer to it. No, the classical city, one would think – it always being understood that we are now talking about something virtually extinct, in the age of the suburb or megalopolis or the private car – the classical city is defined essentially by the nodal points at which all those pathways and trajectories meet, or which they traverse: points of totalisation, we may call them (...) (Jameson in McCormack; Stead 1982: 133)

In this particular aspect of the city as socializing milieu lies the significance of such a textual depiction of urban space in its incessant movement, with its resonant rhythm and its modernist translation of a sense of change (industrial political, economic, social); the beginning of *Aeolus* is illustrative for the way in which the modernist “classical city” is offered on the open stage of fiction with the help of a zooming in and out of the streets and the Dublin infrastructure:

Before Nelson's pillar trams slowed, shunted, changed trolley, started for Blackrock, Kingstown and Dalkey, Clonskea, Rathgar and Terenure, Palmerstone Park and upper Rathmines (...) Right and left parallel clanging ringing a double-decker and a singledeck moved from their railheads, swerved to the down line, glided parallel. (*U* 7.1-12)

Recording their dynamics in the economy of the literary text – which in itself brings all descriptive elements together as “points of totalisation” – does not necessarily hint at recuperating territories, but repatriating some of their characteristics in the space of fiction, in Dublin as the imaginary homeland of urban energies rather than the Irish capital hosting Nelson's pillar as a pole of Irishness. Joyce offers his readers the portrait of a city with the “modern consciousness” that was aware of a synchronic adherence to a type of aesthetics, and which is an “urban consciousness” (Harding 2003: 57), in the end. Joyce's authorial consciousness cannot leave aside such urban details that give Dublin its consistency, its history as evolution and transformation of place, since the “concentration of habitations, crowds in the street, and cultural institutions in the city has always had its excitements, and what Joyce sees in expanding Dublin at the beginning of the twentieth century is no more than an intensification and variegation of such excitements, with the trams, the telegraph, the printing press accelerating the back-and-forth movement of people and information that has been manifested in cities through the ages.” (Alter 2005: 139)

The negotiation of meaning between classical-modern(ist) has found with Joyce and his urban (re)creation a different significance, in that modernist preoccupations with urban forms coagulate in what would later become a recurrent (traditional, and, therefore, classical) point of interest. A modernist “classical city” – the fictive residence of a modernist spirit and an exiled writer – comprises and echoes the author's double vision: an integration, an appropriation of the city's “map” and a distantiating from it.

Coming back to an image that has an autonomy of its own, that exists inside as well as outside the fictional frame and whose validity and authenticity can

be checked at any time is not an easily achieved task. One of the theorists of urban space, Jane Jacobs, insists that “Designing a dream is easy; rebuilding a living one takes imagination” (Donald 1999: 121). Quite interestingly, Joyce’s preference for visual representations (in painting, for example) addressed pictures with a narrative structure in it, images that could tell a story<sup>1</sup>. This taste for the eventful and the narratologically conditioned representation is explained by Hillis Miller’s phenomenological apprehension of space:

Space is less the already existing setting for such stories, than the constitution of space through that *taking place*, through the act of narration. What, then, is the nature of these space-producing events? Do they simply map spaces or represent events? Not really, suggests Miller. Rather, they project events onto space. To gloss Lefebvre’s concept of representational space, they generate a narrational space. (Donald 1999: 123)

Telling the story of a place (“space-producing events”) might work on a logic of linguistic production (single coding); remembering the story of a place implies a double act of fictionalization (double coding). If memory can be conceived as “performative act” (Donald 1999: 125), the unfolding of the narrative layers is part of the process of space recreation. Space as memory (as the depository of its historical configuration) becomes the memory of space when rewritten, when fictionalized.

Joyce’s work, therefore, maps Dublin with a mind to convert it into the representation of memory as space; fictionalizing memory does more than project memory as space. What Joyce’s Dublin retains and offers its readers can be read as the urban dimension of authorial memory and migrant reterritorialization

## THE JUDGMENT OF THE SOUL IN THE IMAGINARY OF THE ROMANIAN POPULAR CULTURE

COSMINA BERINDEI

**ABSTRACT.** The present study intends to bring into discussion a few aspects related to the judgment of the soul, as it is outlined in the Romanian popular beliefs, with the purpose of pointing out some of the essential characteristics of the articulated eschatological conception in this cultural space, in comparison with the Christian eschatology.

According to the Romanian popular beliefs, the soul starts his journey to the other world, immediately after he leaves the body, a journey that is spread with a series of probations: the flow of the waters, the flow of the bridges very narrow, the flow of the paradise's bridge, which if he passes, he will be sent to heaven, and if not, he will burn in the flames of hell, which actually substitutes the judgment. So, before he participates in the actual judgment, the soul could be punished.

Further we have referred to the rituals which suggests the concern in order to ensure the soul's security for the moments after he leaves this world and passes into the other world.

In the Romanian cultural space, the idea of this moral judgment has entered more on a morphological level and less on a functional level. In other words, the idea of the trial was taken over, but the old prototypes to that human relationship to the world beyond was articulated, have proven more powerful, they are responsible for the unlimited confidence in the posthumous salvation of the soul, equivalent to a devaluation at a functional level, a moral trial.

**Keywords:** the eschatology, the individual judgment, the Last Judgement, the soul, the bridge.

Among the aspects referring to the eschatology of the individual, the judgment of the soul represents the essential moment for Christianity, which gives meaning to this religion, in its asset as an eschatological religion. In the present study we will try to bring into discussion a few aspects related to the judgment of the soul, as it is outlined in the Romanian popular beliefs, with the purpose of pointing out some of the essential characteristics of the articulated eschatological conception in this cultural space, in comparison with the christian eschatology.

The first christians have waited for the world's end in a close future, Christianity being a religion that was developed under the sign of the apocalypse<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Mircea Eliade, *Istoria credințelor și ideilor religioase*. Traducere și postfață de Cezar Baltag. București, Editura Univers Enciclopedic, 2000, p. 527.

In this context, the idea of the soul's judgment is related to the Second Coming of Christ. Because this event was delayed, the souls could not be ignored in an undetermined existential break, the individual judgment was introduced, which takes place immediately after death. However the individual judgment did not exclude the idea of the Last Judgment, which will take place at the end of days and which will definitely seal the *post-mortem* destiny of the individual.

According to the Romanian popular beliefs, the soul starts his journey to the other world, immediately after he leaves the body, a journey that is spread with a series of probations, which if he passes he will be sent to heaven, and if not, he will burn in the flames of hell, which actually substitutes the judgment. So, before he participates in the actual judgment, the soul could be punished.

### 1. Rituals of increasing the security of the moribund in the World Beyond

According to the Romanian popular beliefs, immediately after death, the person's soul which separates from the body, departs on a long and troublesome journey. Therefore a candle is placed in the hand of the person who passed into agony, in order to ensure his security for the moments after he leaves this world and passes into a world dominated by great darkness<sup>2</sup>: „At the Romanians, when someone dies, it is a habit to put a burning candle into his hand, a candle that will burn in front of him for eternity and will light his way wherever he goes”<sup>3</sup>. About the one who dies without light it is believed that he passes to the other world through dark and desert places<sup>4</sup>, without any help. In addition it is believed that the bad spirits will not get near the dead if he carries a candle in his hand. Therefore, the candle that was put into his hand at the moment of his death, or another one is put in his hand to leave with it to the other world, where it will serve in order to light his path until he will find his place for rest, the candle being especially useful when he will pass the bridge to heaven<sup>5</sup>.

Nearby the accustomed candles that are used at the funeral ritual, Romanians from all over the country, have a special candle as stated by Simion-Florea Marian. This special candle is very long, as long as the height of the dead, and it will be lighted during different moments of the funeral ritual. In Bucovina and Moldavia as well as in certain regions of Transylvania, this candle is called rod. It is being believed that the dead lies on it, exactly as if he would use a rod, on his way to the other world, especially when he passes the bridge to heaven. About this rod it is believed that it lightens the path of the deceased person to the other world, and it burns all his sins, so

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<sup>2</sup> Simion-Florea Marian, *Înmormântarea la români. Studiu etnografic*. București, Editura Grai și Suflet – Cultura Națională, 1995, p. 24.

<sup>3</sup> Elena Niculiță-Voroncea, *Datinile și credințele poporului român. Adunate și așezate în ordine mitologică*. Vol. II. Ediție îngrijită și introducere de Iordan Datcu. Editura Saeculum i. o., București, 1998, p. 397.

<sup>4</sup> Simion-Florea Marian, op. cit., p. 25.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 55.

that he will leave clean to the other world<sup>6</sup>. The name that this candle is carrying also suggests the idea of a journey that the deceased person will follow immediately after leaving this world, because the rod is an accessory that is indispensable to any pilgrim.

After the dead was buried for three consecutive nights during that it is believed that the soul returns home, the rod is lighted and a water can, a sponge cake and a towel are laid nearby. This ritual is practiced because it expresses the belief that the dead's soul will return home, will eat from the sponge cake, will drink water and will wipe away the sweat from the effort<sup>7</sup> through the unknown and dangerous places of the other world. But man has to equally reconcile the spirits of the earth, because his material remainings will return to the soil. Therefore it is believed that the rod's light will tame earth's dog<sup>8</sup>, that will not bark any more at the newcomer under these circumstances.

The habit of putting a candle into the hand of the moribund with the purpose of assuring his security in the journey that he starts to the other world is extremely important in the rural communities of the Romanian cultural space. This fact is not only expressed by the diversity of answers at the questionnaires on this topic that I have consulted, and that mention without exception this habit, but also other habits and rituals meant to supply this light, in case it happens that someone leaves this world without having a candle in his hand. Therefore, the importance of this aspect is expressed not only at a quantitative level, by spreading it all over the Romanian territory, but also at a qualitative level through the habits meant to supply the possible absence of the respective candle. In this respect, if someone has died without a candle, when another person is dying, the women that are closely related to the deceased person go to the death watch taking several candles with them: the first one is as an alms gift for the respective dead, and the other ones are for the dead from their families<sup>9</sup>, who did not benefit of the light at the departure of the soul. Furthermore, the fact that someone leaves this world without having in his hand a candle to light his path to the dark world which he will enter, implies with it the guilt of the family, but also of the neighbors and closely related persons, who were not able to watch over him, in order to give him such a useful accessory at the right moment. In a documentary study material from the region of Banat, that is a part of the Ion Muşlea Archives, it is stated that: „if a neighbor has died without candles, 7 houses, neighbor families carry the sin for this death. This is why the neighbours of the dead, not only that they watch upon the sick person so that he doesn't die without the candles for the departure of the soul, but also during the 3 days when the dead stays unburied, they do not work anything in their households, and they mourn for him with their heads uncovered”<sup>10</sup>. In the same

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p. 103.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p. 105.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., p. 106.

<sup>9</sup> Vasile Şişu, *Odiseea sufletului. Epos funerar românesc*. Drobeta Turnu-Severin, Centrul Judeţean de Creaţie Populară Mehedinţe, 2001, pp. 11, 37.

<sup>10</sup> AFC 335, p. 5, Folclor Bănăţan, „*Postul negru*“. Cules de Emilian Novacovicu, învăţător pensionat din Răcăşdia, jud. Caraş. Anul 1932, luna Martie.

document it is mentioned about the black fast and its efficiency in relationship with the replacement of the absence of candles for the departure of the soul. In the same document the black fast is mentioned and its efficiency in relation with replacing the absence of the candles at the departure of the soul. In this respect the „*black fast*” can not only be fasted by the sinners who admit the weight of their sins in order to save their soul from hells swelter; but it can also be fasted by every man or woman who considers him-/herself guilty, for the death of the family member or neighbor without necessary candles at the exit of the soul”<sup>11</sup>. The fast is kept for a period of seventeen days, between august 29, when according to the orthodox calendar the *Beheading of St. John the Baptist* is celebrated and September 14 when *Feast of the Holy Cross* is celebrated. The black fast that is kept during this period, is completed by the spiritual cleaning of the body and by prayers made in the church. This fast means eating almost nothing, because the person is allowed to eat only a crumb of ginger bread, made of cereals flour, and roasted, and drink water, and it is being kept for the forgiveness of the sins, as well as for the ones who have died without a candle, so that they can be taken out of darkness and brought into the light.

A very special case is represented by the suiciders, who by accident, have died without having the candle at the departure of their souls. In the same precious document from Banat, that also contained the piece of information referring to the fast, a very interesting ritual is being related, where the soul is given the candle „It is believed that the soul of the suicider through hanging can be embraced by God, into the light, only if he also given the candles for the soul, otherwise he enters under the domination of satan, in the darkness”<sup>12</sup>. In this respect a white pigeon will be captured, and will be released to fly in front of the funerary convoy, after seven candles have been tied to its body<sup>13</sup>. This way the soul should have the possibility to take the candles that he did not have at the departure of the soul.

Counting on the same efficiency, that of a postume journey having the benefit of the light, through the unknown world that the soul will enter, candles are also being offered as an alms during lifetime, but it is equally believed that the candle offered by the godfathers at baptizing will also be of use: „From the candle that you give at baptizing, will be seen to the other world, because there is no sun. Even if you did not give any other candle as alms, that is one”<sup>14</sup>.

## 2. The departure of the soul and his journey to the other world

The popular beliefs registered in the Romanian cultural space referring to the condition of the soul immediately after death, until the forty days pass, and when according to the religious doctrines, he will participate at the individual

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid., p. 4.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., p. 1.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., pp. 1-2.

<sup>14</sup> Elena Niculiță-Voronca, op. cit, vol. II, Polirom, 1998, p. 462.

Judgment, are slightly different from the concepts of the church. What the two have in common in this respect is the idea that the soul does not leave very fast his house and household, as well as the fact that during this time span the soul is a wanderer. Concerning the first observation, there are plenty of pieces of information according to that the soul sits nearby the icon or over the door as reflected in the beliefs from Moldavia and Transylvania, while the information from the south often refer to a white piece of clothing or shirt that is placed at the mast of the house, believing that the soul that has recently left the body will stay on it: „I put white clothing at the mast of the house where the soul can rest while he stays with us”<sup>15</sup>. „It is said that until six weeks the soul will come and sit itself on the white shirt placed on the mast of the house, towards sunrise. If he has no place where to stay, he leaves soiled; this is how the ritual is from our ancestors, this is how we also mention it”<sup>16</sup>. The information suggests the concern that the ones left behind manifest so that the *white wanderer*, situated at the border between the two worlds should have his last moments of silence.

This special care for the dead is emphasized immediately after the soul has left the body, because both components that previously formed one entity, who was aware of the sense of the world in that he was wandering, suddenly become vulnerable. On the one hand the soul, that is given a great importance during the time span that follows closely, must be helped so that he can travel smoothly in the unknown world in that he entered, and on the other hand he must be guarded and protected so that the bad spirits should not harm him. The death-watch itself and the acts that were performed based on the death-watch had a protective and defensive role. If the dead is not watched all the time from the moment when he died until the moment when the body is descended into the tomb it is believed that he is exposed to the bad spirits<sup>17</sup>, who eagerly wait for a moment to gain an abandoned body. Also related to the body and its relationship with earth in that he will enter, we must also mention that beliefs existing in certain areas, beliefs according to that the earth has its guards that immediately perceive the presence of a newcomer, therefore after the person is buried „It is said: Tonight, the whole night the poor fellow will be barked by the dog of the earth because it doesn't know him”<sup>18</sup>. Sometimes, in order to keep it away, a birch was placed in the coffin, or, with the same purpose the candle was left burning for three consecutive days after the funeral. In order to weaken the bad spirits, sometimes a stone from a place where a house, a reek or a cornfield was struck by a flash<sup>19</sup>.

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<sup>15</sup> Ernest Bernea, *Moarte și înmormântarea în Gorjul de Nord*, p. 25, Informatoare: Sârbu Maria P., 60 de ani, nu știe carte, Runcu, 1930.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., p. 62, Informatoare: Sârbu Maria C., 30 de ani, nu știe carte, Runcu, 1930.

<sup>17</sup> AFC 740, p. 42, Folclor din comuna Purcăreți, jud. Alba, Cules de Gh. Pavelescu. Liceul Aurel Vlaicu Orăștie.

<sup>18</sup> AFC 774, p. 4, Material cules în Sărămaș, jud. Brașov, în anul 1935 de către Ștefan Curcă învățător.

<sup>19</sup> Adrian Fochi, *Datini și eresuri populare de la sfârșitul secolului al XIX-lea: Răspunsurile la chestionarele lui Nicolae Densusianu*. București, Editura Meridiane, 1976, p. 165.



The ones remaining behind must take care that the dead person's soul will arrive in a good place where it will not lack anything. Therefore there are rituals of giving alms for this purpose, sometimes even at the funeral. Sometimes the alms consists of a black hen, corn grains and a wimple<sup>20</sup>. It is believed that the hen given as an alms for the dead will make some room for the soul in the World Beyond by grubbing the earth. In the same manner it will disperse the sins of the dead in the other world. The corn grains are enclosed for the hen to feed itself, and the wimple is believed to be useful to the dead to wipe himself if he will sweat of work in the other world.

An extremely important aspect on the path of the *white wanderer* is represented by the flow of the waters that the soul encounters on his way. So that these waters can be passed easier, because the bridge over them is most of the time a symbolic one, being extremely narrow, sometimes as thin as a hair, sometimes at the alms were given pieces of cloth suggestively named *bridges* or *arches*<sup>21</sup>. On the passage of the dead from home to the cemetery, whenever the funeral convoy was passing over a water however small or insignificant it would be, a piece of white clothing, three feet long, was laid in front of it. The flows of waters represent in fact probations the every soul must pass in order to reach into a happy space in the World Beyond. If the souls will fall from the bridge he will land in hell: 'The bridge is made of a hair. If it breaks he will go with it to hell. If he passes the bridge of the hair without braking it, he goes to heaven'<sup>22</sup>. Because the bridges that appear over these waters are very narrow, they are strenghtened by the piece of clothing laid in front of the funerary convoy. After the dead passes over this piece of clothing, it is fetched and it is kept until after the funeral, when it is given to poor women. The piece of clothing is being used because of an existing belief according to that from the stage of raw hemp until it is turned into clothing the fiber is tortured while it is processed, and the deceased will not have to face any difficulties in the other world<sup>23</sup>. In Moldavia and in Bucovina<sup>24</sup>, nearby the pieces of clothing the alms also includes a pillow. These bridges can be in number of three, one at the way out from the house, one at the way out from the yard, and one at the entrance at the door of the church, or one offered every time after a Gospel is read. The probations that the deceased will have to pass on its way to the other world are a lot more numerous, and we will return to them by the time we will refer to the judgment. For now we will continue to talk about the objects that the family of the deceased person offers as alms or puts into the coffin on the dead persons's side, in order to increase his security in the other world.

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<sup>20</sup> Adrian Fochi, op. cit., p. 165.

<sup>21</sup> Simion-Florea Marian, op. cit., p. 195.

<sup>22</sup> AFC 710, p. 6, Material cules în comuna Popești, jud. Hunedoara, în anul 1935, de către Emilian Fetileanu înv.

<sup>23</sup> Simion-Florea Marian, op. cit., p. 197.

<sup>24</sup> Elena Niculiță-Voronca, op. cit., Editura Polirom, 1998, p. 455.

A very interesting ritual in this respect has been registered in Țara Românească where, „after the dead is buried, a sheep or a lamb has to pass over the grave. The sheep must be wet with water and must shake itself on the grave, so that the water from the wool should put out the flames of hell which could burn the dead<sup>25</sup>.

The efficiency of the alms is expressed in a very suggestive requiem, meaning that it emphasizes the idea of the long journey that the deceased person is engaged, as well as the fact that the remaining relatives can substitute any shortage/lack by undertaking a symbolic journey on his side, during that they will take care of all the things that his soul needs.

Because the road to the world beyond is long and trying, and the alms is interpreted as fulfilling a necessity of the dead, in Țara Românească, after the funeral, someone from the family of the defunct, usually a girl or a woman, will carry water for a period of forty days to a poor family from the village, with two new pots, which they will finally offer as alms to that family. It is believed that by doing this the dead will water his soul until he passes through the customs<sup>26</sup>.

As we have previously stated, in the Romanian popular culture, the passage towards death is seen as a long journey. Nearby the arguments that were already brought into discussion, that underline the concern of the ones that are still alive regarding the preparations for the journey of the dead, meaning that they will take care that the *white wanderer* has light on his path and everything that he needs, we need to add the concern of the ones left behind that the wanderer does not get lost on his way. In the threnes the dead is always made attentive about the he should always follow the right side of the road which is the one that takes him to heaven.

The popular beliefs regarding the choice of the right path, has a remarkable age, being present even in the Egyptian mythology, as the historians of religion have noticed, and it has an excellent plastic representation on the glass icons of Matei Țimforea on the topic of the *Last Judgment*. From the right corner of the icon start three separate roads. The green road is the one of the straight ones, it takes to door of heaven the God-The Father, Jesus and the Virgin Mary are waiting for the straight ones, each of them holding in their right hand a cross and in their left hand a torch. The red road, the one from the middle, descends from the balance of justice, where an angel with a fire-sword and the devil dispute/fight for every soul. One of the two is under the balance of the soul. The other red road, the one from the bottom, is the road of the lawless, and it pointed to the mouth of the monster Leviathan. A group of sinners is following this road, preceded by musicians.

The aspect that probably fascinates the most and that is omnipresent in the entire Romanian cultural place, connected with the journey of the soul towards the happy space of the other world is the one referring to the high customs. The postume itinerary supposes the passage through seven, nine, twenty one, twenty-four or even ninety-nine customs. The belief in the existence of the high customs is

<sup>25</sup> Simion-Florea Marian, op. cit., p. 215.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., p. 255.

a mythological motif very spread in manicheism and mandeism and that has probably a Sumerian origin<sup>27</sup>, is often invoked in eastern Europe. Such an image could be easily connected to the text of the New Testament, to be more specific in *Paul's epistle to the Ephesians* where the devil is called „master of air domination” (Ephesians: 2,2). After the episode in that the evil has been banished from heaven the took the space under his domination. Patristic writers have developed this subject a lot, given its strong component of religious teaching. Here is also the source of the writings of John Climax.

Customs high ground in the story of a popular book called *The Life of St. Basil the New* and belief of the existence of high customs was prolific in the Romanian cultural elements by which it is being referred in many folklore and iconography.

She wove well, with faith in a posthumous journey full of obstacles, and the idea that this way of proceeding is evidence that more important than the court itself, because the souls who can overcome all customs and bridges will reach in heaven, while others, being sinful, will fall from deck.

In the Romanian popular culture, this faith is filled by an episode as spectacular, which refers to the fall of the split angels from heaven. Of these, some fell down on earth, always being among people and instigating them to misdoings, others have remained suspended between heaven and earth, who shall be known as devils or daemons.<sup>28</sup>

Many documents from this country mention about the existence of the customs, but their presence is also identifiable at the burial customs and the ones following the burial. Thus, before the funeral money is often put in the hands of dead or other objects having the role of defending of the tests he will have to overcome when he will pass through customs high. Their number varies from one area to another, from one informant to another. Further we present several testimonies recorded in archival documents, regarding preparation of the dead to pass high customs:

„In the four corners of the coffin is put two lei, for the departed to pay for the 12 customs“<sup>29</sup>.

„A silver coin and a cross of wax are given to him in his hand to be guarded from evil“<sup>30</sup>.

„About the customs it is believed that they are a total of 24. In order to be permitted to pass them the dead is put in his coffin 24 lei tied in 24 corners of handkerchief. This is for paying at the customs. (...)“<sup>31</sup>.

<sup>27</sup> Mircea Eliade, *Istoria credințelor și ideilor religioase*, ed. cit., p. 465.

<sup>28</sup> Simion-Florea Marian, op. cit. p. 286.

<sup>29</sup> AFC 739, p. 30, Material cules în comuna Dolhești, jud. Fălciu, în anul 1935, de către elevul Berbecaru Ioan, Cl. VII-a Școala Normală de băieți Vaslui.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., p. 31.

<sup>31</sup> AFC 774, Material cules în Sărâmaș, jud. Brașov, în anul 1935 de către Ștefan Curcă învățător.

„The human soul passes through the 44 high customs: burglars, whores, drunks, etc. and each addiction has its own custom. It is searched for sins and good deeds and as they are available, they push the soul to good or to bad. There is only the face with its angel<sup>32</sup>.

Sometimes it is believed that the high customs are placed between hell and heaven and the soul must climb, consequently from hell into heaven, following a road full of obstacles: „the devil stays in hell, tied down, and up to God there are 24 customs, with locks and a fire burning in them. The soul starts from hell upwards and burns through the fires of all the customs until it reaches up to God; than he is white, pure clean of sins, of what was black<sup>33</sup>.

For that the soul can pass easier through high customs, „at the funeral 44 handkerchiefs or pieces of cloth with 1 ban on them and a candle are given out, so that the soul can give one at every customs, in order to be released from it<sup>34</sup>.

In addition, for that the customs high road can be passed as easily, „The dead should not be made any node or the strap (the neck) or in line with what is hot, either foot plates etc.. because otherwise he cannot pass the customs<sup>35</sup>.

The subject of the high customs is not missing from the Romanian Orthodox iconography, being present both in Moldova and in other areas of the country. The episode appears on the walls of the monasteries<sup>36</sup> Humor, Arbore Moldova, where you can see a tower with interior stairs and two uncovered platforms. On each floor there are devils and angels guarding. It is believed that souls will go to heaven passing through customs and giving account for their deeds. In iconography souls are claiming their rights, written on a parchment, and giving money to the devils to make them more tolerant. This iconographic motif appears in Maramures, in the church of Căieni (Călinești) and that of Ieud-Deal. Passing through each of the twelve customs, arranged in the form of steps of scale arising from the church Călinești, involves a dispute between an angel and the devil, who each have in hand a parchment on which they had the facts written. The devils show the list ostentatiously and the angels submit while protecting the soul with a baby- face, holding him with the right hand. Under this way of customs clearance there are the two devils that take to hell the souls of the damned: one of them took on his back, bound with a rope, a large number of souls who lost their white coats that they wore before. Another one, put them in a wheelbarrow in order to ease his burden and improve his work. An angel with the sword in his way is trying one last gesture of recovery.

<sup>32</sup> Răspunsurile la Chestionarul lui Nicolae Densusianu: 4555, pp. 117-118, Încețator D. Popescu, 1896, Februarie, 11, Com. Tismana-Gorj.

<sup>33</sup> Elena Niculiță-Voronca, op. cit., Editura Saeculum I.O., 1998, p. 467.

<sup>34</sup> Adrian Fochi, op. cit., p. 249.

<sup>35</sup> AFC 740, p. 31, Folclor din comuna Purcăreți, jud. Alba, Cules de Gh. Pavelescu. Liceul Aurel Vlaicu Orăștie, Informatoare: Raveca Mihai.

<sup>36</sup> Ileana Stănculescu, *Il giudizio universale nella pittura murale esterna del nord della Moldavia*. Prefazioni Cătălina Velculescu, Henry Mavrodin. Edizioni Aspasia, 2001, p. 161.

### 3. The Individual Judgment and the Last Judgment

According to the Romanian popular beliefs, the soul is judged immediately after death to receive punishment or damnation as provided in the Christian eschatology. Unpublished documents containing answers to the questionnaire are often concerned with this detail on the fate of the soul until Last Judgment. The place for waiting is rarely neutral one, where the soul has entered into an existential pause, but often the rest is in heaven or at God. These beliefs constitute a real expression of the fact that in the Christian Dogma, about that the peasant found going to church, there was a much more ancient faith, that continued to join him, whatever the changes that were that were happening in his life: he can not conceive that after death, he will not follow a life under the same parameters with the one from earth. Although until Last Judgment, heaven and hell will be left empty, this court is regarded as the second one: "By the second trial, heaven and hell is empty; souls are in the world, but we do not see them. Heaven and hell are also in this world, but very far; heaven is at sunrise and hell at sunset. When the time of judgment comes St. Peter opens the door and the souls of good ones will enter, and the ones of sinners will go to fire in hell"<sup>37</sup>.

About the time of the trial itself, it is not spoken directly in the popular beliefs. The trial is rather a sequence of evidences, God is gracious, he does not give scary verdicts: divine justice is impersonal, at the level of passed obstacles. Also, the ones remaining alive may help the dying with requiems: „The one who falls under the bridge is fallen, he can be taken out from there from his relatives if they make requiems and remembering for him. There, the soul is cleaned 100 times by fire and water, and when it is clean, he can pass on a bridge of gold, but he will still need nails to keep himself. And after the world will end and will be judged, the ones that God will send to hell, they will still go to heaven but after that will be cleaned. Only those who will not be clean and will not be able leave will be helped out by the Mother of God with her tow at Epiphany. The sinners, that have very heavy sins, their line breaks and they fall back, and no one will be able to get those out, they will remain in the bottom of hell forever and ever"<sup>38</sup>.

This fragment contains references about the way the relatives of the departed may intervene to save him. Related to this aspect are probably the beliefs that those people who had children<sup>39</sup> can pass easier the tests that expect them in the World Beyond. It is equally important to obtain forgiveness for sins committed on earth, mercy: "Be a man however sinful, if alms is made for him, so that others say ‚God bless you for it’ and if 100 of those are praying to God to forgive his sins, God will forgive him and he will enter into heaven"<sup>40</sup>.

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<sup>37</sup> Elena Niculiță-Voronca, op. cit., Editura Saeculum I.O., 1998, p. 467.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., p. 468.

<sup>39</sup> Elena Niculiță-Voronca, op. cit., Editura Polirom, 1998, pp. 571-572.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., p. 476.

To get into heaven, the soul passes over the bridge of heaven, which is sometimes regarded as the last customs. This bridge extends, according to some beliefs, over hell, and the one who tries to pass, is always lurked by the danger of falling. For this purpose bridges or the arches are placed on the way of the dead: "When they go to heaven, they must pass over hell. It was seen as a bridge to bring dead canvas. The soul when he goes, passes over a bridge greased with oil, to slip, therefore the man has nails at his hands and feet so that he can keep himself"<sup>41</sup>. Heaven's deck is divided into three parts: the first part of the deck contains the people who many sins and they are more difficult to escape from hell, the second are those who have neither a lot of sins, but no very little either and the third party are those who still remained on the bridge that have very few or no sins at all. God gives them wings to pass in the World Beyond<sup>42</sup>.

We can hereby see such a great mercy of that the souls benefit in establishing the verdict of salvation, respectively final damnation. They are accompanied by the guardian angel who is always careful soul and protect him, then man himself finds mercy if he made acts of mercy, by helping the poor. To this we have to add the requiems and remembering that the remaining alive keep for the dead and not least to the soul may find an ally in the Mother of God, which stretches the tow from Epiphany and saves this way should from hell's works. An organic generosity that the Romanian peasant has showed continuously and which he has expressed it the most different modes, is well articulated here.

Unlike real courts described most accurately in Western eschatological texts, but also presented as pictorials in their entire complexity, the Last Judgment means according to the Romanian popular imaginary, an expeditious fact. It's like a ticking of a mandatory task in the agenda of centuries: "Judgment will only last for an hour, that's how much it will take, and during that time all souls will be judged. They will go to judgment as sheep at the gorge."<sup>43</sup>

This detail, which suggest the same lack of interest in relation to the Last Judgment comes to reinforce that observation that the articulated eschatological thinking in imaginary Romanian popular culture is not centred on the idea of moral judgments, but is being built on a thinking specific to archaic religions.

The archaic man can not think his destiny posthumously than in context of his ordinary life, together with the ones of his kind, and participation in this fate could not to be hindered in any way. Christianity, a superior religion, articulated the idea of salvation has given meaning to the concept of a judgment, but at even at this point, the Romanian popular imaginary shows a great conciliation of ancient beliefs with new aspects of the Christian religion. He kept morphologically speaking, all the details of the Christian imaginary, but in terms of functionality, it operates the differentiation by the fact that a complex palette for saving the soul,

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<sup>41</sup> Elena Niculiță-Voronca, op. cit., Editura Saeculum I.O., 1998, p. 467.

<sup>42</sup> Simion-Florea Marian, op. cit., p. 289.

<sup>43</sup> Elena Niculiță-Voronca, op. cit., Editura Saeculum I.O., 1998, p. 479.

which compensate the moment of the trial. Iconography on the Last Judgment , concentrated around the balance of the soul, to which we will refer now, has valued even better the aspects of arhaicitate eschatological thinking in this cultural space. Almost without exception, around the soul balance represented in the Romanian iconography, angels and demons dispute the souls among them. The Devil sneaks on the balance pan, along with bad facts, stones, but the balance always tilts to the right, which suggests the saving of the one the is subject to trial. Both, this picture and the elements that we have previously noted that show the mercy that the soul enjoys regarding its eschatological salvation, give us reason to seek explanations for understanding the mechanism which is operating in this respect. In this respect, it is a useful assessment of the history that Christianity had in this space. It is known the Geto-Dacian belief in the immortality of the soul, materialized in a post-existence with equal life on earth, which was not subject to the moral judgment of the soul. No source mentions about such a faith, and nothing makes us believe that it had existed, the more so as in Romanian popular culture we are dealing with this enormous mercy in relation to the posthumous destiny. Therefore, the Geto-Dacian religion, was based on a rudimentary way of thinking under which posthumous destiny was not linked to a moral trial, over which Christianity brought a new type of approach to the afterlife, based on a moral trial. In the Romanian cultural space, the idea of this moral judgment has entered more on a morphological level and less on a functional level. In other words, the idea of the trial was taken over, but the old prototypes to that human relationship to the world beyond was articulated, have proven more powerful, they are responsible for the unlimited confidence in the posthumous salvation of the soul, equivalent to a devaluation at a functional level, a moral trial.

## VIRGIL NEMOIANU – THE IDYLIC DECONSTRUCTIONIST

*“For me, truth is a semantic field.”*  
(VIRGIL NEMOIANU)

COSMIN BORZA

**ABSTRACT.** This paper tries to reveal the manner in which the idyllic nature structural to the Romanian critic and theoretician Virgil Nemoianu fits the deconstructionist dimension of his analytical discourse. On focusing on several theoretical lines elaborated in Virgil Nemoianu’s books, we draw some original conclusions which could even validate the syntagm of “idyllic deconstructionism”. Because he avoids programmatically the confrontation with “totality”, “the centre”, or the “essence”, Virgil Nemoianu is not actually a radical, dogmatic deconstructionist. However, since he praises so passionately the disorganising, indolent energies of the secondary, Nemoianu remains, with a contradictory, yet specific syntagm, an “idyllic deconstructionist”.

**Keywords:** Virgil Nemoianu, idyllic, deconstructionism, Biedermeier, the secondary

Virgil Nemoianu is living a complex style of (biological and intellectual) life. Born in 1940, he spends his childhood in his grandparents’ Banat, constantly moving to and fro between Borloveni and Caransebes; his adolescence and early youth are spent in the country’s capital city, a period recurrently discontinued by brief trips to Europe and America; he reaches full maturity on North-American territory. Hence, there is no wonder he should find it impossible to assume an unequivocal national, cultural, and intellectual identity, although, as confirmed by his theoretical and autobiographical writing, throughout his entire life he has been pursuing the middle course, the safe grounds, and the shielding, idyllically warm spaces. In his own words, an identity paradox marks his life: “with an eye on accuracy, but also owing to sentimental attachment, I’ve often preferred introducing myself as ‘one from Banat’ and not as a ‘Romanian’ [...] Hence, a more accurate definition would be the following: I’m a man from Banat whose first living background was the Bucharest, and the next one the North-American continent”<sup>1</sup>.

Consequently, the professional development of the future comparatist, theoretician and literary critic depended from the very beginning on the success of harmonising the many aspects of his personality. Whereas, at the individual level, the

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<sup>1</sup> Virgil Nemoianu, *Arhipelag interior, Eseuri memorialistice (1940-1975) (Interior Archipelago, Memorialistic Essays)*, Amarcord Publishing House, Timisoara, 1994, pp. 7-8.



young man from Banat expatriated overseas felt he could calmly undertake contradictions, the differences or incompatibilities owed to the metamorphoses of social-cultural backgrounds<sup>2</sup>, at the level of the intellectual-ideological development Virgil Nemoianu would have to make peace once and for all with an eccentric position, which compels the author of *The Taming of Romanticism* to conquer authentic rope dancer agility when moving amongst the diverse currents, attitudes, literary methods he gets in contact with, despite his obvious attempt to delineate and theorise a clear-cut, stable way. Because, even after settling in the USA, seeing his identities, thus, “compelled to take shape” (life begins “being dammed”<sup>3</sup>), we can distinguish in his texts an antithesis between the theoretical positions declared at the thematic and rhetorical level and the discourse-analytical methods used during demonstration, whether we are talking about his books of literary criticism, of philosophy of culture or of essays.

On the one hand, Nemoianu is a self-declared republican conservative, protector of calm and resilient values, and admirer of the classicist organicism and of the “taming” of reactionary or anarchist urges; however, his analyses usually search for revealing the chaotic tensions, the incongruities, antinomies, and conflicts of theories, currents, movements or, plainly, of the literary texts approached, following the trend set off by Paul de Man’s, Derrida’s or J. Hillis Miller’s deconstructionism. To the American professor of Romanian descent, harmony and order may be outrageous and reactionary; “taming” is active resistance against conformism and an opportunity to revitalise, whereas harmony and idyllic character need instability and clashes *par excellence*.

These are the grounds (themselves more or less deconstructionist) on which this study is built; I will try here to reveal the manner in which the idyllic nature structural to the Romanian critic and theoretician matches the deconstructionism of the analytical discourse, crystallised subsequent to the contact with the intellectual American setting.

### Virgil Nemoianu – the labyrinth of theories

The phrase in the title of this study – *Virgil Nemoianu – the idyllic deconstructionist* – is sufficiently oxymoronic so as to appear artificial, both from the angle of set opinions on the deconstructionist discourse and from the perspective of the general directions drawn by Nemoianu’s texts. If the main assaults of deconstructionism are against absolute Truth and against certainties, aiming at the typically postmodernist atomisation of “great narratives”, rejecting “not only the notion of *stability*, which is *continuity*, but also that of *logical sequence* insofar as it makes reference to a certain

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<sup>2</sup> Cf. *Ibidem*, pp. 178-179: “... my soul and mind resembled increasingly to a Victorian house [...] there would be, in this venerable and bizarre house, contradictions, diversities, incompatible levels, disorders, heavy furniture and noble objects, ghosts hidden in ancient armoires [...] But even then this house frame of my mind and soul made me youthful in a special way. I mean I was young not owing to flexibility and availability, such as the other youngsters, but owing to the clear yet diverse personalities I was then able to assume.”

<sup>3</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 372.

antecedence and, even more serious, to an *origin*<sup>4</sup>; moreover, if the idyllic model is perceived as “small scale humanism”<sup>5</sup>, where good manners, order, peace, diffidence, and coherent action dominate, the fine-tuning of the two terms is a mere fantasy. However, the analysis of the rapport to the various theoretical lines presented in Virgil Nemoianu’s books sends to unanticipated conclusions, and it can even validate a construction such as “idyllic deconstructionism”.

In this manner, throughout his intellectual development, Virgil Nemoianu crosses an actual labyrinth of theoretical-literary methods and discourses. From the organicist aestheticism assimilated via Maiorescu and the Sibiu Literary Circle<sup>6</sup> to the impressionist critical approach induced by Negoitescu, from the promotion (not lacking a pronounced critical detachment) of the structuralism in fashion during the ’60s in communist Romania, the young intellectual emigrant crosses easily to the American New-Criticism (which becomes his fundamental model during the ’70s); however, later, he opts for a “more historical, diagnostic-symptomatic” methodology<sup>7</sup>, without spelling out the meaning of this critical metaphor. The definite aspect is that, although he never confesses it explicitly<sup>8</sup>, Nemoianu uses deconstructionist strategies *avant la lettre* on the winding path to theoretical growth. With Nemoianu, this attitude does not emerge because of an intensified polemic spirit, but precisely because of a sympathetic approach to literature, which aims at perceiving nuances, even if they lead to a critical, “unsettling” interpretation<sup>9</sup>. In fact, and he admits it

<sup>4</sup> See Mircea Martin’s foreword, *Deconstruction and Reading*, p. 8, to J. Hillis Miller’s volume, *The Ethics of Reading*, Art, Bucharest, 2007, translation by Dinu Luca.

<sup>5</sup> See Virgil Nemoianu, *Micro-Harmony. The Growth of the Idyllic Model in Literature*, Polirom, Iasi, 1996, translation by Manuela Cazan and Gabriela Gavril, p. 34.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. idem, *Calmul valorilor (The Calm of Values)*, Dacia, Cluj, 1971, where, in the first chapter – *Cateva rosturi ale literaturii (Several Uses of Literature)* – written in 1965, young Nemoianu suggests an eloquent definition of this initial orientation to aestheticism: “The experience of literature is acquired by man and triggers the group of spontaneous, instinctive and unforeseen reactions. The human being enriched and ‘coded’ in this manner will be able to react positively, beautifully, nobly, no longer needing the detours given by a certain long contemplation, no longer needing to put in thorough balance the arguments, the advantages. It’s something similar to saving means.”

<sup>7</sup> Idem, *Arhipelag interior*, edition cited, p. 356.

<sup>8</sup> Nemoianu uses rather restrainedly the term “deconstruction”.

<sup>9</sup> See Nemoianu’s interview in *Adevarul literar si artistic*, no. 646, December 10<sup>th</sup>, 2002, p. 7, where he constructs a very interesting critical self-portrait: “I have also tried to maintain a descriptive note for the monograph dedicated to Doinas, *Surisul abundentei (The Smile of Abundance)*; the careful reader will also perceive critical moments, even in the conclusion. The subjective element? Friendship? I would consider things in slightly different manner. I think that any critical-literary approach is more useful and more fertile when it is rooted in delight and love, rather than in hate or adversity. If I don’t like something or someone, perhaps it’s better if I don’t waste my time, perhaps I should better leave it on to others. I am aware that such an attitude is not at all popular nowadays. The hegemonic literary critique in the West (and more and more frequently in the East) is built on the principles of contrast, of adversity, of cultural creativity (when this is somewhat accepted!) and, consequently, of literary examination. I do not want to make peace with such conduct or manner of thinking. The critical act, as the American essayist Susan Sontag would affirm years ago, would be better off if perceived as some sort of erotic act; hermeneutics is subsequent. Anyway, hate is mere negativity; out of nothing you get nothing. Unless you are or you think you are God”.

himself, synchronised curves, correlativity and visions of fulfilment and of completeness are frequently built according to an “irresistible sense of the dialectical”, even according to an “anti-canonical spirit emerging from idleness and inquisitiveness”, the quarrel with the most antithetical life circumstances<sup>10</sup>.

For instance, the doctoral thesis discussing the idyllic model in literature suggests a picture fairly relevant to the tense polarity of Virgil Nemoianu’s way of thinking.

Written between 1969 and 1971, the author considers that the study is “some sort of transition between the manner of thinking of a young intellectual grown during communism (but opposing its ideology) and the conceptual discipline of the occidental academic world”<sup>11</sup>. While, in the beginning, the subject matter of the thesis is chosen out of an “impulse” to prove his theoretical skills, following the invitation of Univers publishing house to write a foreword to Oliver Goldsmith’s novel, *The Vicar of Wakefield*, the young intellectual detects in such an activity “the gravity centre” of his own being<sup>12</sup>. Because, after having made the first “prudent, orderly, systematic steps”, like a “composed, earnest” doctoral researcher, Nemoianu discovers that the systematic approach of minor authors matches perfectly his “anti-canonical” spirit, and the study begins grasping, to his delight, “the passionate dialectics of the confrontation procedures, the triumphs and defeats registered on both sides, the combinations, deformations and restructuring, the projections on various plans (from the aesthetical to sociological theory, from the political to the philosophical and beyond), the translations necessary to slide from one level to another, the different ways in which durable values, the deceiving masks of traditions would emerge [...]”<sup>13</sup>.

The paradoxical and tense rapport between the thematic level and the discourse one is also obvious throughout the demonstration in the book. Thus, although he does not set in motion an explicit debate, Nemoianu is in opposition to the theories concerning idyll such as they are articulated by Jean Paul and by Schiller (“an epic description of total happiness in a closed universe”, respectively “a poetical representation of innocent and happy humanity”<sup>14</sup>). Dealing with it in the terms of a literary “model”, not in the terms of a genre or of a sub-genre, the author thinks that the idyll goes beyond the chronological boundary of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, in order to form a “secondary” level both for classicism and for romanticism, so that elements of the idyllic model may be found in various forms a lot later, during modernism. From its “secondary” position, the idyllic model “moderates the harshness of the classicist purism, making room to the tangible” and “is situated antithetically in the relation to romantic Titanism, proposing a suggestive, safe background, for adventure and mystery”<sup>15</sup>. Such oxymoronic, mitigatory-reactionary effects are owed to the structural

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<sup>10</sup> Passim V. Nemoianu, *Arhipelag interior*, edition cited.

<sup>11</sup> Idem, *Micro-Harmony*, edition cited, p. 6.

<sup>12</sup> Idem, *Arhipelag interior*, edition cited, p. 408.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 419.

<sup>14</sup> Idem, *Micro-Harmony*, p. 11.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 16.

paradox of the societal model of the idyll. Nemoianu separates the idyll from the pastoral, judging that the idyllic model is not a utopian one; it does not promote “careless ease”, but, on the contrary, it retains imperfection as one of the constitutive elements. As long as the idyllic model does not become a commercial asset, constructing an artificial and “inhuman” image of life, it outlines a “reflection, chiselling and a humanist ideal” of existence, but also maintains “roots in the era’s facts”<sup>16</sup> and, subsequently, synchronizes order and coherent action with instability and incoherence. Virgil Nemoianu does not attempt at all to conceal the second component; moreover, when he analyses the materialisations of the idyllic model in Oliver Goldsmith’s, Goethe’s, Schiller’s, E.T.A. Hoffman’s writings, he highlights their frequent wavering between the illusion of executing an idyllic construction and the disillusion of becoming aware of the impossibility of such an action. In fact, *Micro-Harmony, The Growth and Uses of the Idyllic Model in Literature* also speaks about the theoretician and literary critic’s anxiety; he wants to create a coherent study, but at the same time he can see the gaps and incoherencies in his own edifice. Nevertheless, the theoretical conception matches Nemoianu’s existential view, synthesised excellently in an interview given to Daniel Cristea-Enache: “This is what we need to understand: that we are living in a world of imperfections, we are searching to fix and eliminate them (as we should), and not in a world of utopian and absolute dreams, which is the world of totalitarianism”<sup>17</sup>.

The study on structuralism<sup>18</sup> pertains to the same period of the first theoretical attempts. Impressive owing to the range of its theoretical founding and to the authenticity of the issues approached, this study also undermines its own grounds, with reference both to the author’s attitude on his 1967 research, and to the manner in which Virgil Nemoianu chooses to develop the description of the notion of structuralism.

Hence, once again, *the reading* that Nemoianu does of his own books (in *Arhipelag interior* or in the interviews) is enlightening. The structuralism episode is approached via a double interpretive framework. In the beginning, for the young Romanian intellectual compelled to stand out within “a background of anxiety and hidden threat” of the communist power, the orientation to structuralism is the “escape to a reasonably secluded, somewhat autonomous area” and “ranges amongst the superficial, but well-intended attempts of identifying a modern, reasonable idiom”, where he can express “traditional-sentimental values”<sup>19</sup>. A declared admirer of the promoters of this new theoretical attitude (Tudor Vianu, Mihai Pop, etc.), young

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<sup>16</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 27.

<sup>17</sup> *Romania literara*, no. 12, April 4<sup>th</sup>, 2001, p. 8.

<sup>18</sup> V. Nemoianu, *Structuralism*, Editura pentru Literatura Universala, Bucharest, 1967, with a selection of texts translated by Gabriela Radulescu and Virgil Nemoianu.

<sup>19</sup> Idem, *Arhipelag interior*, op.cit., p. 353 and passim. pp. 353-354: “For me, structuralism was something definite, simple, solid, objective, free of ideologies, sufficiently convoluted and esoteric so as to maintain at a distance the uninvited ones. Structuralism was entirely matching the idyllist notions that had been ingrained in me ever since I was younger [...] Well, structuralism seemed to make possible the precise escape to a small, organised, calm, predictable and harmonious world.”

Nemoianu appears fully conquered by the structuralism conceptualisation and, therefore, proves he is a fervent activist for the designs of the new theoretical branch in vogue during the '60s. It's no wonder that, at that time, the Romanian theoretician arrives at an overstated conclusion: "in front of structuralism [...] literary life gave the impression of a hum"<sup>20</sup>. However, following the contact with the American intellectual setting and following the (self-) critical reevaluation of the texts written in a structuralist manner, Virgil Nemoianu becomes aware that structuralism does not come with the identification of an organicism of life and literature, but it represents a rather enclosed, artificial, inhuman pattern, a sort of theoretical and intellectual bovarism. The autobiographer in *Arhipelag interior* confirms himself the divorce from the orientation fervently gripped during the '60s, by a sentence that could become the motto of an entire generation of Romanian critics and theoreticians: "... for me, structuralism was a social event rather than an intellectual one"<sup>21</sup>.

In fact, although the 1967 study reveals, even by the publication year, its nature of promoter of the structuralist movement within the Romanian area (the label "introduction to..." could at any time be applied to it), *Structuralism* does not show at all a eulogising, apologetic face. Nemoianu's approach would rather target an attempt of conceptual specification, necessary, in the author's opinion, particularly in order to understand more easily the evolution of human knowledge. The author begins from the assumption that the development of human thinking and imagination goes three-way: the major path, "the spiral of human consciousness", relating to the evolution of society; the path of scientific and philosophical knowledge, and also the path of "central concepts". Structuralism is viewed as one of those terms that emerge at a given moment in the humanity's conscience in order to balance the intemperance of the main ideological movement. Therefore, its relevance is limited, determined historically<sup>22</sup>.

Stating that the structuralist method holds a "secondary" role as compared to the historical, philosophical, scientific "principal" of the era, at a moment when structuralism has become an authentic religion of Romanian theoreticians, whereas your own conception on the "secondary" is not clear-cut, there is the (self-) subversive outcome of Nemoianu's attitude. Even the strategy of structuring the study chapters reveals the dialectic evolution, even self undermined, of the theoretical approach. After listing the diverse definitions of the concept, analysing even the philosophical roots of the notion of "structure" or the modulations of structuralism within the American

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<sup>20</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 353.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 354.

<sup>22</sup> It is not at all difficult to highlight in such an approach the seeds of the future "theory of the secondary": "The historical objective succession of the cultural facts and phenomena is accompanied and served by a history, we would say a secondary one, by an evolution of artistic styles and modalities, of the literary forms and tools. [...] A theory of the 'secondary' in culture becomes tempting, the conclusion of which would be, perhaps, that the individuality, the uniqueness of a moment if given by what is secondary, ephemeral, eccentric to it." (*Structuralism*, edition cited, pp. 14-16).

theoretical movements of the type “New Criticism” or “neo-Aristotelians”, Nemoianu arrives at highlighting “the significance of structuralism during our era”, but also the “deficiencies” of the structuralist movement. The Romanian theoretician’s analysis now focuses on the correlation of the structuralist ideas to the mentality of the era that gave birth to it (a method that will, in fact, mark all of his subsequent studies). In such pages, structuralism reveals its limits, its structural illusions, its paradoxical and aporetic nature, and finally, its irreversible journey to self-dissolution. Although aiming at being an integrative movement that conquers “perfection in eternal patterns”, cancelling “the ruptures in the universe” and in the human being, structuralism is “fragility itself”<sup>23</sup>. “Structuralism stresses and frequently generalises the moment of the synthesis of contrasts to the detriment of their fight”<sup>24</sup>, but, Nemoianu states, “the inexorable course of time, the continuous transformation, the perishability – all these aspects that the structuralist thinker wants to ignore – have their revenge, and structuralism (so much dominated by certainty, balance, stability) is the most unstable, the most precarious amongst systems [...] revolutions and turmoil evade it, predictions and retrospectives find it unsatisfactory”<sup>25</sup>. Therefore, what should have been a eulogy collapses into an epitaph.

Even more interesting from the perspective of the materialisations of the “idyllic deconstructionism” are the two fundamental studies during the American period – *Theory of the Secondary*<sup>26</sup> and *The Taming of Romanticism*<sup>27</sup> - authentic hard work of Virgil Nemoianu’s mature, dialectical, deconstructionist-idyllic thinking<sup>28</sup>.

Although published four years after the publication of *The Taming of Romanticism*, *A Theory of Secondary* constitutes a theoretical framework for the essay on the Biedermeier Romanticism, anticipating and developing several of the ideas approached by Nemoianu in the latter. One may even say that the volume in 1989 is the (now) American (of Romanian descent) theoretician’s ideological manifesto<sup>29</sup>. Treated in a superficial, appeaseable manner, or over-interpreted<sup>30</sup>, the

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<sup>23</sup> V. Nemoianu, *Structuralism*, edition cited, p. 80.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 79.

<sup>25</sup> *Passim*, *Ibidem*, pp. 80-86.

<sup>26</sup> *Idem*, *A Theory of the Secondary. Literature, Progress, and Reaction*, The John Hopkins University Press, 1989.

<sup>27</sup> *Idem*, *The Taming of Romanticism. European Literature and the Age of Biedermeier*, Harvard University Press, 1985.

<sup>28</sup> In this chapter, I will present only the general ideas that form the two studies, and then I will dedicate to each of them a section in the dissertation.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. Calin Andrei Mihailescu’s article in *Dictionarul scriitorilor romani*, Albatros, Bucharest, 2001, coordination and scientific revision by M. Zaciu, M. Papahagi, A. Sasu, pp. 440-442, Monica Spiridon’s critical review *Critica ratiunii pluraliste* to the volume *Romania si liberalismele ei*, *Observator cultural*, no. 32, October 3 – 9, 2000, p. 12.

<sup>30</sup> See Ovidiu Hurduzeu’s article, *Elogiul “secundarului”* in *Convorbiri literare*, February 2003, p. 14: “Currently, Virgil Nemoianu is the most lucid and powerful voice of the Romanian culture”, the author also proclaiming “Virgil Nemoianu’s contribution to the new beginning of the Romanian philosophical thinking on its own path.”

volume dedicated by Nemoianu to the “secondary” rarely finds (at least in the Romanian literary sphere) a balanced reaction. Such an exception is given by Mihai Zamfir’s observations to Nemoianu’s last two studies in America – *The Triumph of Imperfection* and *Imperfection and Defeat*, deemed as “collaterally developed demonstrations” of the thesis in *A Theory of the Secondary*<sup>31</sup>. Beyond the pertinent description of Nemoianu’s view on literature, history, philosophy or science, Mihai Zamfir’s essay is enlightening by the manner in which it expresses perfectly the analytical strategy of the theoretician left in the USA: a continuous wavering between the obvious and the paradoxical. Indeed, perhaps also owing to the theoretical height offered by the direct contact with the American cultural trends, Nemoianu does not shy away from stating directly the obvious aspects of the cultural scene, which have been blocked almost close to dissolution, by all sorts of increasingly sophisticated theories and concepts<sup>32</sup>.

By placing at the heart of a 250-page study the common-sense observation that literature is “marginal as compared with the people’s main concerns and with history’s central mechanisms”, with no fear of coming close to the ordinary, and because he stages, starting from such an axiom, an authentic eulogy of the literary functions and influences in the evolution of human mentality and knowledge, Virgil Nemoianu drafts a suggestive chart of this deconstructionist approach. Because, paradoxically, not only the “radical peculiarity of the approach, the unanticipated imaginative leaps [or] the ruptures in the writing”<sup>33</sup>, theorised at the philosophical level by Jacques Derrida and transferred to the literary critical approach by Paul de Man, lead to a deconstructionist grid, but also the game of (self-) undermining implied by the evaluation of facts.

Anyway, the manner in which “the secondary” impacts on the “principal” in *A Theory of the Secondary* resembles the Paul de Man’s definition of the deconstructionist operation: “deconstruction aims at identifying the existence of certain articulations and fragmentations within certain so-called monadic units”<sup>34</sup>, an aspect that I will analyse more thoroughly in the second chapter of my study.

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<sup>31</sup> Mihai Zamfir, “*Ei*” and “*Noi*” in Romania literara, no 10, March 2007, p. 21.

<sup>32</sup> The preference for the clear and “terrestrial” aspects is a constant element in Nemoianu’s approach, ever since the beginnings of his intellectual growth. Thus, the theoretician deplores together with I. D. Sarbu the distortions of the language in the critical and literary discourse: “The critics have begun writing esoterically, while some of the novelists would be understood not even by Blaga; cultured language is isolated in spheres of specialised accents. A critic of the modern music cannot understand a thing from the review of a modern picture or from our young textualists’ hermeneutics”. (*Traversarea cortinei*, correspondence of Ion D. Sarbu and Ion Negoitescu, V. Nemoianu, Mariana Sora, Editura de Vest, Timisoara, 1994, foreword by Virgil Nemoianu, edition supervised by V. Nemoianu and Marius Ghica, p. 243).

<sup>33</sup> As Mircea Martin describes the “difficulty” of the Derridean texts, in the foreword to *The Ethics of Reading*, edition cited, p. 7.

<sup>34</sup> Paul de Man, *Allegories of Reading. Figural Language in Rousseau, Nietzsche, Rilke and Proust*, Yale, U.P., New Haven, London, 1979, p. 249.

The other fundamental study, *The Taming of Romanticism*, announces from the title the bipolar direction of the theoretical approach. The term “taming” refers to the idea of control, mitigation, moderation, specific to the idyllic model approached in *Micro-Harmony*, whereas the association with the revolutionary, excessive, rhetorical romanticism is an oxymoron that goes back to the tension between the “secondary” and the “principal” in *A Theory of the Secondary*. The methodology undertaken by the author is also strongly influenced by the paradoxical assumption in which the analytical approach is rooted. Nemoianu’s study aims at abandoning the approach of romanticism in the terms of “fixed amount”, in order to consider it a cultural process holding a peculiar and challenging dynamics. This is why, although fully aware of the conceptual revolution started by the prescription of the “Biedermeier Romanticism”, the theoretician feels the need to constantly announce the limits of his own edifice. “Any literary explanation is the projection of a multi-dimensional reality onto a simple, horizontal plan”, Virgil Nemoianu notes in the explanatory postscript to *The Taming of Romanticism*<sup>35</sup>, as if attempting a justification of the use of more reading frameworks that lead invariably to the same result. For instance, the historical and comparative method that searches for the breaks in and the fall of *High Romanticism* in order to grant freedom of movement to the *Biedermeier Romanticism*, follows almost without any syncope in the case of “great” literatures – English, German, and French. However, in the analysis of the Eastern European Romanticism, the author finds it mandatory to perform ample theoretical, and even stylistic or rhetorical spins, because the primary term (“the principal”) – High Romanticism – is missing. This is why, the postscript to the study where the discussion of the “methodology”, of the “notion of period”, and of the “utility of the study” is suggested turns into a relativising approach typical to Nemoianu’s ideology.

### ***A Theory of the Secondary – the (dis)harmony of the paradoxical and the obvious***

As an approach of marginal nature, but also of exaltation of the functions of the literary process in the evolution of human knowledge, *A Theory of the Secondary* is, as mentioned, the ideological and methodological nucleus of Virgil Nemoianu’s creation<sup>36</sup>. In this study, the theoretician merges disarmingly obvious observations with those that are paradoxically inhibiting, in order to recreate a complete narrative of the always tense, but permanently possible to harmonise relation between the aesthetical, the imaginary and the scientific, philosophical or political discourses.

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<sup>35</sup> Virgil Nemoianu, *The Taming of Romanticism. European Literature and the Biedermeier Era*, Curtea Veche, Bucharest, 2004, second edition, translation by Alina Florea and Sanda Aronescu, p. 287.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. idem, *Arhipelag interior*, edition cited, pp. 513-514: “[...] *A Theory of the Secondary*, in the end my most important book, the one that represents me psychologically and philosophically. It is there that, in the clearest manner, you will see intersecting the professional and the ideological. Indeed, the book is a glorification of imperfection and a sentence of the utopian, feelings that, of course, I had ever since I was young, coming – how else? – from a tendency to contradict the social communist experience.”



Throughout the demonstration, the author feels the need to challenge the interpretive inertia of two contradictory attitudes. On the one hand, *A Theory of the Secondary* finds an essential objective in “providing to the readers a model for the understanding of literature without illusions, in its (scandalous or beneficial) conflict with history”<sup>37</sup>. In this manner, irrespective of how much some literary theoreticians and critics would want to induce the idea of the centrality of literature within the humanity’s explanatory systems, its authentic and fertile field, Nemoianu states, must be located at the margin of people’s regular concerns, at the periphery of major historical mechanisms. On the other hand, simultaneously with and complementary to the indication of the literature’s adequate position on the scale of human interest, Nemoianu attempts a defence of the literary phenomenon against the increasing number of detractors who, programmatically or not, cancel its value and functions. Therefore, a complex network of repeated discourse masks and exposures, of continuous interchanges of theses and antitheses, turns *A Theory of the Secondary* into the book of “fertile pluralities”, of “healthily disordered” diversities, where, indeed, “truth is a semantic field”<sup>38</sup>.

Even the structure of the book stimulates the idea of a tessellated edifice, where each statement is questioned in the immediately following paragraph, so that, by means of a polyhedral reflection, it should map out a clear-cut, coherent fragment from the general picture configured only in the end of the reading.

Organised in three parts, of similar lengths, the study *A Theory of the Secondary* develops gradually, by prolepses and flashbacks, by categorical statement and convincing negations, toward the concluding chapter, bearing the title *A Brief Theory of the Secondary*. Up to this point, Virgil Nemoianu suggests a discourse in which the notion of balance is given precisely by the eccentric positioning from the premise. If the first part is named *A Theory of the Rearguard, Literature as scandal*, the other two units of the book get moderate titles: *Progress and Its Complements. Literature as Mediation* and *Alienation and Organicism. The Importance of the Secondary*. In their turn, the chapter titles are characteristic to the author’s analytical attitude. For instance, the opening part, under the label of “literature as scandal”, comprises three sections in which, first, the theoretician asks *Is literature always reactionary?*, and then the “secondary” is approached both from its approach as a “hero”, and from the one as a “victim”. The second part also, dedicated to “literature as mediation”, develops its essential theses in the sixth chapter, *Language against history: the secondary as textual and political decentralising*. Finally, the concluding chapter of the last part and of the entire study, where we expect a stress on the “importance of the secondary” within the process of alienation and fulfilment of world organicity, opens with a statement that specifies

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<sup>37</sup> Idem, *A Theory of the Secondary. Literature, Progress, and Reaction*, Univers, Bucharest, 1997, in Romanian by Livia Szasz Campeanu, p. 9.

<sup>38</sup> Idem, *Romania si liberalismele ei. Atractii si impotriviri, (Romania and Its Liberalisms. Attractions and Oppositions)* The Publishing House of the Romanian Cultural Foundation, Bucharest, 2000, p. 159.

the fundamental direction of the ideology and of the discourse in the book: “Any theory of the secondary must be, at the same time, a theory of the corruption, of the subversive and of decadence”<sup>39</sup>.

Therefore, by means of typically deconstructionist strategies, Virgil Nemoianu reaches observations that the radical promoters of deconstructionist did not even dare to postulate, fearing that the challenging of the monopole of the ontological gaps and absence (that probably characterise the human being) would imperil the validity and authenticity of their theories. Using an “idyllic” version of deconstructionism, the American theoretician of Romanian descent creates a series of interpretations relevant not only to the literary analysis, but also to philosophical, historical, social approaches, which can strengthen even the deconstructionist approach (increasingly consumed by its own inertia during the last years).

Having arrived here, it is necessary to present Virgil Nemoianu’s standing with reference to the deconstructionist movement. This conceptual parenthesis should clarify the incongruity of two preconceptions that could be implied by the paradoxical fusion of the idyllist ideology with the strategies of deconstruction: namely that Nemoianu does not understand adequately the deconstructionist phenomenon, or that he distorts its constitutive principles.

From the beginning, a common-sense comment should be made: Nemoianu does not situate himself at all in the group of the admirers of postmodernist deconstructionism. He couldn’t, in any case, given the theoretician’s conservative existential philosophy. Therefore, each time that he finds it possible, Virgil Nemoianu articulates his disagreement with the agnosticism and extremism of the promoters of the direction in the ’80s, in the United States. However, only a careful analysis of the author’s polemic discourse can distinguish the exact implications of the dismissal of Derrida’s or Paul de Man’s conception on the aesthetical, the literary, and the philosophical.

For instance, *A Theory of the Secondary* includes in the very first statement a definition in the negative of the methodology of the study: “In our era, dominated by postmodernist de-structuralism, by the meta-fictional imagination and non-convincing epistemology, as well as by the post-historic dilemmas and anxieties of the Occident, the time has come, perhaps, to think again about literature and attempt to rehabilitate it in front of the increasing wave of doubts and, sometimes, of the violent attack against it as institution or as practice”<sup>40</sup>. Consequently, deconstructionism is first synonymous to “doubt” and accused that it would “attack violently” the literary phenomenon. A few lines further down, Nemoianu names the deconstructionists “utopian revolutionaries” and rejects Jacques Derrida’s action, who would aim at “dethroning the principal” and replace it with “an

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<sup>39</sup> Idem, *A Theory of the Secondary*, edition cited, p. 187.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 5.

absence”, and even set in the place of this “gap” the kingdom of literature<sup>41</sup>. Seventy pages further on, the ideologist of the “theory of the secondary” separates again from the author of *The Dissemination*: “Many have read Derrida’s and his disciples’ deconstructionist theories as a call to marginality: it would perhaps be fair to describe Derrida as an adversary of the principal, related to the egocentrism by the stress he puts on it rather than an apologist of the secondary”<sup>42</sup>. On the contrary, says Nemoianu, his approach does not challenge the primacy of the “principal, it only undertakes a demonstration of how literary imagination models science, philosophy, politics, in the history of humanity. However, paradoxically, so typical for Nemoianu, the theoretical justification of such a perspective is offered even by the representatives of the deconstructionist movement: “Some have gone to suggesting even that history is fiction. It would be more appropriate to say that the opposition between literature and history is identical to the one between the non-determination of the literary work (so eloquently presented by modern critics, from Derrida to Hillis Miller) and the historic pressure towards fixation, precision and coherence. The non-determination of literature pushes brutally back toward a moment that always precedes the historic act in an unbiased manner. The irony is that such opposition implies, at the same time, from literature, a greater amount of understanding of history and a deeper identification with it [...]”<sup>43</sup>. “This is how, oscillating among detachment, fault, retraction, but also identification or consubstantiality, Virgil Nemoianu uses a deconstructionist map even in presenting his relation to deconstruction.

I cannot close this explanatory parenthesis without reminding the importance of the implicit deconstructionist strategies for the demonstration in *A Theory of the Secondary*: while Nemoianu does not even dare to access the theoretical aporias that attempt to unveil either the nothingness / the absence, or the “well structured solidity” at the heart of existence, he however proves genuine fervency in the analysis of the zones situated in the near proximity of the “centre” “inhabited by plurality and imperfection, by diversity and secondary, by despair and concentration, by inconsistency and detail, by variety, digression, alienation”<sup>44</sup>.

As he avoids programmatically the confrontation with “totality”, with “the centre”, with the “essence”, Nemoianu is not actually a radical, dogmatic deconstructionist. However, as he praises so passionately the disorganising, indolent energies of the secondary, aiming at negligence, protraction, (self-) undermining, articulating at the same time the belief that “the crucial gift of the perpetually renewed, perpetually ephemeral defeat represent one of the most charitable and

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<sup>41</sup> Cf. *Ibidem*, p. 5: “As opposed to Jacques Derrida, for instance, I do not want to reverse this rapport. As opposed to the utopian revolutionaries, I do not seek to dethrone the main, to replace it with an absence, or, maybe even more useless, to set a ‘main’, a centrality where another one has been before.”

<sup>42</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 73.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 206-207.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 8.

most precious pieces in the endowment of the human being, the faithful source of all our gallantries and hopes”<sup>45</sup>, the phrase “idyllic deconstructionist” fits Nemoianu like a glove.

Only when perceived through this filter is Nemoianu’s book understandable in the multitude of its implications. In order to prove the fecundity of the previously outlined interpretive grid, I will describe in this part of the study three of the deconstructionist-idyllic positions in Nemoianu’s book, i.e. the three phrases suggested by the author as nuclei for each of the parts of the volume: “literature as scandal”, “literature as mediation”, and “literature as imperfection”. If I were to formulate in a synthesised manner Nemoianu’s theory on the secondary, starting with the three phrases, it would be like this: literature seems scandalous and reactionary from the perspective of major human ideologies (historic, scientific, philosophical, and political), but, precisely by its incessant opposition to the historic progress, literature mediates the individual’s access to monstrous, excessive transformations of the “principal”, providing the dominant ideological discourse with a human side, an effect of reality. However, “the secondary” of the artistic imagination can never replace “the principal” of the philosophical or scientific thinking, precisely because literature holds the most striking self-reflexive function, permanently aware of its imperfection, non-completion and non-determination, which set it invariably close to the defeat specific to any human being throughout its existential journey. Consequently, Nemoianu postulates, the literary phenomenon also holds a redeeming, refreshing side, as it manages to determine man to accept and assume his faulty nature.

Nemoianu dedicates the first three chapters of the volume to the phrase “literature as scandal”, including here multiple references to the mediating function or to the imperfection of literature. Here, the author brings together a series of brief case studies, aimed at supporting Lionel Trilling’s thesis in *Beyond Culture*, according to which the writers commonly considered “monumental representatives of our era” are at least “indifferent to the ideas and emotions of liberal democracy”<sup>46</sup>. On the other hand, the creators of literature are conservative, in a remarkable amount, and they monumentalise the critical function of literature. By their reactionary spirit against the innovative tendencies of society, they merely defend the authenticity of the aesthetical approach, as “literature and art do not fit the pattern of human order: they pertain to irrationality and to the hazardous, and the surprise, the refuse and the dispersion belong to their very essence”<sup>47</sup>.

As an outcome of such common-sense observation, Virgil Nemoianu suggests a valuing of the reactionary writers who “fight against despair and pessimism, against chaos and lack of trust” to the detriment of progressive artists who “accept serenely the role of instrument of history and abandon themselves to

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<sup>45</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 218.

<sup>46</sup> Apud *Ibidem*, p. 11, Lionel Trilling, *Beyond Culture*, New York, Viking, 1965, pp. 166-167.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 13.

commonplace and conformism”<sup>48</sup>. Actually, the theoretician’s deconstructionist urge in *A Theory of the Secondary* aims at unveiling the “node of conflicts”, the “group of antagonisms” involved by any historic situation that, simultaneously, attempts to cover, to cancel, to even them out.

However, although Virgil Nemoianu is aware that the reactionary literary answer may generate “historic disorder and social turmoil”, the analytical approach in *A Theory of the Secondary* does not lead to the postulation of emptiness (typical to deconstruction), of the absence of stability of the existence. Because, fully complying with the internal logic of Virgil Nemoianu’s thinking and methodology, any deconstructionist urge finds an idyllic balance, so that, instead of irremediably destabilising, literature “represents a ‘genuine’ solution to the dilemmas of a historic era: [it] is sincerely considerate with people’s anxieties and uncertainties, it purifies and balances them, it transforms them into a ‘Grecian urn’, if I may be allowed to say it”<sup>49</sup> (s.m.C.B.). Or, more accurately, using an expression typical to Virgil Nemoianu, “the harmony and order [of literature] are reactionary”<sup>50</sup>.

In order to explain even better the “decentralised dialectics” implied by the literary phenomenon when the “huge monolithic systems” of the centre no longer function normally, but merely perform a levelling out, (auto-) cancellation in terms of their relevance to human existence, Nemoianu illustrates his theoretical ideas by analysing two literary texts: *Coriolanus* by W. Shakespeare and *Doctor Faustus* by Thomas Mann.

*Coriolanus* is chosen in the demonstration precisely owing to the confrontation between the exegetes who considered it a progressive creation, therefore complying with the ideology of the era, and those who characterised it in the terms of a “reactionary” text. For the first category of literary critics, the main character is just another “one defeated” and fits perfectly the class of the individuals who “have to pay a terrible price” because of their incapacity of “rising to the level of social-sexual expectations and to the standards of their world”<sup>51</sup>. On the other hand, the supporters of the reactionary nature of *Coriolanus* believe that the meanings of the text must be sought after at the level of the “masked”, implicit oppositions between the hero and the society, family, and even between the central character’s conscience and his own interior urges, a perspective that grants complexity to the main character and moderates / cancels the moralising side of the Shakespearian creation. Agreeing with the latter interpretations, Nemoianu develops the analysis toward displaying the multiple implications held by the reactionary character of Shakespeare’s play. Throughout his demonstration, the theoretician temporarily turned into a literary critic starts with highlighting the accents shifts *Coriolanus’* author produces as compared with Plutarch’s biographical essay. Without staging an idealisation of his

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<sup>48</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 12.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 17.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 17.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 38.

hero, Shakespeare favours Coriolanus and makes it possible that the tragic aspect of his existence be born not out of foolishness, wickedness or mediocrity, but out of a confrontation of its subjectivity (be it marked by numerous deficiencies) with the artificial and levelling limitations of the social dimension.

From these interpretations suggested by the gaps in the text, from what is subjacent to the oeuvre, Virgil Nemoianu leads the analysis toward the identification of Coriolanus' case with the one of the "secondary" within its positioning in relation to the "principal"<sup>52</sup>. Consequently, Coriolanus' revolt and defeat following the confrontation with the suppressing mechanisms of the social and of the political denote the predestined victimisation of the human individual confronted with the relation to the forces of the "principal". And *Coriolanus*, filtered by such deconstructionist framework, reveals in the end of Nemoianu's demonstration its soothing-idyllic character: "... those retrogressive and defeated, the revolt and regression may show the path forward, in our case the path toward individuality, liberation, alienation"<sup>53</sup>.

The second literary text aims at highlighting the "skandalon" aspect of literature on completely different grounds, but the interpretive method and the conclusions of the analysis are similar. If Shakespeare's *Coriolanus* demonstrates that alienation and the condition of victim become *sine qua non* clauses of historic progress, Thomas Mann's *Doctor Faustus* should reveal the manner in which the reaction / the revolutionary attitude manages precisely by means of the defeat undergone to balance the univocal nature of the social-political "principal". In order to reach such an interpretive objective, Virgil Nemoianu strives to understand the opposition between Serenus Zeitblom and Adrian Leverkühn beyond "what the narrator (and perhaps even the author) would like to make us believe"<sup>54</sup>. Therefore, the author points toward the lack of credibility of all of Zeitblom's information and suspicions; he demonstrates the reversal of the rapport of forces between the central characters in their relation to the idea of organic (the rational and balanced Zeitblom is the one who disassembles programmatically the synthesis attempted by the eccentric and Dionysian Leverkühn<sup>55</sup>) and manages to characterise paradoxically

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<sup>52</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 53: "Progress means exhibition and explanation. Progress means advance toward a contractual and non-integrated condition. Progress means the loss of an enormous potential that will never be exploited. Therefore, *Coriolanus* is a tragedy of regret and recollection. Coriolanus is destined to be defeated, but his defeat must be perceived by the public as a veritable loss, as a renunciation to the human substance and to the ethic value. [...] progress gains meaning only when accompanied by a full interior perception of the defeat and of the values left behind".

<sup>53</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 54.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 56.

<sup>55</sup> Cf. *idem*, *Calmul valorilor*, edition cited, the essay *Swift among styles*, pp. 93-101, where Nemoianu uses also deconstruction by unveiling the obvious when he proves that Swift is not a predecessor of the absurd, nor is he a satirical by excellence, but a mere "incurable classicist": "Swift never intends to caricaturise or distort, he merely performs a usual arithmetic operation: he measures by using the standard of the simple classical logic, the actual fact, and he trims anything that exceeds his standard in one direction or another".

the two heroes: Adrian Leverkühn represents “an image of alienation and freedom, of marginality and of creative capacity”, typical for a “*via dolorosa* of lucidity and sacrifice”. In an antithesis to the tragic hero, to the victim Leverkühn, Zeitblom is the “executive agent of the community and of its history”<sup>56</sup>. Deconstructed and disintegrated in this manner, Thomas Mann’s novel outlines by its two central characters the exact tense relation between the “secondary” (Leverkühn) and the “principal” (Zeitblom) and allows Nemoianu another deconstructionist-idyllic statement of the principles of the “theory of the secondary”: “The principal may become demonic and it proceeds in this direction when it suppresses the secondary, namely when it ignores, and even abolishes diversity, plurality, alienation, irrationality, reaction. The things that led to the historic horrors were Adrian’s marginalisation, defeat and sacrifice, and not his self-assertion, work or ideas”<sup>57</sup>.

The second and the third parts of the study *A Theory of the Secondary*, structured around the phrases “literature as mediation”, respectively “literature as imperfection”, describe the theoretical ideas in the first chapters by extending the relevance of the notion “secondary” to the exterior of the literary phenomenon as well. In order not to protract excessively the analysis in this chapter of my study and to avoid potential repetitions, I will resume to presenting only two demonstrations specific to Virgil Nemoianu, from the large number of aesthetical, political, philosophical applications, by which the author attempts to justify the validity and value of his own theory.

With the purpose of reaffirming the confidence in the mediating and moderating function of literature, in the fifth chapter of the study Virgil Nemoianu lists the various modalities through which the dialectics of illness helps in understanding cultural history. The theoretician of “the secondary” develops Susan Sontag’s explanations in *Illness as Metaphor* and reiterates a series of analyses from *Micro-Harmony*, so that he manages to delineate, within several episodes in the history of humanity, the moments where the ideology of the “principal” reveals its limits, artificiality, in-humanity. Because in front of the outcome of illnesses such as plague, tuberculosis or cancer, no philosophical, scientific or sociological theory doesn’t manage to enforce its principle, thus proving their uselessness. However, Nemoianu shows it, the secondary of literature comes to have a much happier relation with the disastrous displays of diseases. Where “the principal”, from its height, fails irremediably, “the secondary” manages to infiltrate almost unperceived and offer at least the impression of balance and harmony, which seemed forever lost. Oscillating with agility between such observations (now obvious, next paradoxical ones), Virgil Nemoianu shows that the cultural phenomenon “attracts illness in and toward humanity, knits it closely in an intimate fabric, with numerous fibres of meaning and of value, and thus – to a certain extent – neutralises its blind,

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<sup>56</sup> Idem, *A Theory of the Secondary*, edition cited, p. 69.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 68

annihilating powers”<sup>58</sup>. Science finds remedies to illnesses on the long term, but it will never be able to persuade the individual to accept that illness is an essential element of his existence. This is the task – on an even longer term – of literature.

The final part of the book brings at least one other essential interpretive demonstration with the purpose of understanding adequately the ideology and methodology founding *A Theory of the Secondary*. This is the ninth chapter – *The Dialectics of Imperfection: Girard, Blaga, Serres*. Prior to coordinating all the interpretive paths toward a concluding chapter, Virgil Nemoianu suggests an interesting *mise en abyme* of his own theoretical conception. Aware of the novelty of the perspective in *A Theory of the Secondary*, the author anticipates the wonder of more categories of readers, owed to the uncommonness of the appearance of the merits of imperfection, of reaction and of the secondary in the public discourse. Hence, the theoretician announces explicitly his likes, admirations, influences, but also the detachment from other conceptual / ideological trends.

Beyond the more or less sympathetic observations that Nemoianu brings to Girard’s, Blaga’s or Serres’ texts, the fundamental part that defines Nemoianu’s idyllic deconstructionism is the sentence that postscripts them: “If the observations above leave you with the feeling they are fragmented and disjointed, they have managed to convey their message, outlining a consistent portrait of the hermeneutical process in the field of ‘symptomatic’ writing. The field is enormous: it speaks of marginalities, of subjacent and concealed currents, of surface signals, of lateral deviations, of thorough details and imperfection. [...] it is difficult to imagine a continuation of the ‘real’ philosophy (of the civilised discourse, in general) in the absence of writings on the world of the secondary. Unavoidably, emaciation would follow – a reduction to logical formalism”<sup>59</sup>. The same would occur – I can state it without doubt while finishing reading the demonstration in *A Theory of the Secondary* – with the deconstructionist movement if it weren’t, for instance, for an idyllist “distortion”, of the type Virgil Nemoianu, which should grant it an effect of reality.

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<sup>58</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 97

<sup>59</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 184.





**BODIES OF BUTTERFLIES.  
TRANSFORMED BODIES AND THE TRANSFIGURATION OF  
FICTIONAL WORLDS IN *ORBITOR*, BY MIRCEA CĂRTĂRESCU**

**ELENA CRAȘOVAN**

**ABSTRACT.** Mircea Cărtărescu's trilogy begins with the exposition (and the exposure) of the theoretical body, a mixture of oriental doctrines and postmodern fantasies, canceling the taboos of Western tradition, emphasizing strange symmetries or bizarre visions, trying to reach the form and destiny of a butterfly, in its metamorphosis from larva to flight. While such observations about the proliferating postmodernist metamorphoses, tending to replace the schemata of high-modernism, have become commonplaces of interpretation, less has been said about the characters' reluctance in following the narrator's vision. Although it claims to follow Roland Barthes's model of writing and reading as erotic acts, the novel describes a rather sadistic eros, marked by ritualized dissections and eviscerations. The concrete bodies refuse to freely show themselves in all their (butter-)flying glory. Instead of splendor (as announced by the model), we are shown the atrocity of violation and the grotesque succession of mutilations; all these speed up hurry the metamorphosis artificially and shed light (in the most concrete-carnal meaning) on the "butterflies" inside the body (the hemispheres of the brain, a section of the spine, the pelvis bones, the female genitals). The final goal is to access a superior fictional world, transfigured by these sacrifices, to tame the God brought into being. This process has an analogue in the meta-narrative world, in the relationship between the female bodies, reluctant to obey the marvelous metamorphoses the narrator would prescribe. The double subversion, feminist and actantial, represents a typically postmodern portable schematization of the modern revolutionary and foundational gesture, making the text function as a schematized replica to the historically modern emancipatory gesture.

**Keywords:** metamorphosis, (biblical) revelation, Barthes' theory of writing and reading as erotic acts, fictional worlds

**1. Under the Sign of the Butterfly. On the Corporeal Scheme and Metamorphosis**

Cărtărescu's massive trilogy is held together by the narrator's powerful (prophetic) discourse, the essayistic-visionary digressions made by Mircea (the narrator-protagonist), which obsessively orbit around a dominant theme: the various hypostases of the human body. Right from the beginning we are invited to

witness the “deliberate construction of corporality”<sup>2</sup>: starting from the antithetic, dualistic perception of the simultaneously obscene and divine body, Mircea produces a hybrid, hallucinatory discourse, mixing up the Biblical and Medieval sources with the Enlightenment philosophy, seasoned with body images from the Far-Eastern doctrines.

One of the analogies which cancel the traditional oppositions between reason and instinct is that between the sexual and the cerebral triangle, the symmetry between the lower and the upper body, an idea which can be found in the Oriental systems of symbols (and, more explicitly, in the Jewish corporeal scheme)<sup>3</sup>. The narrator describes an inversion of physiological functions, invents a metaphor of physiology, in order to transgress the incompatibilities and to achieve a holistic perception of the body: “*Because the diaphragm, like a wall between two kingdoms, divides our body into two zones with opposed polarities... Both of them, although on different levels of existence, live deeply immersed in immortality. In the orgasm of the mind and in the syllogisms of fecundity, in the brain’s sperm and in the memory of the ovaries is revealed – always in two different guises: angelic and demonic, masculine and feminine, the terrible cosmos, the bloody item of jewelry in which we live*” (I, 60).

According to these symmetries, the spermatozoa and the ovules travel to melt their brains and the fecundation is, first of all, a cognitive experience while the brain activity is the “*copulation between synapses accompanied by the ecstatic ejaculation of serotonin*” (II, 390). The symmetry and juxtaposition of contraries, the meeting between opposed poles, traditionally thought to be incompatible, is, in Cărtărescu’s novel, the “revelation”, the “explosion of light”, the “blinding” core of being.

The entire body becomes a sense organ cosmically augmented, a “*cosmic body*”, the physiology, the reflexes are interrogated and integrated in a cosmic perception of the insignificant, while the cosmos is humanized: “*The universe is in no way a clockwork mechanism, but a soft architecture like that of the human body, a temple of membranes, a basilica of wrinkling teguments, a cenotaph of mucilage, with no sharp angles and lasting materials, where the human being produces the dreams, thoughts and illusions, the human time and language*” (I, 173).

Mircea imagines a “simultaneously hyper-realistic and dreamy anatomy, an extension of the known body, an overflow of being out of itself, an ek-stasis”<sup>4</sup>. Simultaneously felt as blessings and curses, this symmetry and this exterior projection of the body impose a double living. Prisoners of the flesh and participants to the nature of God, Cărtărescu’s characters live their body (em-bodiment) as inmates of an „erotic purgatory”<sup>5</sup>: “*We already take part in God’s being, We all secrete from the bushes under our arms, from the fat on our thighs and especially from the shell on our shoulders, a perfumed light which wraps us in a kind of shuttle* (I, 215). *We are very close to truth, good and beauty, three words for the tank of light at the core of our lives, that lightening which rips our body in twain from the brain to the sex and makes them coalesce into a single, blinding, blinding sun*” (I, 319).

<sup>2</sup> Simona Sora, *Regăsirea intimității*, București, Editura Cartea Românească, 2008, p. 246.

<sup>3</sup> Annick de Souzaenelle, *Simbolismul corpului uman*, Timișoara, Editura Amarcord, 1996 pp. 14, 58.

<sup>4</sup> Adrian Oțoiu, *Proza generației ’80. Strategii transgresive*, Pitești, Editura Paralela ’45, 2000, p. 131.

<sup>5</sup> Paul Cernat, *Un corp la cea mai înaltă viziune*, in “Observator cultural”, nr. 131/2002, pp. 11-12.

This participation to the nature of God verily by the corporeal existence is closely linked with the central (structuring) metaphorical or mythical vehicle of the book which is to be found in metamorphosis. From birth to death, human life obtains in a continuous transformation, changing from one state to another, in its search for a perfection that transcends the present forms. In his diary Mircea Cărtărescu confesses that he is trying to rewrite Kafka's *Metamorphosis* in a Proustian manner. The entire novel is placed under the sign of the butterfly and its metamorphosis from larva to flight. The human body is like the butterfly's in so far as it is beating the air with its wings simultaneously towards the past and the future: a legible past, as it is the already-lived/already-written, a pre-visitable future, while it is just the book being written upon. And it is a butterfly body because it is subjected to metamorphoses, just like the body of the chrysalis and as such it secretes "a silken thread" waiting to be gathered home by the angels of Apocalypse. Life, the present is like "the worm-like butterfly body, between its two wings".

"Being marked with the sign of the butterfly" can act as the founding moment for the personal myth<sup>6</sup>, which tells the story of the metamorphosis, marking the difference between the larva and the celestial body; this is an idea which will imprint the characters' destiny: "*We are the larva of a celestial being which is made manifest in the trunk of the complex brain-spinal chord in our bodies. With the spinal chord marrow as its roots and with the two hemispheres inside the skull, like two flesh-cotyledons, it looks exactly like a tiny plant in its first stages of development after it has just come up. Flesh is the land in which it was planted and which it will exhaust, the brain will also be consumed and will dry up like an empty nutshell, and from its middle will burst, fresh and brightening, the two leaves, or wings of the soul, the wings of the spirit, which, dressed in the glory of a celestial body, will be planted on a new earth, under a new heaven*"<sup>7</sup> (I, 61).

In this passage, the text receives apocalyptic resonances. And, from this point on, the structure of the book becomes clear in its dependence upon the apocalyptic myth which is meant to give meaning to the personal and collective history. The goal is, at a primary level of interpretation, similar to the ones inscribed in the New Testament teleology: to transgress the dichotomies between the lower and the upper body, flesh and spirit, what is clean and what is dirty. Through their metamorphosis, which implies the acknowledgement of symmetries and the spiritualization of the „flesh”, through the „denial of the body” and the reaching of the essence, by searching for the signs inside the body (the butterflies inside the flesh), Mircea Cărtărescu's characters aim to attain („in their God/Author's image and after His likeness”, as the *Bible* says<sup>8</sup>) a new world, a new reality.

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<sup>6</sup> Simona Sora, *Ibidem*, p. 246.

<sup>7</sup> The intertext is obvious: "And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away" (*Revelation*, 21,1). The quotations are taken from the *KJV Bible*, <http://mobile.biblegateway.com/versions/index.php?action=getVersionInfo&vid=9#booklist>.

<sup>8</sup> *Genesis*, 1, 26., „And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness”.

## 2. The Myth of Apocalypse as a Textual Dominant. Metamorphosis and Revelation<sup>9</sup>.

Simona Sora considers that Cărtărescu is an „apocalyptic humanist”, and she comments upon *Orbitor* as being an Apocalypse revisited in the postmodern age. Each of the three volumes opens with fragments from the *New Testament*, that announce the second coming of the Lord. Biblical quotations like the ones about the “natural body-spiritual body”<sup>10</sup>, “the knowledge face to face”<sup>11</sup>, “a new heaven and a new earth”<sup>12</sup> are recurrent in Cărtărescu’s novel and are absorbed in the story.

*The Book of Revelation* is the model archetypal narrative that the novel follows and that marks the messianic discourse of the Peoples of the Book<sup>13</sup>. These mythical scenarios (about the end of the world, the Revelation, the waiting for Messiah’s Second Coming) impose a sense to history; at the same time they set the trajectory of the story, its construction as an apocalyptic text, directed towards the gradual receipt of the Revelation. The intertextuality with the *Bible* (especially *The Book of Revelation*) is a canvas on which Mircea, the narrator, sews his own embroidery. Meanwhile, *The Revelation* marks the linear, teleological course of the narration, through which history is transformed into myth and the chaotic events receive a divine significance. The historical frame is that of the 1989 Romanian Revolution, but the descriptions are biblical: “the last year of man on earth” “the last Christmas... the last evening”. The differences between history and myth are cancelled: apocalypse is historicized myth, a myth about history<sup>14</sup>. „Like our world, the Bible begins with the Genesis and ends in Apocalypse... In fact the Bible continues endlessly, although it has an end and its ending is a catastrophe. Every world has to destroy itself in order to be complete” (III, 443-444).

The interpreters of various apocalyptic discourses referred to the ambivalent position of the narrator. Like Saint John on the Isle of Patmos, Mircea is both inside and outside the world that he describes, he becomes a *thou* who is asked by an imperative voice from on high : “write thou the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter!”<sup>15</sup>. The historical apocalypse which puts an end to the city and to the novel is doubled by a personal catastrophe and revelation at the same time. The multiple endings (also endings on multiple narrative levels) determine one another. “Apocalypse” happens simultaneously for the inhabitants of Bucharest, for the statues, for Mircea and his demonic twin Victor, for the Peoples of the Book, for the reader(-as-character).

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<sup>9</sup> We shall use the capital letter when we refer directly to the book in the *Bible*. When we refer to revelation as vision, we shall use the small letter instead, although the background reference to the book of St. John remains.

<sup>10</sup> *I Corinthians*, 15, 44.

<sup>11</sup> *I Corinthians*, 13, 13.

<sup>12</sup> *Revelation*, 21, 1.

<sup>13</sup> Another biblical reference to the chosen people, the People of God in the *Old Testament*.

<sup>14</sup> Lois Parkinson Zamora, *Writing the Apocalypse*, Cambridge University Press, 1989, p. 18.

<sup>15</sup> *Revelation*, 1, 19.

We would like to emphasize the interdependence of the two major themes in the book: metamorphosis and revelation. All the transformations imposed to the bodies are not without cause, but are part of a divine plan. From the stag beetle (whose larva metamorphoses inside the oak trunk), to the butterfly larva or the human body (engaged in its own transformations) – all beings follow a series of changes in order to reach a superior form (their celestial body) and a “face to face” knowledge of God. All these images announce a catastrophe followed by a rebirth. The New Testament and the SF scenario merge in the end of the trilogy: *„And suddenly, in a blink of the eye, they were all changed... to show themselves again, perfect and wonderful, naked and irradiating joy, all being thirty years old, reborn from the water and the holy spirit... they started to ascend, light as dandelions, to heaven [...] leaving the cradle of humanity, searching for new earths and new heavens”* (III, 546).

Thus, the story is not an anarchetype, as Corin Braga would say, because we do not read just the remains of archetypes in chaotic amalgamation, but a restructuring of these fragmented archetypes turned into new forms, i.e., into an ectype<sup>16</sup>. It is interesting to discover how the postmodernist project of the novel is abandoned in favour of an idiosyncratically metaphysical one, with medieval undertones (the unity of worlds, the symbolic communion between them, endowed with a hierarchy and witnessing to the holistic ideal, the “Whole”, in Cărtărescu’s terms). Drawing all these observations back towards our subject, all the themes of the “flesh” (the corporeal schemes, the metamorphosis, the erotic rituals, even the erotic relationship between the writer and the reader theorised by Roland Barthes) are connected under the sign of the (apocalyptic) revelation.

But, as Simona Sora justly observes, “the deliberate choice of a subject as versatile as the body is one thing, and its narrative development is a completely different matter”<sup>17</sup>. In the following sequence we shall try to emphasize this contradiction between the narrator’s discourse and the destiny of the Peoples of the Book. The People’s of the Book narrative does not “naturally” mirror the Author’s theory, but strangely precipitates the rituals and denies the basic meanings of the Author’s vision, even if the Author (Mircea) is the God of this world.

### **3. The Peoples of the Book. Mutilation and Metamorphosis.**

Cărtărescu condenses an entire personal history in the body-metamorphoses, in the skin-cartography or in the unspeakable aggression of the eviscerated corpses; it is a

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<sup>16</sup> Corin Braga, *De la arhetip la anarhetip*, Iași, Editura Polirom, 2006, p. 255. The author proposes two new concepts, starting from the well-known archetype: the anarchetype and the ectype: „An an-archetypal writing is that book whose scenario was spread in a nebula of meaning; in a cumulative type of logic, it uses images, symbols, situations and myths like recycled materials; these bricks don’t preserve the plan of the initial building, nor do they enter in the composition of a new one. Anarchetypes do not describe the total disappearance, but the incoherent presence of these remains of archetypes and symbols.”

<sup>17</sup> Simona Sora, *Ibidem*, p.246.

story told from the Genesis to the Apocalypse. But the representations of the body also recall its role in post-structuralist theories, especially in Barthes' discourse about the textual erotic<sup>18</sup>, which was considered very trendy for Romanian literature by the generation of the '80s<sup>19</sup>. The story is shaped by these textual markers: the postmodern vision and the apocalyptic meaning which wraps the trilogy like a membrane.

The repeated, grotesque descriptions, with dissected, eviscerated women, with the butterfly of their hips exhibited like in a macabre insectarium, all are part of the strange rituals of The Knowledgeable Ones, a bizarre sect who looks in the entrails of maidens for signs of a messiah. The wanderings in the abyss of flesh and the physical atrocities anticipate not only the apocalypse in the end, but the dominant idea of the text (wielded by the ubiquitous butterfly symbol): the idea of metamorphosis with the transgression of the material world to live in the eye of God, and His contemplation "face to face"<sup>20</sup>.

But there are contradictions between the messianic discourse of the narrator and the "exodus" of the (chosen) Peoples of the Book, those who try to give birth to their Author. The strange members of The Knowledgeable Sect are those who understand their status as characters in a book and who try, through their entire lives, to signify something inside a story and, finally, to exit the book for the encounter with their God, the Author. They think the world is a book, written as they are living it; they also think that the coherence of the text –world and the birth of the Author (who will write them down) depend on their individual gestures. This transgression of the bi-dimensional world should happen, according to the author, as a bodily-metamorphosis. Instead, The Knowing Ones' rituals are not real metamorphoses, but a mimicry and a precipitation of them through violent acts: it is a literal interpretation of the biblical metaphor "deny your body". The ritual defloration in ancient rituals is replaced by dissections and eviscerations. In the underground network of New Orleans, Celia, a maiden whose skin has been given the unction with aloe and nard, being adorned in view of a nuptial rite, as it were, is, instead, repeatedly tortured to death: "*For hours, the flesh and blood body of the young girl was inflicted with the entire human suffering, and much more... but her screams seemed, however, to be outcries of unbearable pleasure, rather. The only act that could be narrated, cruel though it was, seemed tender, by comparison to what had happened before: the Albino man split Celia's belly, letting no drop of blood from her body, and took out clean, like an anatomic exhibit, the uterus, guarded by the two uterine tubes, like two wings... The uterine butterfly floated gently through the air, winging its fin-like skins*" (I, 342).

Paradoxically, in these minutely described rituals, with an insane care for details, the erotic delight is not the finality ... Or, maybe, as Barthes would have it,

<sup>18</sup> Roland Barthes, *Plăcerea textului*, Cluj, Editura Echinox, 1994.

<sup>19</sup> Adrian Oțoiu, *Ibidem*, pp. 111-134.

<sup>20</sup> As in the motto: "*For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known*", I Corinthians, 13, 12.

delight is always in the proximity of fear and always unspeakable (only pleasure can be told, while delight remains untold, suspended silence; consequently the scream of the statues in *Orbitor* is a soundless one).

In another sequence, Coca (who had first been met in Bucharest in the '50s, then as a prostitute in Amsterdam), enters, through a painting, in a Dutch house, where she contemplates the museum "exhibits": on a wall – slices of spinal marrow with the natural shape of a butterfly, on the other – sphenoid bones taken from the base of human skulls. "*Heavy bones, still, ready to fly, preserved from tens of skulls of infants, adolescents, adults and old people*" (II, 422).

The false metamorphosis imposed on the women's bodies by the mad Dutch is more than a revelation of the human butterflies inside the flesh. Their exposure shows the succession of ages through the corporeal transformations, it aims at understanding the fourth, temporal dimension of a superior world where things and beings are not perceived in succession, but simultaneously. Thus, metamorphosis is understood as the bringing together (in an instant) of the successive times and forms of existence.

Even in the narrator's discourse the same baroque vision and concepts are implied: "*The baroque anatomy of my body discloses and simultaneously hides the fourth dimension, time. If you cut my spine transversally, you will find, on a white disc, the drawing of a grey butterfly; if you cut my true being transversally, as you would cut a tree to find concentric wood-rings, you will find Mircea inside Mircea inside Mircea inside Mircea inside Mircea*" (I, 235).

The third insectarium that Coca sees (and which she will complete before her death) exhibits another type of butterflies: "*Wide, strong wings... thick, circled bodies*" – the trophies are not true butterflies, but the hip bones fixed to the spine, butterfly-bones which "*evolved out of fat as from a pupa*" (II, 424).

The poetic analogies between the human anatomy and the symbol of the butterfly are taken literally and they generate horrific rituals: the hip bone butterfly, the female genitalia, sections of the spine, the brain hemispheres (like two wings) are allowed to emerge in full view, "allowed to see the light of day", being freed from the burden of the flesh. They all make up (like the anatomical drawings from the 16<sup>th</sup> century), a virtual museum of torture a "dream-thought catalogue of the unbearable"<sup>21</sup>.

This strange hurry of The Knowing Ones to provoke the metamorphoses, the compulsive repetition of vivisections aims at making manifest the celestial symbol – the butterfly. The larva does not turn into butterfly slowly (naturally), but the butterflies of the body are eviscerated from the flesh like from a pupa, even if this premature evisceration ends (for both humans and insects) with mutilation and death. Thus, from the lupus stain on the Mother's hip, to the sections and organs brought forth, "the butterfly effigy mediates throughout the entire book between

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<sup>21</sup> David le Breton, *Antropologia corpului și modernitatea*, Timișoara, Editura Amarcord, 2002, p. 51.



blindness and recognition, between the concupiscent body and the knowledgeable soul, between inertia and rebirth”<sup>22</sup>.

The same “technique” of dissection and penetration is recurrent in the author-reader relations and in the adventures of the narrator who describes his life as “*a terrifying vivisection of mind upon itself*” (II, 94).

The female bodies have no value in themselves, but they become instruments. Anca’s hair is cropped, the skin on her skull is carefully shaved, in order to reveal a superb tattoo, a convex “mirror” of Mircea’s face. As the image of the tattooed skin is the only important thing, the body is a message for the reality of another fictional world<sup>23</sup>. For Mircea (acting as a narrator and the god of his world), The Peoples of the Book are significant bodies, a corpus of signs, a message archive, “surfaces which generate the illusion of depth” and which compose his own past: the woman trapped in an elevator, violated by a US pilot and giving birth to a butterfly, is a “message” (in her body) for Maria (Mircea’s mother), Anca’s tattooed skull is a text/image for Mircea (as the skull of an Italian matron was a message for Mircea’s ancestor, the Polish prince Czartarowski).

Even if the “knowledge” of the body is not always a mutilation, the erotic act is aggressive, possessive and ends in abandonment. Copulation means also copulation between synapses, and erotic “knowledge” also means spiritual revelation. For book characters, “revelation” has the precise meaning of reaching their own essence, their fictional status. As the *Bible* states that “eternal life” is “knowing the only true God”<sup>24</sup>, *Orbitor* (the Book of books for the “beings” who live inside the text) describes revelation as the process of cognition and recognition of its Creator (the Author) and the role of each character inside the big story: “*I was a chosen one. Not The Chosen, as I felt too little and weak for this; still, something was due to happen. I would live in a history, even if it wasn’t mine, I would be given coherence and dignity in a world, let it be the most illusory of all. Because it is the story, not your essence, which gives you the real consistency* (I, 199).”

From the beginning, Mircea imagines very similar hypostases for himself: the microscopic insect living in a page from Dostoevsky’s *The Idiot*, the “I” living in a roll of toilet paper, a parasite digging its channels in God’s skin, the stag beetle digging blindly in the oak trunk. Metamorphosis is seen as death, as denial of the “old” body, a mere carcass left behind. In mystical, radical terms, revelation is deadly, the happiness of being chosen is also a terrible curse. Being “inside a story”, “in the Book” is, for The Knowing Ones, a privilege and a punishment: it is the archetypal tragedy of the Chosen People of God, experienced by the People of the Book in their paper world: “*O, Lord, don’t choose me, Lord, let me never know You, never be in your Book*” (I, 205).

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<sup>22</sup> Simona Sora, *Ibidem*, p. 257.

<sup>23</sup> In Cărtărescu’s vision, the whole book is the tattooed body. In *REM* the text appears, in the end, like “body-art”. The characters in *Orbitor* exhibit a body-become-text.

<sup>24</sup> *John*, 17, 3.

As Simona Sora sums up, “in the sometimes monstrous couplings in *Orbitor*, there is a single hierophany. The abrupt way to an integrated vision, the revelation of the Whole from the moment of the Apocalypse consists of numerous episodes, decays and oblivions. Nostalgias and farces, joining of contraries are, in the end, the redemption for what seemed to be the evil lack of meaning.

#### 4. Textual Erotics between Hypnosis and Submissiveness.

After dealing with the erotic relations between characters, in the present chapter we will describe the relation between the author and the reader. The model of textual eroticism, as described by Roland Barthes and turned into the hobbyhorse of the postmodernist writers (and for the Romanian novelists of the 1980s), is differently used in *Orbitor*. Erotics does not appear as delight, a purpose *per se*, but, like for Cărtărescu’s characters, it becomes a means to revelation.

Knowledge as erotic relation, as it appears in the rituals described above, is amplified in the ritual of writing and reading. The book has a corporeal essence, its own anatomy borrowed from the organism which secretes it: “*This text ... is the sweat, the sperm and the tears which daubs the sheets of a lonely man*” (I, 94) and the act of writing – “*the white page I will not defile with the obscene sperm of my pen*” (I, 207) – is one of the author’s physiological processes narcissically exhibited. If text is the anagram of the body (Barthes), its reading will also be a bodily, sensorial experience<sup>25</sup>. The organic essence of the manuscript is kept outside the book pages, in the act of reading, described as the penetration of the reader’s body, or a complex neural intervention, but (in both cases, as we shall see), an incision, a violation of corporeal integrity (,as you receive, when reading, a graft on your brain”, III, 208).

Reading a book is also a love story completed with the hymenal penetration. The act of writing is similar to erotic mystics, where the author is a seducer involved in power games (well-known between the lovers): “*I inject [through the book] in your dreamy mind, half of my genetic code. Only in your protective skull will the book develop, when it fuses with half of your being’s code*” (II, 433).

But, as sensual love can vary between tenderness and instinct, the book can also metamorphose into a „monstrous, deadly trap”. From a book of games, the manuscript becomes The Book of Revelation, Apocalypse. The readers are cast, one by one “out into outer darkness”<sup>26</sup>, outside the story, and the one destined to knowledge is forced to “*a total peel off language, of values, of the cosmos image*”. The condemnation of being the chosen one implies becoming an instrument: “*It’s not you who chooses the book, the book chooses you to write itself through you... A real book always selects only one reader, as a true world saves only one soul and a true ovule chooses one sperm, because, in a way, the writer and the reader are a single body, the world and the soul are one, the ovule and the spermatozoid are one. And redemption means to understand this, by destroying yourself* (II, 161)”.

<sup>25</sup> Roland Barthes, *Ibidem*, p. 44.

<sup>26</sup> Matthew, 8, 12.

From the real world, where the giant eye reads the world of the book, “*the lazy lady on the coach*” is projected in the bi-dimensional world of the text, hypnotized by the vision of this “Flatland”, imprisoned in a painting, “a woman with a book in her hands”: “*You, who are reading now, lain on your coach, this unreadable book, which doesn’t say anything, which doesn’t want anything and doesn’t mean anything, you cross on it, like on a vessel, the transparent plane of our world [the characters, o.n]. You are, at the beginning of this sentence, a tomograph section – a woman with a book in her hands, guillotined from a spindle-like block, which is your true body, and now you are another section, with another section of the book in your hands*” (II, 432-433).

Involved in textual erotics and become characters in the book (being “guillotined”), the readers are successive sections of the (apparently) the same body, like the characters in cartoons.

In this hallucinatory body of metaphors, reading is an erotic game, a euphoria of penetration and withdrawal, a mixing of resistance and submission; the text seduces, conquers, hypnotizes. “*Writing is hypnosis, reading is submissiveness*”; being an ideal reader means, for Mircea Cărtărescu (*Diary*), “*to read naively, to let yourself manipulated, to fall in all the traps, all the textual dips. Otherwise you understood nothing from the act of reading, which is an act of faith, not of reason*”, and hermeneutics is a form of devotion. Text is aggressive: as the girls in *Orbitor*, the reader is deprived of her body in order to reveal the message (like Anca), or violated (like Celia and Coca), to exhibit a strange beauty. Being the single reader of a singular book implies being possessed, hypnotized, saved. The supreme delight is unbearable pain and damnation and revelation are one, as “*the invention and the invented rose are one, the labyrinth and the walking through it are, together, the wonder*” (III, 65).

## 5. Fictional Worlds. “A New Heaven and a New Earth”.

Mircea Cărtărescu transposes the biblical anthropogenesis in the genesis of his Book as, in this Book, he is the Author, its god, and the characters and their worlds exist in his eyes and in his synapses; their dreams and deeds can only multiply, at a smaller scale, the image of their Creator. The paper beings (People of the Book) can’t get out from the basilica of the brain which dreams them<sup>27</sup>.

From this perspective, all the fragments cited before describe the same body of god, whose mind creates, through dreamy, hallucinatory or imaginary mechanisms, the characters. Their expeditions through giant bodies of different consistencies (granite, flesh, adrenaline) try to reach the blinding light in god’s eyes, his multi-dimensional world, in the core of revelation: the knowledge that they are creatures of a mind which dreams them, that the worlds they inhabit are made of words which, in miraculous “caught ups” prove to be bodies of their god: “*Somebody, deep, in another night, of a different kind, was holding in his hand my world*”.

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<sup>27</sup> Thus, the Bucharest in the novel is not the representation of a real city, but a mental projection, the image existing in Mircea’s brain, his dreams, his memories.

The narrator states the ontological difference between worlds. “Our” world in which we live can be “read” only by someone watching from a superior level: like the page in a book read by Mircea, where a microscopic insect lives, the world of the characters becomes text for the author. As Cărtărescu suggests in the essayistic digressions, we are all characters of a textual reality legible in another dimension: that of the eye reading the book, of the hand turning the pages.

The People of the Book look for their god. Revelation means getting out of the bi-dimensional world of the text, achieving the perspective in god’s eyes: “*I knew, as I was screaming, trying to tear my ties, that I’m in an ocular globe, that I live, like an infinitesimal speck of dust in the eye – of which god? Of which giant atlas? And that eye was opening to a world of a higher level. From the neuronal structures which generate the dreams of this being, who was moulding in his dreams our world, I was caught up and taken through the optical nerve, let to the polychrome carpet of his retina and forced to watch, from the core of his crystalline, to a blinding, blinding, blinding world*” (I, 278).

Paradoxically, “blinding” means the dark, painful incapacity to see, but it also means “too much light”, a blinding for the corporeal world and a turn of the eyes inside, towards the spiritual, the essence of being, “the tank of blinding light”.

As in the recurrent motif of the erotic body Cărtărescu was making up a story for the postmodern (barthesian) theories, in a similar way, in the apocalyptic discourse, a procedure frequently used by postmodern novelists is amplified – metalepsis: the intrusion of the Author in the diegetic universe or the penetration of characters in the metadiegetic world, the transgression of borders between fictional worlds and different ontological levels<sup>28</sup>. Adrian Oțoiu observes that ascendant metalepsis (the intrusion of characters in the narrator’s world) implies a state of revelation, a theophany. Apocalyptic revelation and “salvation” means to get beyond the illusion of fragmentary, towards the holistic view.

The recurrent metaphor of the mystical rose puts together the metatextual level and the apocalyptic theme. The story appears like a labyrinth of petals crossed by the characters (and the reader) to reach the final revelation. The world apocalypse is doubled by a textual, self-reflexive one: “*like the thousand roads of a crystal labyrinth: you can see clearly through its walls the mystical rose in the middle, but you can never reach it, until you realize that the labyrinth is the rose, that its shiny walls are its petals and your crossing through is the Miracle*” (III, 65).

In a similar way, the characters live in a body which is their world, and this body-world is, in fact, the book being written, a secretion of the author’s body. Revelation means the “face to face” knowledge, but the road to it is part of the miracle: “*You have to look for the exit, this is the goal of your life at the level you are now. There is a conspiracy to convince you that there is no way out and, truly, there isn’t any, until you search for it. And, in a way, the search itself is the way*

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<sup>28</sup> Brian McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction*, Routledge, New York, 1996, p. 82.

*out, as if the space you cross, with hope and faith, would solidify behind you and form your personal tunnel, only for you, like a pore suddenly opened in the petal-like skin of God” (I, 324).*

The fragment is very dense, a nucleus of the novel, as it condenses its central, metaphysical themes: the ways out of the labyrinth are passages to another world. The tunnel is analogous to the nautilus metaphor, here with the opposite meaning of opening and salvation. The petal-like skin of God reminds of the mystical rose (another labyrinth); revelation is a nest of borders and surfaces. And, finally, revelation means being part of God’s body, not like a prisoner in a tunnel (like the parasite, the beetle, the larva), but like a presence inside his eyes, adopting his vision, seeing the world with infinite dimensions.

Thus, the mystical-symbolic architecture of the world and of the body connects the characters and their creator in a narrative texture, and the contradiction between the themes of the novel (which was the starting point of this paper) is misleading: the holistic corporeal scheme, the cosmic body, ecstatic eros, metamorphosis and revelation are elements in the same picture. In a surprising story, extreme violence done to bodies (vivisection, evisceration) and (sur)natural metamorphosis, unbearable pain and unspoken pleasure overlap. In this way, Mircea Cărtărescu recycles the commonplaces of other postmodern texts to create a novel with metaphysical overtones, an apocryphal Apocalypse.

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## THE THEORY OF REPRESENTATION AFTER STRUCTURALISM

ADRIANA STAN

**ABSTRACT.** The study dwells upon some basic theoretical points concerning the literary representation inspired by structuralist convention or attempting to go beyond its assumptions, to which purpose it brings under scrutiny the works of Paul Ricoeur, Wolfgang Iser and Antoine Compagnon, analyzed for their different takes upon the mimetic projection of the narrative.

**Keywords:** representation, convention, mimetic, structuralism, phenomenology.

One commonplace theoretical assertion has it that artistic experiences of modernity deepened the crisis of representation. Mallarmé's *Le livre*, Dadaist collages or abstract painting are indeed paradigmatic instances of the violently anti-mimetic tendency of Western aesthetics. Deplacing extreme frontiers of communicability, artistic avantgardes staked on formal experimentation in the detriment of content, implying that art is firstly an experience of form and only secondly a commentary upon the world. Modernist literature as well disregarded the logical organization of plot, choosing rather "articulation itself as plot"<sup>1</sup>.

Theodor Adorno<sup>2</sup> uses the model of negative dialectics to explain the programmatic alienation of the modernist work of art from the traditional context of reflection: since it no longer can naively reproduce the social systems of norms, art becomes defensive, absorbs and internalizes the real conditions of crisis. "Unresolved antagonisms of reality return in works of art as immanent problems of their form". According to this logic, *Guernica* could be considered a social protest exactly by its inhuman, unrealistic construction: such works produce an effect in the real because they "reproduce the guilt of monadologic disorder of society". Adornian aesthetics places in relation of utmost tension the *constructed* and the *mimetic*, and hence points out, in full consonance with the poetry and painting of High Modernism, that the degree of transparency of representation is in direct proportion with aesthetic quality: if outright mimetic relates to the industry of consumption - "the lila field is kitsch", and "if not reified, the work becomes merchandized" – on the other hand, "constructivism, which is officially the opposite of realism, relates by its language of disillusionement to

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\*all translations from the volumes cited belong to us.

<sup>1</sup> Eco, Umberto – *Opera deschisă. Formă și indeterminare în poeziile contemporane*, traducere și prefață de C. M. Ionescu, Paralela 45, Pitești, 2002.

<sup>2</sup> Adorno, Th. W. – *Teoria estetică*, traducere de A. Corbea, G. H. Decuble, C. Eșianu, Paralela 45, Pitești, 2006.

historic reality much deeper than realism immersed in Romantic colour could, as the principle of the latter, conciliation with the object has in time become pure romanticism. Adaptation of art to de-sacred world cannot be made by traditional realist means without falling into aesthetic academism”.

### Structural(ist) conventions

Enhanced by artistic modernism, literary theory dwelled from its very beginnings upon the mediation exerted by literary conventions. Russian Formalists<sup>3</sup> were the first to underline that conventions of form interpose between the external reference and the intrinsic meaning of the text, which makes literary reflection oblique, or better said - a *refraction*. Further on, the several variants of Structuralism, inspired by Saussurean linguistics, strongly disregarded empirical evidence, as well as the use of intentional concepts, including the model of reflection. As a matter of fact, Structuralist anthropology is less preoccupied with concrete exploration of human acts than it is with drafting, through abstract analysis, the “infrastructural, logical, unconscious and collective”<sup>4</sup> basis of the living acts. Heuristic and epistemological prestige falls upon the second term of the binomial *real - its representation*. Besides anthropology, this tendency is illustrated as well by the psychology’s *Gestalttheorie*<sup>5</sup>, which states that perceptive concretization of materials provided by senses is oriented by an originary, supersensory instance.

On the whole, Saussurean linguistics inspired in all variants of Structuralism the *anti-referential* point of view. Literary theory derived radical consequences from Saussure’s (apparent?) suggestion that meaning comes not as direct connection of words with the real state of facts, but is produced by linguistic configurations with determined distribution. Since natural language is no inventory of objects of the world – would the Structuralists infer – neither can the literary text be reduced to a descriptive repertory of the real universe. Dogmatic semiotics would further restrict literary meaning to the formal function of signs, while narrative poetics would focus upon purely structural properties of story and discourse, although not explicitly disapproving with hermeneutic technics (see, in this respect, Genette or Todorov).

Toma Pavel offers in *Mirajul lingvistic*<sup>6</sup> an acid and challenging critique of the epistemological premises and presumably scientific viability of Structuralisms. He starts by pointing out troubling discrepancies, which theory fails to justify, between the abstract scheme and the empirical material under analysis. As shown also by the famous “summary” of Oedipus’ myth made by Lévi-Strauss, the rushed passage from *data* to *theory* leaves unaccounted for an ample sequence – thus “unintelligible”- of concrete events and proper names, otherwise essential to the story.

<sup>3</sup> Xxx- *Ce este literatura? Școala formală rusă*, antologie de Mihai Pop, Ed. Univers, București, 1974.

<sup>4</sup> Lévi-Strauss, Claude – *Antropologia structurală*, traducere de I. Pecher, Ed. Politică, București, 1978.

<sup>5</sup> Arnheim, Rudolf – *Arta și percepția vizuală: O psihologie a văzului creator*, traducere de Florin Ionescu, Ed. Meridiane, București, 1979.

<sup>6</sup> Pavel, Toma – *Mirajul lingvistic*, traducere de Monica Spiridon, Ed. Univers, București, 1993.

Theoretic prioritization of logical regularities, which makes the point of the structuralist method, is, of course, arbitrary to the living text. Yet, in practice, it works as an efficient alibi in support of the conventionalist and anti-mimetic perspective. Speaking about the *effect of reality* (1968), Barthes rushes in asserting that purely descriptive passages lack narrative significance, other than masking the scheme of plot by superposing a stratum of referential illusions. One could undoubtedly argue on why couldn't so-called "realistic" details have autonomous meaning outside the basic narrative scheme, yet, with Barthes, the question remains unanswered. Observing, in this respect, that the same book (*Madame Bovary*) "has been accused on mimetic grounds and acquitted on diegetic grounds (Flaubert's process)", Toma Pavel underlines a certain contradiction between *mimesis* and *diegesis*, that Barthes' flamboyant rethoric hides. Pavel's anti-structuralist demonstration is worth summing up. He starts by assuming there must be a certain space of indeterminacy between the structural properties of discourse and the objectives of representation. However, if one should set the example of *The Queste del Saint Graal* and Flaubert's *Sentimental Education*, one could infer that stylistic and discursive properties, although common, play different roles in the given narratives. This happens because realism is not necessarily a discursive effect. The functional model of structural features and aesthetic properties concerning representation should include two distinct levels with their own organization: basic operations and the intentional project. Structural properties of literary texts constitute the basic operations which are flexibly connected with various mimetic projects. "Structural means do not determine the nature of the representational project, but are disposed in accordance with the necessities of the project. The relative autonomy of the mimesis allows a great variety of representational games, from mere pictographic denotation to the illusion of *vraisemblance*. Neither strictly determined, nor arbitrary, connections depend upon the pressure of tradition, upon taste or the intervention of individual genius."

More than in structuralist poetics at large, extreme opinions on literary representation are expressed by members of the group around the *Tel Quel*<sup>7</sup> review, which predicates a challenging combination of psychoanalysis and marxism. By uncovering the cleavage between manifest and latent content of the psyche, psychoanalysis brings to light the *pre-representational* production before its conscious deformation. Lacan<sup>8</sup> even suggests that the unconscious is structured linguistically and dominant signifyings, not the meaning apparently "represented" in the ego, are the ones to determine the activity of the psyche. The Marxist point of view adds to these suggestions a general critique of the ideological content. As a consequence of these

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<sup>7</sup> Xxx – *Pentru o teorie a textului. Antologie Tel Quel 1960-1971*. Introducere, antologie și traducere de A. Babeți și D. Șepețean-Vasiliu, Editura Univers, București, 1980.

& *Theorie d'ensemble*, Editions du Seuil, Paris, 1968,

<sup>8</sup> Fink, Bruce – *The Lacanian Subject Between Language and Jouissance*, Princeton University Press, 1995.



influences, the meditation upon literary language developed in the ambiance of Tel Quel overconsiders the signifying which rules signification. Instead of the traditional understanding, the concept of *unreadability* comes to underly the act of reading. Members of Tel Quel actually assume having historically surpassed *representational illusionism* of the Balzacian type, as well as the technique of *self-representation*, in an *anti-representative* direction. On analyzing Proust, Jean-Louis Baudry and Philippe Sollers argument that the “madeleine” or the “pavement” aren’t simple ornamental metaphors, but epic commutators which expand the text and make it glide, so that the “productive” function of literature overpowers its representational value. Julia Kristeva theorizes in the same manner upon Mallarmé, Lautrèmont or Joyce and proposes accordingly the concept of *intertextuality* as “shreds of discourses opening from the inside, criticizing and annulling one another”. Literature is, to this extent, referring to literature only, texts are claustrophobically oriented towards other texts.

Achievements of the Nouveau Roman (by Sollers, Robbe-Grillet, N. Sarraute, M. Butor), quite unreadable today, demonstrate in excess, as an artificial comet of theory, the fact that “to narrate/to tell stories” has become practically impossible and world can no longer be placed in an intelligible structure of representation. In Jean Ricardou’s terms, “the narration of an adventure” separates from the “adventure of a narration”<sup>9</sup>. French novelists reduce the referential value through insistent description which dilates and reify illusion, by measure that information with referential degree clash and relativize one another, becoming opaque.

### **The ethics of representation**

Paul Ricoeur<sup>10</sup>, adept of “instaurative hermeneutics”, writes in a climate when human sciences – linguistics, psychology, sociology, history – trying to follow the objective model of sciences of nature already rejected the primacy of the individual conscience, to focus upon collective conscience.

According to Merleau-Ponty, Sartre or Ricoeur from the 50s, in the line of husserlian phenomenology, the subjectivity-conscience connects to the world through a network of primary significations, amplified by perceptions, is founding and transcendental. In the next decade, speculative structuralism (of Althusser, Barthes, Foucault, Levi-Strauss, Lacan) would challenge the known issue of the phenomenological subject by means of language, demonstrating, from different directions, that effects of meaning can be produced by a linguistic structure in which the subject in the sense of phenomenology no longer intervenes as donor of meaning.

Ricoeur’s plea for memory as matrix of history spins around the idea of an irradiant subjectivity filling with meaning the representation of past. Opposed to the anti-hermeneutic reflex of a Nietzsche, Freud or Marx, for whom the fabric of

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<sup>9</sup> Munteanu, Romul – *Noul Roman francez*, Univers, București, 1973.

<sup>10</sup> Ricoeur, Paul – *Memoria, istoria, uitarea*, traducere Ilie & Margareta Gyurcsik, Ed. Amarcord, Timișoara, 2001.

reality is a sum of interpretations, and “depth” an effect of illusion, Ricoeur examines the possibility of reconciling the conscience and the real in the light of an anthropological optimism strongly influenced by ethics. The ontologizing revival of memory (similar to the revival of the imaginary attempted by Gilbert Durand) starts by exploring the Greek distinction between *mneme* (passive recollection) and *anamnesis* (the effort of remembrance). Plato regards the mimetic perspective as dangerous for the order of the city and hence places representation of the past in the domain of imagination, lying within the ontological possibility of error (in terms of the *eikon* – image of an absence). Plato’s theory of the *anamnesis* is targeted against the horizon of ultimate truths and does not take into consideration the categories of the self and human time. On the other hand, Aristotle considers memory has the capacity to retain the past; voluntary remembrance is, in fact, tightly linked to the past (not only to the anhistorical land of Truths). As synthesized by Jean-Paul Vernant, memory appears at Aristotle, “not only as the source of true knowledge in man, but rather as the sign of his unfulfillment”<sup>11</sup>.

Ricoeur’s phenomenology further dwells upon Aristotle’s concept of “remembrance”, which he interprets in a meditation on temporality with no few lyrical sparks (“the miracle of recognizance is to provide the alterity of past with presence”). In his view, representation of the past does not mask the absence or the unreal, but comes to unveil the temporal reality of the human being. Husserlian line of thought makes possible, at this point, to juxtapose the phenomenology of memory and the phenomenology of perception. Following the model of “retention”, which describes the temporal density of the present, Ricoeur believes that “the thing remembered” is able to infuse with vibrance the present world. Since it “belongs to the world of experience”, representation extends beyond the platonic status of empty *eikon*.

The veritative quality of memory depends however upon conscious assumption of the past, a point of view which converts Ricoeur’s initial phenomenology into an ethics of history. The author distinguishes here between “remembrance” and “exercised memory” (as in the learning-by-heart practice). On principle, as an active, productive realization of the past, remembrance is part of a valid existential project. However, in practice - suggests Ricoeur with a Marxist touch - history seems to act by colonizing the live and individually autonomous spaces of memory. The narrative dimension of memory makes it vulnerable to ideologization. Official power narratives transform the access to past in a kind of automatism mediated by a symbolic curtain which distorts reality. “Lack of the labor of remembrance constitutes a deficit of criticism”. Ricoeur comes here close to Hobbes’ political theory which stated the fact that historical repetition of the legal pact founding society is meant to hide the initial insecurity of the state of war, namely the past reality. As Foucault would infer, “we are subjected by the power to a production of truth”<sup>12</sup>.

<sup>11</sup> Vernant, Jean-Paul - *Mit și gândire în Grecia antică*, trad. A. Niculescu, Ed. Meridiane, București, 1995.

<sup>12</sup> Foucault, Michel - *Trebuie să apărăm societatea*, trad. B. Ghiu, Ed. Univers, București, 2000.

Much has been said indeed about the role of representations in confirmation of the dominant order, about the discursive devices enhanced by systems of power in the view of auto-legitimation. All variants of Marxism make an issue of rhetorical debate out of the theme of ideology as product of forces escaping the control of the subject. Although hinting asymptotically at the matter, Paul Ricoeur remains nevertheless far from Althusser's radicality and from the absolute belief of the latter that an ideological system of representations logically organized has the force to turn individuals into false subjects by assigning them certain roles. Ricoeur's epistemology is, in fact, critical only to the extent it can work constructively, suspicions only on measure that it foresees the chance of a therapy.

Even if aware of the individual memory's frailty to political distortion and paying no "tribute to an idealistic prejudice", Ricoeur suggests that restricted phenomenology should be ethically compelled by an epistemology of history in order to restore the authenticity of the individual event. He seems to feel the subjectivity's weakness, yet he keeps exploring the possibility to circumscribe a social frame of coherent and unfalsified ideologically representations. The plea for the cognitive force of individual memory takes a pragmatic turn by describing the ontological founding of history, which should provide a new form of existential freedom of the individual.

Ricoeur observes, from the start, that, even if historiography is based on individual testimony, historical knowledge eventually neutralizes living memory along the successive stages of "archiving-explanation-representation". Any historical representation is tempted by some formalization, as the underlying model of comprehension/interpretation gains autonomy over the event and the individual. The historian selects arbitrarily, seeks for regularity, permanence, collective, symbolic practices, while the pre-judice of coherence supporting historical configuration tames and also falsifies the amorphous mass of "lived time". Historical representation shares with fiction the narrative development – including release in the plot, moments of climax, heroes etc. – which mean that both are intelligible due to their internal structure, not necessarily because of adequacy to the real world (this is, also, the argument of structuralists). Ricoeur cites Hayden White (from *The Content of the Form*) who shows that discoursivization is strongly marked, both in cases of literary and historical narration, by the "rhetorics of tropes" and hence legitimates its own key of intelligibility, which makes it autoreferential (an excellent example: the prestige of the king's image to support and articulate the 17th century absolutism). In Ricoeur's opinion, the development of microhistories (along the line of New Historicism, presumably) from the last three decades of the 20th century has only brought further evidence in support of the idea that any historical representation is a construct: "historical scales are incommensurable" because "on changing the scale, we see completely different things in society".

The problematics above is also, halfway between ludic and melancholy, one of the key themes in literary postmodernism. *Waterland* by Graham Swift, *The*

*Maggot* by John Fowles, *I, the Supreme* by A. Roa Bastos are some examples of postmodern narratives in which the clash of false documents raises the question whether the historian actually “discovers” or “invents” the totalizing narrative model he uses. Therefore, to know the past becomes an issue related to representation, rather than a matter of objective recording.

However, Ricoeur’s inference about the labile referentiality of the narrative brings nothing new as compared to the conclusions also expressed in structuralist and poststructuralist theory of the second half of the 20th century. It is worth citing, in this respect, a very “barthesian” excerpt: “The resistance the literary form opposes to exteriorization in extratextual grows to the same extent with the realist impulse”. Distrust in the mimetic potential of representation is generalized in the epoch, however Ricoeur’s specific tone relies in the ethical-ontological investment. Where structuralists would have taken theoretical delight in the vicious circle of a formalism abstracted in gnosiological skepticism, Ricoeur dwells upon the great ethical drama, the huge ontological insecurity brought forth by the crisis of representation. He observes that “the singularity/unacceptable/moral judgement out of joint” discredits the entire historiographic arrogance. There is something “so monstrous” in what regards the Holocaust that “it misleads/confuses all possible ways of representation”, since “one cannot reunite in a superhistory the points of view of executioners, of victims and of viewers, who attended the events from different positions”. The resistance of the raw event to historical representation imposes the ethical urgency “to determine precisely the referential moment which distinguishes history from fiction”. The veritative force of memory in phenomenological sense can intervene at this point to impede upon misrepresentations of history through living, community shared remembrance of that-which-cannot-be-put-into-discourse. At the end of his book, Ricoeur admits his distinction is essentially ontological, so it can hardly be settled at the epistemological level (whence his plea-like, sometimes vague, discourse). The concluding lines seem to agree with the pragmatic trend of Habermas’ consensual utopianism: “The balance between history and memory must be set at the level of public debate”; “The supposed meaning of history does not depend upon historians, but upon the citizen who react and give a follow-up to events of the past”.

### **Representation as performance on a score**

As pointed out above, by the late 60s, artistic modernism and theoretical formalisms have already wiped out the naive mimetic assumptions in interpreting literary fiction. However, if the structuralist reflex of poetics and narratology shut the text in the self-sufficiency of formal coherence, the aesthetics of reception reopened the text either to historicity (Jauss), or to individual conscience (Iser), negotiating a weak theory of reference in a contextual, pragmatic sense. Empirical approach of the School of Konstanz tries to bridge the gap widened by structuralist essentialism between the method of research and the literary material.

To some degree, Wolfgang Iser<sup>13</sup> is still indebted to the legacy of structuralism and artistic modernity in his appraisal of the text as an autonomous and somehow extra-wordly entity. Alongside successive readings which make it concrete, the text, as described in his theory, resembles an unidentified flying object. Its quasitranscendental nature relies on the weakening of referential links. The “repertory” of the text “appeals” to real world “referential systems”, but changes radically their function in accordance with purely textual necessities of “selection and combination”. Here, “depragmatization” of reference seems to be just another name for the old defamiliarization theorised by Russian formalists and shows much similarity with the modernist autoreferentiality, although the idea of “repertory” has some resemblance with Bahtin’s “dialogism”, more linked to the outer world.

Elegantly avoiding any allusion to authorial intentionality, Iser performs upon the statuesque profile of the text a truncated phenomenology which regards only the reader. The arachnoid web of the text as “an empty form structured perspectively” captures the reader and provokes him fill in the blanks with his own “imagining” acts. In Ingarden’s line of the “projected/intentional aesthetic object”, the text opens as reading proposal not for one, but several possible representations, just like a musical score that enables a variety of performances. Representation is successively and inconstantly realized through reception.

Among others, Compagnon would rightfully notice that “imagining” is a hazy notion which fails to account for the real and extremely variable competences of the actual readers, from the cult to the less learned one. It might be true that, on principle, blanks and indeterminacies can be so challenging as to stimulate hypotheses in reading; however, in practice, there is no doubt a reader with mean competence would throw away *Finnegan’s Wake* quite because of the too many possibilities of “imagining” the book offers.

As a matter of fact, the discourse of the German theoretician, dense with metaphors or personifying figures, provides with literary glow a theory which is as far from the empirical material as in case of structuralists. Because, although “communication” and “concretization” are axial concepts in debate, the interaction between the reader and the text looks rather like a mechanical ballet of virtualities. Reminding of a switch control panel, the text seems to function only as long it produces shortcircuits, whereas the reader acts as a gear of currents of tension oriented by fixed electric charges.

The question of representation is dealt with on this fragile thread drawn between the empirical and the virtual. For Iser, like for Adorno, transparency or opacity of representation relate directly to the aesthetic quality: while mass literature (*romans à la these*) appears as clear and defined, the authentic work has an onion configuration: “layers over layers of significations”, which makes meaning much less predictable than the daily speech. Literature refers thus to the real only

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<sup>13</sup> Iser, Wolfgang – *Actul lecturii. O teorie a efectului estetic*, trad. Romanița Constantinescu, Ed. Paralela 45, Pitești, 2006.

negatively, and the more distorted the representation, the stronger the aesthetic vibration. Of course, Iser avoids the extremes dear to the structuralists who were making use of a “simplistic theory of reference” (according to Compagnon) in order to oppose radically the fiction to the real. The German theorist’s argument fortunately sounds more believable and common-sensical: the ontological perspective which placed in existential opposition fiction and reality must be reshaped in a functionalist (“fiction says something about reality”) and pragmatic direction (“induces the receiver a certain behavior”). In what regards reference, Iser’s theory remains elegantly ambiguous and could be best described by the syntagm of *fringed mimesis*: the pre-existing referential space, the necessary space of familiarity (other texts, social norms etc. ) is distorted and broken into large blanks leaving place for the readers’ innovation. More exactly, “the familiar attracts only by measure that is used in an unfamiliar manner”. Iser approximates the sphere of representation with a touch of negative theology – “neither (reflection), nor (deviation)”. Traditional hermeneutics can thus be reconciled with formalist approach in a simili-phenomenological mix close to the model of revelation.

The status of the text in and related to the world also reminds of the structure of dialectical opposition proposed by Virgil Nemoianu in *O teorie a secundarului*<sup>14</sup> between literary imagination and historical progress. Literature often retrieves the aspects left behind by the great explanatory systems of society and, by reinterpreting them, it works as countercurrent to dominant norms.

In Iser’s view, the coefficient of real within the text is fluctuating and inconsistent, whereas the structure of representation appears as vague, but at the same time perceivable. As we have already pointed out, Iser’s theory manages to render a rooted formalist approach in an elaborated phenomenological display. On the one hand, the literary text breaches from daily discourse and current norms by turning them upside down and confiscating their utilitarian coherence, on the other hand, it can return obliquely into the world, through the probable reaction it raises in the reader. No doubt, there is some idealism and enthusiasm in this plea to recover the sociality of texts (“privatization”), as if the theoretician were trying to save what he still can from a domain the speculative excesses of theory had already dried. Trying to dismantle the prejudice of the unique textual structure, Iser sees the text as a sort of *terra incognita* with many dark zones and some luminescent spots, which the reader maps step by step (hence “the theme-horizon structure”), bringing gradually to light the areas of obscurity.

Dwelling upon the same idea of referential ambiguity of literary text, Umberto Eco arguments<sup>15</sup> that “an artistic form is an epistemological metaphor: the manner in which forms of art are being structured (by comparison, metaphor, rendering the concept through image) depends upon the way in which the culture of the time reflects

<sup>14</sup> Nemoianu, Virgil - *O teorie a secundarului. Literatură, progres și reacțiune*, traducere de Livia Szasz Câmpeanu, Ed. Univers, București, 1997

<sup>15</sup> Eco, Umberto – *Opera deschisă* etc.

reality.” Anyway, Eco remains true to the principle of “unlimited semiosis” (see also Peirce: language is a self-explanatory system by means of conventions interposed between sign and object), which makes him plead constantly along his works in favour of a culturalist and anti-mimetic point of view. Eco’s semiotics wipes out from the concept of “denotation” strong referential assumptions, as he defines it within the circularity of cultural units (signs referring to other signs). In *Kant și ornitorincul*<sup>16</sup>, Eco demonstrates from a pragmatic de-ontologized angle that reference is contract-like, negotiated, moreover – it might even not have anything to do with the signified, or with the (in)existence of the referent.

### What is the sense of convention?

Antoine Compagnon<sup>17</sup> sums up from flexible and slightly neoconservatory positions the peaks of literary theory which developed by gradually closing the text on its verbal condition. In his opinion, the suspect ease of passing from the century-old belief that literature speaks about the world to the theoretical apocalypse of autoreferentiality is liable to several “common-sense” counterarguments. There is indeed a long way from Auerbach’s *Mimesis*, internal stylistic panorama of texts which measured the evolution of Western literature by the increase of referential precision and described the integration of reality in the work, to the French narratology from the 60s which refused radically the idea of reflection.

Saussurean linguistics together with the discovery of Russian formalists worked as detonators for French theory. Saussure’s thesis concerning the arbitrary of the linguistic sign was taken literally to suggest the downright autonomy of language as against reality; since words and things no longer communicate by a necessary and ontological relation, French theorists infer that signification of a text is not set by referential adequacy, but is built exclusively as differential game within the linguistic system. Compagnon suggests in this respect that literary theory rushed in adopting the Saussurean scientific legacy only to compensate for the lag felt by comparison with the whole of modernist aesthetics, already showing a program of distrust in the conventional realism (abstract painting, Valéry or Breton’s poetics etc. ).

In order to surpass referential prejudice, theory had to overlap the concepts of *semiosis* and *mimesis*, considering the latter outside the idea of imitation, in terms of a discourse with its own rules and conventions. Compagnon sees here a misinterpretation of Aristotle’s *Poetics* in the sense of highlighting the “technique of representation” and the production of verisimilar fiction, instead of the relation with reality and “imitated object”. With the support of Marxist approach stating that representation is, as a rule, discredited by ideology, structuralist and poststructuralist

<sup>16</sup> Eco, Umberto – *Kant și ornitorincul*, traducere de Ștefania Mincu, Ed. Polirom, Iași, 2005.

<sup>17</sup> Compagnon, Antoine – *Demonul teoriei*, traducere de Gabriel Marian și Andrei-Paul Codrescu, Ed. Echinox, Cluj, 1997.

theory long debated upon the “literary lie” which sells a linguistic artifice as copy of the real. *L’effet de réel* is first and foremost artistic craftsmanship, yet highly likely to determine misappropriation of the surface illusion as pure substance. To cut it shortly, literature appears as a make-believe game which tempts us into mistaking the reality for its representation. Despite the speculative charm of the anti-referential argumentation, one might wonder, together with Compagnon, whether there is any practical finality of this radical skepticism.

The French author further debates upon the epistemological frailty of the structuralists’ argument against realist representation as “referential illusion”. Compagnon observes that Barthes, as well as Riffaterre, work with “a simplistic and long discredited theory of reference”, which they find easier to delimit from. For instance, in *S/Z*, Barthes defines reference as direct unmediated relation between the signifying and the real world, as if he knew nothing at all about mediation performed by means of the “image, sign, representation, fiction in general”. It is then obvious that, against such an absolutist standard, no literary work could be so immersed in reality as to make us able to “hallucinate the object”. Riffaterre also makes use of “an old-fashioned, pre-saussurean theory of reference” on assuming that if in daily referential use “words are stuck to the reality represented just like labels on a jar”, in literature, on the other hand, words are connected in the horizontal plan of discourse and according to the internal unity of the text. But, to reduce the idea of reference downright to the model of a classified list (which Saussure never implied as such) means to win from the start the theoretical battle simply by disqualifying on principle the opponent.

According to Compagnon, the structuralists’ argumentative parade rushes triumphantly even before setting authentic scientific grounds, inclusively in what regards linguistics whence they inspire. He points out that the Saussurean arbitrary originally refers to the specific connection between the phonetic and semantic levels of language and makes no direct suppositions about a presumable epistemological relation of language to the world. Moreover, the linguistic thesis above was attempted to explain the abstract system of language (*langue*), not the actual level of speech (*parole*). Toma Pavel also noted that the anti-referential premise uselessly complicates the description of deictic elements, since the “relevance of binary oppositions” (mis-leading to the belief that meaning is structurally formed) is obvious in phonology and morphology, but “waned on dealing with the lexical meaning (where gradual reports, not the structure, make the difference)”<sup>18</sup>.

Compagnon seems on the run of restoring the heuristic and mediating value of representation, whose specific functionality literary theory has managed to elude gracefully. He firmly believes the losing aporia imitative/non-imitative can only be surpassed by an approach concerned with the cognitive value of mimesis. In this respect, Northrop Frye tried in his *Anatomy of criticism* to orient the debate on

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<sup>18</sup> Pavel, Toma – op. cit.



representation from the idea of *copy* to that of *effect*, by dealing with the three terms from Aristotle's *Poetics*: *mythos*, *dianoia* and *anagnorisis*. Instead of interpreting fiction as directly against the real, we might take into account its "intelligibility", namely the capacity to produce in the viewer/reader certain reactions and specific knowledge. To the same extent, Paul Ricoeur underlined the fact that the "logical" form in which a narrative is configured captures the reader in order to initiate him in "a practical way to live the world". From this perspective, the problem of reference remains of secondary importance. Regardless of its connections with the real, literature has an unmistakable capacity to turn the reader's view, enriched, back into the world. The matter can be best dealt with, we might add, in terms of "fictional worlds" which, as demonstrated by Toma Pavel in his famous book, make use of the same referential mechanisms as in daily use of language to refer to fictional worlds taken as possible worlds; in consequence, once we enter the literature, fictitious acts of language function exactly like real acts of language outside literature.

All in all, what was left after structuralisms and their theorising enthusiasm self-consumed like a strip of fireworks seems to be mostly a pragmatic hope in the "intelligibility" of the real and its representations.

**BOOK REVIEWS**

**Iliana GREGORI**, *Știm noi cine a fost Eminescu?, Fapte, enigme, ipoteze (Do we know who Eminescu has been?, Facts, enigmas, assumptions)*, București, Art Publishing House, 2008, 336 p.

On writing the present research, Iliana Gregori debates upon the (still) ambiguous status of the Romanian poet, whom some still regard in terms of bookish associations with an *exotic plant* or a *statue*; the assumption is, in both cases, of a poet closed into his own mito-poetic world, one we cannot know otherwise than partially, so as not to annihilate the eminescian mystery: "Eminescu's biography is yet insufficiently known, his intellectual aspects undervalued, his status of «national poet» too narrowly understood."

Iliana Gregori's volume includes three chapters: the first one, entitled "Eminescu at Berlin" resumes a study previously published in *Literary Studies* collection (Bucharest, Fundația Culturală Română Publishing House, 2002), while the other two: "Between Berlin and Charlottenburg" and "Bucharest, 28<sup>th</sup> June 1883" are published for the first time. The author places her investigations under the zodiacal sign of the two hermeneutical concepts: the *parabiography* and the *onirobiography*- "the analysis and interpretation of Eminescu's literary work should be mixed with the biographical reflection; in other words, the reading «of the literary work» should involve the reading «of life»." These two concepts are focused on the biographical sequence of about two years representing the time Eminescu spent in the German capital, Berlin. They enable the interpreter depict unusual biographical and analytical aspects concerning Eminescu's life and his literary work, as well as to polemize with prejudices of interpretation. First of all, Iliana Gregori discusses "label-formulae"

such as "the last great European Romantic poet" or "late Romantic" which have become clichés for decades. She observes in this respect that through intellectual contacts with various disciplines and cultures: philosophy, medicine, history, law, Egyptology, Ethnopsychology in the capital of Germany - "Eminescu is connected to what the German science offers more modern and new." Whence the conviction that Eminescu's stay in Berlin was not, in fact, an inauspicious period for the poet- as many exegetes still hold true. Secondly, by framing "micro-histories" within "macro-histories", the author manages to situate her narrative discourse in a broader area of research that combines biography with the history of mentalities or history of ideas; Iliana Gregori evokes and reconstructs carefully the Berlin of the epoch: university activities, living details (Egyptian Museum, Berlin streets, the locations where Eminescu lived etc.), providing information on the Charlottenburg Castle, the history of Hohenzollern dynasty, especially, the love of Friedrich Wilhelm and Luise.

Concerning Eminescu's literary work, the first two chapters analyse three important narrative texts at which the poet works during his stay in Berlin: *Poor Dionis*, *Prince Charming the Tear Begotten* and *Pharao's Tlă avatars*. Critics consider both *Poor Dionis* and *Pharao's Tlă avatars* true failures, stating that the reader is not able to answer the basic questions: *was it dream or reality?* and *who is the main character of the short story?* They actually represent eloquent examples regarding the hypothesis of Eminescu's lesser skills in writing prose. Iliana Gregori is dissatisfied with the assumption that the theme of these two short stories is (only) *the metempsychosis*. She asserts instead that these texts also dwell upon another thematical vision: that of *identity*: "in the trance of story [...] the ego, in other words,

becomes translucent, he communicates osmotically with the Other.” At the same time, the reflection of the African continent as a peculiar world into the Eminescu’s literary writings is realized through *borrowed signs* - “hieroglyphs” - illustrated, for instance, in the folk tale *Prince Charming the Tear Begotten*. In the third chapter, “Bucharest, 28th June 1883”, the author starts from a tabu event: the “eminescian” insanity- assessed by the supposed act of the poet who wished to murder the King of Romania. This narrative episode allows Iliana Gregori to advance hermeneutical judgments on the subject of “the creative genius’ identity.”

Iliana Gregori’s investigation resorts to “micro-histories” naturally framed within wider cultural, political and ideological context. One can see here the hermeneutical pattern theorized by the *New Historicism*. Consequently, the period that Eminescu spent in Berlin is considered highly representative, especially as it is viewed in the specific context provided by the spirit of the age. Although she uses hermeneutical concepts such as the *parabiography* and the *onirobiography* which are applied to the biographical sequence when Eminescu was fulfilling his doctoral studies in Berlin, the author is aware of the impossibility to offer an exhaustive answer to the question she asks herself all along the book: *who is Eminescu?* Consequently, one faces a confusing rhetorical tension with the bitemporal interrogation (past-present) between: *who was Eminescu?* and *who is Eminescu?* All things considered, Iliana Gregori asserts that Eminescu’s literary work remains “an open one”, in a “*stadi nascend?*”, because Eminescu “has not been when he was, he is when he is no more.”

Silviu MIHĂILĂ

**Paul CORNEA**, *The Origins of Romanian Romanticism. The Public Spirit, the Movement of Ideas and the Literature Between 1780-1840 (Originile romantismului românesc. Spiritul public, mișcarea ideilor și literatura între 1780-1840)*, Cartea Românească, 2008.

Paul Cornea Ph.D. is a Professor at the Faculty of Letters, Bucharest University as well as a highly appreciated literary critic and historian, with important works in the fields of literary theory and comparative literature. *The Origins of Romanian Romanticism* represents the second edition of his 1972 study. Generally praised for its exhaustive information, the book is considered to be “more important and innovative than 35 years ago, re-thinking notions and values inherited from one generation to another – movement of ideas, of mentalities, manifestations of the public spirit” – in order to understand the coordinates of the Romantic age. (Mircea Anghelescu)

The study unfolds from the very first pages of the book, without forewords or prefaces. It is the author’s belief that the reader should enter “directly into the apartment, without further delaying him in the vestibule with explanations and amendments”. It is only when we reach the *Afterword* that his methods are revealed and explained by the author himself. Following this line of thinking, we will tackle these clarifications according to the framework of the book and its initial structure. *The Origins of Romanian Romanticism* is an in-depth erudite research: a masterpiece of interdisciplinary architectural construction which re-dimensions the concept of literary history. The introductory part is centered round the definition of Romanticism: upon attempting a synthesis of the definitions given to this term, he realizes the impossibility of a reductive explanation. A clear definition of the term appears

difficult because of its “unclear semantic status”, the term being clear enough to allow communication and – at the same time – ambiguous enough to fuel ponderously disputes of the erudite researchers. An overview of the attempts to define the concept points out that although over 150 different definitions have been given there cannot be just one mathematical, concise, comprehensive and universal. The confusions have appeared because different meanings have been attributed to the name Romanticism (literary current, historical age, typological concept), but also because the object itself is inexhaustibly protean. Cornea’s work is set to study the origins of Romanian Romanticism under a double aspect: “as a mentality” and as a “literary current”, therefore from the perspective of the history of ideas and of the history of literature. He includes a discourse on the method, stating that the study of the origins of Romanian Romantic literature commands a double inter-currence: from the literary level to the state of mind of the era and then back to the historical context especially because the birth of Romanian Romanticism coincides with the birth itself of our modern literature. Based on rigorous documentation on primary sources doubled by an epistemic tension he finds the answers into a profound analysis of Romanian society. It would point out the dislocations of mentality and requisitions for the renewal of the intellectual life which have made Romanticism both possible and necessary; the economical, social and moral transformations which have encouraged the great conversion of tastes, sensibilities and ideas around 1820-1830.

From here on the book has triptych architecture: *Book One. Preliminaries (1780-1821)*, *Book Two. Transition (1821-1830)* and *Book Three. The Emerging Romanticism (1830-1840)*. In *Book One* the author notices that towards the end of the

XVIII-th century there were a lot of symptoms of a decisive change in the mentality of the ruling class. The studies in this section present the complex causes of the crisis of Fanariot society, interrogate upon the sense of the historical process and notice the aggravation of the social tensions (with extreme conflicts between the landlords and the peasants caused by the dissolution of natural economy and the limitless increase of taxes). At that period the echoes of the French Revolution were rather weak, with Fanariots acting as the intermediaries of modern culture and changes in tastes, behavior and lifestyle. The “technical” survey is doubled by the “text”, in a double perspective of both projecting the phenomenon on ever-larger coordinates and also practicing a very close reading of the literary creations. He examines the destiny of the “fortuna labilis” motive and its variants: “the ruins”, “the triumph of death” and “ubi sunt?...” and analyzes the works of representative poets Alecu Văcărescu, Ioan Cantacuzino, Nicolae Văcărescu and Nicolae Dimachi. *Book two* dwells on the importance of the year 1821 (Tudor Vladimirescu’s revolution) and the literary echoes of the event. Cornea concludes that two phenomena seem to be at the root of the intellectual manifestations of the age, giving them meaning and coherence: on one hand the conscience of the individual and his demands for freedom, security and justice (incompatible with the current social and political order) and on the other hand the emerging national ideas, a driving force and a source of passionate excitement. In *Book Three* the historical framework lays the foundations for the institutionalization of culture and extension of the cultural movement at a national scale (organized learning system, societies, theatres, press, publishing, general public). The concept of “national conscience” validates itself during Romanticism: national individualization through language, history (as manifestation

of national conscience) and discovery of folklore (as a discovery of the real “self”).

The *Postscript* and *Afterword* further explicit the author’s methods, thus pointing out some of the book’s virtues. The main criterion used was that of “plausibility”; in other words it consists of finding explanations to the phenomena which should include the outmost number of facts. And indeed it does – beyond the methodological project of the book (aligning Romanticism to the evolution of culture and interacting it with history) the idea which emerges is that literature is not merely a document revealing mentalities, but also a “value” configurated into language. Therefore the boundaries between the episteme of other sciences – history of mentalities, historical sociology, esthetics, poetics and stylistics – become fluid. This book is a landmark in the study of the period and remains so after 37 years with no modifications (the two editions are identical). In its impressive structure, thesis, documentary base and most substantial matter the study is fully validated as one of the fundamental books on Romanian Romanticism.

Sanda PĂDUREȚU

**Paul CORNEA**, *Delimitări și ipoteze. Comunicări și eseuri de teorie literară și studii culturale (Delimitations and hypotheses. Communications and essays in the theory of literature and cultural studies)*, Iași, 2008, Editura Polirom.

The aim of Paul Cornea in his book is a balance, an essential moment when already defined limits are not only reconsidered, but the very act of reconsidering them constitutes (far from the infatuation of a redefinition) an opening. This opening is dovetailed, as suggested by the title itself, between a delimitation and a

hypothesis. To be more accurate, the plural (openings) would suit much more the concerns of this book, implying the fact that it does not search for (and does not intend to, it does not offer) a definite answer, a final resolution, but rather a possible (or the possibility of a) viewpoint, hypothesis, interpretation.

The book is thus placed under the sign of the open, it dwells on the space and play of communication. It projects a responsive audience (in the sense of a less abstract one), different from that of a written essay for example.

Channeled on eight domains (“Enlightening and Enlightenment movements”, “Romanticism”, „Status of Literature”, “Canon”, „History of Literature”, „Reading Theory”, “Comparative thinking”, „Cultural studies”) the book binds together 23 communications delivered between 1974–2006, most of which (19) occasioned by international conferences. The choice of the 23 papers is justified by the fact that the author felt these texts are still relevant today. Their actuality is justified precisely on account of the impossibility of a final delimitation or delineation. Thus the main reasons that lie at the basis of this book are: (1) the questions and controversies, the theories and interpretations accounted for have not been offered a more or less satisfactorily and conclusive resolution; (2) it offers the Romanian cultural scene papers which are mostly unknown or unavailable; (3) it strives to go beyond a mere indexation of bibliographical lists, and to constitute an invitation to dialogue, especially a polemic one, with the younger generations.

The preface itself could constitute a communication per se, or, rather, a metacommunication with the specific function of introducing the reader to the author’s comprehension of precisely the concept of communication and its applicability and efficacy. The very idea of (and tendency towards) novelty is regarded from the point of view of the danger it bears, that

of overshadowing viable perspectives and interpretations for the sake of general tendencies or trends. Paul Cornea touches such sore points as (quoting H.R. Patapi-evici) the lack of an institutional public space for carrying out debates, and hence the status of the literary history, criticism, or theory. He is interested in the canon and its controversy, the concurrent factors that enter the equation of assigning a canon and questions the current fixation for the canon, the canonical approach and interpretation.

The areas of interest of the book go beyond the concerns dictated by the conferences agendas or the personal (that is subjective) preoccupation. The book comprises essays that are argumentative, with fewer bibliographical notes, and study-texts, structured in an analytical mode, but also predominantly oral texts, with the limits and nuances specific to the species.

Paul Cornea's metadiscourse on communication is followed by another one on theory. It tries to delineate theory from what the author defines as "spontaneous theorizing", which is a sort of theory taken to the streets, that of the common, unadvised, average person. The understanding of theory the author prefers originates in the dictionary definition of the term as doctrine and hypothesis.

Paul Cornea follows and traces swiftly the course of structuralism and poststructuralism, while trying to keep as much as possible an unbiased gait in this space which is both called in question and claimed, with its ups and downs, highs and lows, with merits and shortcomings, punctuated by bibliographical reference points that Paul Cornea comments on rather in an informative than in a sentencing way.

The theory of literature does not constitute however a privileged point of view of the book. The author says that he made use of criticism, literary history, theory, but also of memorialistic writing, literary sociology, comparative thinking, according to the demands of the topic, following the logic of demonstration and the exigencies of writing.

The thematic classification of the content is justified by the concern of achieving a greater mobility, an unhindered flow for the reader who will thus be able to quickly turn to what might be of greater interest to him. In other words, the book admits the possibility of a model reader that will follow the entire route of the book, as well as that of a, let's say, rather partial reader, who might be interested in just one or some of the sections of the book, the area of topics covered being so wide and generous.

Paul Cornea accounts for his concern of keeping very close to the initial form of the communications with the following: "...the author of an already published text is entitled at any moment to go back to it, to alter it and change it according to his own liking. My rule in the game was though a different one: not to make use of retrospective adjustments. I tried my best, with the help of my younger assistants, not to break it. It is a risky approach. I would like to be credited for when saying that I am well aware of all the implications of this choice."

Aura ȚEUDAN\*

**Matei CĂLINESCU**, *Mateiu I. Caragiale – recitiri (Mateiu I. Caragiale – rereadings)*, Polirom & Biblioteca Apostrof, Cluj, 2008.

Attempts of saving the Romanian literary legacy from depreciation (by censorship, being included in the curriculum of literary studies) and reconsidering its tradition have failed by ignoring the voice

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of the individual reader. Starting with Barthes, a new strategy is perfected by integrating the concept of a reading that preserves the shroud of mystery, and stages a non-repeatable labyrinth for every game of (re)reading, although the text remains the same. The text is revealed as a mandala, mathesis, the frame that contains all external literary links stored in the reader's memory, where fiction transgresses the real and merges with the individual memory.

The essays that are gathered here are charts of Matei Calinescu's readings from this novel "Craii de Curtea – Veche". This text expands by adding two complementary essays to the main novel that centers the perspective of the reader- "Remember" and "Sub pecetea tainei". In the preamble of this study's first edition Caragiale explains that re-readings, bookmarks, the tracks of older readings, shortcuts and extensions to these experiences are his objectives in order to serve as guidelines for other passionate readers of Mateiu.

Notwithstanding, Calinescu's study is not a dictionary for M. Caragiale's work in the manner of the Joycean dictionary, it serves as an instrument for time measurement that synchronizes subjective and objective duration, the time of the reading, the time of the fiction and the history between them. The succession of these time-frames reveals a structure of the re-reading process and also the perspective and timeframe connecting perception and the reader's self-perception. Hence rereading is a conscious and self-conscious operation, the text often comes to mind from memories, not in front of the eyes, rereading reads itself, not always the original text.

Matei Calinescu attempts to deliver the key of re-reading unconventionally, by staging a false pretense "naïve" reading, in order to keep the interpretation flexible to the instructions for the reader as a player of a make-believe game within the

text. Calinescu hints to the demeanor of the critic Umberto Eco as a reader engaged within the text and with its author. Interrogations follow two main courses: the ethnic paradox (perpetual decay of Constantinople in the ambivalence European-Balkan) and the psychoanalytic mystery (the anxiety of influence by the craftsmanship of his father and the ambiguous sexuality of the characters or the implied author himself).

His re-reading naturally renders into autobiography as he interrogates a phrase or a name –some questions are answered by playing the role of a character in his mind, some require identification with the author, some are discovered because they fit the profile of the known biography of the author, and others are re-readings from authors that due to resemblances in personality or experience used the same tone (Poe, La Fontaine, Monselet etc.). In the stance of the model-reader (an ideal reader, receptive to allusions from the text) Calinescu begins his re-reading journal with a phrase cut from the novel: "It was during autumn, late October or perhaps November, «a time for tears»". The Year of his recorded reading is the dark decade of 1950-60 when the atmosphere of the novel is intertwined with the mournful reality of communism.

Memory has its triggers- the text comes back to the reader through intertextuality: exploring the sources of Mateiu's motto's, heraldic symbols and biographic secrets, Matei Calinescu also recovers meanings that remained hidden at the time the previous readings. Intertextuality makes the reading of other proses by Mateiu necessary to the interpretation of Craii, regardless of the chronology of their writing. "I am getting to «Remember» starting from an intertextual retrospective of the autor/ narrator in «Craii...» in order to get – under the sign of the secret from before or beyond the secret- at «Sub pecetea tainei»".

All textual memory is circular. The rotation of meanings and expansion of the text includes subjective duration, includes reality- “When a reader is aware of the life of an author he will be inescapably tempted to trace the autobiography in the fiction and the fictional element in the autobiography, the displays of self-picturing of reverie or the games of an artist’s fantasy”. The transient perspective Calinescu shares with the narrator of “Craii...” seemingly miming his imaginative process is described in his own words: “the perspective runs zigzag between different layers of the past remembered or invented (since memory invents and inventing recalls - isn’t it?)”

In my opinion, the keystone of the laws of rereading “Craii...”, a text with meanings and re-readings deposited over years in Matei Calinescu’s memory, between his American “exile” and his imaginary/fictional getaway from the communist years seems to be the intertext of Borges’s «Aleph». The chapter «A balcanic Aleph» explains how the face of this particular reader is reflected by the text he is perpetually rereading. The reader’s own perspective upon the depth of oriental secret versus occidental dilemma, his mixed feelings about his homeland resonate with the central idea of the novel he reads” It seems to me that the main problem debated by the book is the serious ambivalence of the author’s relationship to Romania, its literature and culture, (largely represented by his father, I. L. Caragiale, and the complex relationship between father and son), to the structural pending between Balcanic and European, between tradition and modernity, nationalism and self criticism”.

Ioana ȘIGOVAN

**Laurent JENNY**, *Je suis la revolution. L’histoire d’une métaphore (1830-1975)*, Belin, Paris, 2008.

Laurent Jenny propose une analyse très fine du «politique» et de l’«esthétique» de la littérature française, plus précisément du transfert métaphorique qu’opère chaque période novatrice dans ce domaine-là, à partir de 1830 et jusqu’au 1975, un siècle et demi dans lequel le rapport *révolution-littérature* s’est manifesté et s’est exprimé sous des formes différentes. L’architecture du volume comprend sept chapitres relevant l’option de l’auteur pour une représentation chronologique de la métaphore révolutionnaire dès l’émancipation verbale proposée par Hugo et jusqu’à son abandon après l’écriture tel-quel-iste. C’est un livre très dense, de théorie littéraire, d’analyse et d’histoire, qui incite le lecteur surtout par la démarche analogique, par les exemples et par les remarques interprétatives, en même temps que par l’équilibre de la construction et la personnalisation du discours.

Le volume s’ouvre sur une courte introduction, où Laurent Jenny explique le choix du titre (*Je suis la Révolution* étant une citation de Maurice Blanchot que l’auteur interroge, indirectement, à cause de son extrémisme et qu’il relie, symboliquement et visuellement, à *La vague ou Ma Destinée* de Victor Hugo, en couverture), qui affirme l’existence d’une équivalence entre *révolution* et *littérature*. Dans la même introduction, l’auteur explicite la démarche qui va suivre: «rendre son acuité à ce lieu commun» (l’analogie entre innovation littéraire et émancipation politique), montrer le déplacement perpétuel de l’idée de littérature et, en fin de compte, démonter le *cliché* de la «révolution littéraire». Ce cliché – qui s’est maintenu durant toute la période en discussion –, est traité par Laurent Jenny en «métaphore ouverte, se rechargeant de connotations toujours nouvelles au fil de l’Histoire».



Ensuite, le premier chapitre discute l'étymologie et l'évolution sémantique du mot «révolution» et souligne le fait que ce terme connote toujours un «nouvel ordre» et un certain progrès (qu'il s'agit du politique ou de l'esthétique) et, donc, que c'est faux de l'équivaler au désordre. Le deuxième chapitre développe déjà le domaine de l'analogie textuelle et idéologique (entre Hugo et Joseph de Maistre, Bonald, Rousseau, Taine, Maurras, etc.) et analyse l'autonomisation du langage hugolien en y identifiant trois systèmes métaphoriques. Laurent Jenny se livre à une analyse textuelle très détaillée et passionnante pour relever la rhétorique du poète, l'effacement élocutoire, la subversion, les champs métaphoriques, les rapports de figuration réciproque et, finalement, la logique de la «République des mots» instituée par Hugo. Ce qui porte à travers l'analyse et l'interprétation la marque du style de l'auteur, c'est bien la capacité substantialisante de ses microlectures, ainsi que leur insertion sans faille dans des contextes beaucoup plus larges, historiques et culturels. Dans la partie suivante, le regard comparatif se maintient, cette fois-ci pour mettre ensemble André Breton et André Maltère, avec les différentes opinions sur la signification et la concrétisation de la «révolution», mais aussi pour mettre en opposition de publications comme «La Révolution surréaliste» et «Le Libertaire», en soulignant l'effort de Breton de «sur-réaliser» la révolution. L'analyse du texte littéraire est à chaque fois doublée par l'analyse du plan politique. Par exemple, le destin des surréalistes est mis en relation avec le pouvoir du Parti Communiste à cette époque-là, l'événementialité surréaliste suppose, comme réaction dans la société, un mélange de violence et de passivité, etc. Fidèle à l'interprétation comparative (Blanchot vs. Paulhan vs. Compagnon; Barthes vs. Sartre; Tel Quel vs. le surréalisme, etc.), l'auteur, s'appuyant sur les

textes des écrivains qu'il cite, met en évidence la façon dont le trajet politique et / ou esthétique de plusieurs représentants d'une période historique peut coïncider ou, par contre, différer. Par exemple, au terrorisme surréaliste s'oppose la dénonciation de la terreur par Paulhan, au matérialisme historique s'oppose le spirituel de l'être et de l'écriture, etc. L'objectivité interprétative, le refus d'un parti pris évident, se cache dans l'analyse du texte, pour surgir en conclusions pertinentes à la fin de chaque chapitre. Le matériel soumis à l'analyse est si riche que Laurent Jenny crée l'impression de laisser parler les exemples, en s'attribuant surtout la tâche de «textualiser» le registre générique de son étude.

Dans l'étude de Laurent Jenny, les dates et des événements historiques rencontrent les concepts de théorie littéraire; les mots qui appartiennent au champ sémantique de l'histoire («convention», «république», «proclamation», «progrès», «lutte», «communauté», «croisade», etc.) rencontrent de notions ou syntagmes littéraires («figuration», «événementialité», «métaphorisation», «mythe», «rhétorique», «intentionnalité», «autonomisation du langage», «émancipation verbale», etc.) pour créer, ensemble, une vision originale sur l'évolution poétique et ontologique de la métaphore révolutionnaire. Les deux registres de l'étude, le concret et l'abstrait, l'exemple et la théorie, rendent plus facile la tâche du lecteur. En plus, l'appareil critique utilisé souligne de nouveau la consistance scientifique de l'ouvrage qui s'offre, ainsi, aux lecteurs spécialistes en littérature et, également, en histoire, mais aussi en sociologie et philosophie et, certes, il s'offre en tant que parcours synthétique absolument nécessaire aux étudiants.

Mirela TOMOIAGĂ

**Ioana BOT**, *SENSURIALE PERFECȚIUNII. Literatura cu formă fixă ca încercare asupra limitelor limbajului (SENS DE LA PERFECTIION. La littérature à forme fixe comme essai sur les limites du langage)*, Casa Cărții de Știință, Cluj-Napoca, 2006.

Le volume de Ioana Bot représente une synthèse de théorie, critique et histoire littéraire sur les modifications du concept moderne de *poéticité*, un plaidoyer, conçu sur beaucoup d'exemples et documentations, contre la vision techniciste du structuralisme. Comme elle-même l'affirme, Ioana Bot essaie un «discours fondateur» des formes fixes, son intention étant de remettre en ses droits «perdus» l'idée de «forme», au nom de la liberté (et de la libération) du sujet énonciateur. À ce niveau-là, la «thèse» du livre semble paradoxale, car elle renvoie à la recherche de la *liberté* précisément dans la *forme*, dans le canon, dans la contrainte. Mais, les arguments de l'auteur conduisent vers le retour à l'idée de *langue parfaite* (originale et originale) et donc vers l'association de la perfection de la forme avec la perfection divine. Toute parole, dans l'espace d'une forme organisatrice, peut, ainsi, aspirer à regagner la signification originelle, fondatrice, de l'univers entier. Il y a là une affinité de penser entre l'auteur de l'étude et le poète roumain Ștefan Augustin Doinaș, affinité qu'on retrouve dans le syntagme «rigueur offrant la liberté» („rigoare dătoare de libertate”). C'est de cette manière que Ioana Bot comprend la réflexion sur la forme linguistique (poétique), qui vise en permanence la dichotomie *limite* ou *imperfection* (dans et par le langage) vs. *perfection* (dans et par la forme), dont la solution est le vers, «la forme qui est aussi sens».

L'étude est structurée sur trois chapitres qui passent de la théorie, d'une poétique générale de la littérature à forme fixe (I) à la pratique, à l'analyse des relations qu'il y a entre la littérature contemporaine et ces formes (II), pour offrir,

ensuite, un dictionnaire de la littérature à forme fixe (III), qui ne se limite pas à inventorier, alphabétiquement, et à définir les espèces poétiques, mais qui fait aussi leur historique, en les accompagnant par d'exemples et par de brèves analyses. L'explication de chaque forme fixe se fait en trois pas explicites (étymologie, définition, historique), suivis d'une analyse implicite et, à la fin, d'une bibliographie qui fait, une fois de plus, la preuve du professionnalisme de l'auteur. De ce point de vue, on remarque le caractère pratique de *l'Addenda* (III), les fiches offertes ici étant très utiles aux professeurs de lycée et aux étudiants. Du même professionnalisme de l'auteur parlent aussi les références bibliographiques du livre (dans les chapitres I et II), qui sont nombreuses et qui s'adressent, certainement, aux lecteurs-chercheurs, malgré le fait que l'auteur note, dans la préface, que c'est une étude qui pourrait s'adresser aussi à «un lecteur innocent, non-avisé, qui aime et la poésie, et (par exemple), l'histoire du nombre *pi*». Parmi ces références, nous devons retenir au moins le nom de Jacques Geninasca, celui qui nous offre l'algorithme analytique de la forme fixe, d'Henri Meschonnic, dans les postulats duquel se trouve le point de départ de cette étude, de Paul Zumthor, d'Henri Morier, de Gérard Genette, Wilhelm Pötters, Leo Spitzer, Marian Papahagi, etc.

Un autre aspect digne d'attention dans l'étude de Ioana Bot, c'est la manière de privilégier le texte soumis à l'analyse: parfois, l'auteur cite, à côté de la traduction roumaine aussi la variante originale, pour rester fidèle à la relation primordiale qui s'institue entre forme et sens. C'est le cas, par exemple, d'un rondeau de Charles d'Orléans (et de la traduction faite par Romulus Vulpesco). Au niveau du livre entier, on remarque que le corpus de textes analysés est très riche et varié: sonnets de Louise Labé, Paolo Abriane, R.M. Rilke, Mallarmé (le

célèbre *Sonnet en -yx*), Lorenzo de Medici (où le contenu du sonnet parle de sa propre forme), Raymond Queneau (les sonnets comme littérature potentielle selon le modèle du groupe Oulipo), M. Eminescu (où la construction du moi lyrique est mise en relation avec la forme fixe), V. Voiculescu, M. Cărtărescu, etc.; sextines d'Arnaut Daniel, Ron Padgett; le pseudo-sonnet (comme expérimentation ludique) de Georges Fourest; l'ode de M. Eminescu; le ronset de Horia Bădescu (invention hybride), etc., etc. Dans toutes ces analyses, Ioana Bot identifie l'existence cachée d'un *pattern* culturel, qui est celui de l'euroanéité logocentrique, ouvrant ainsi vers une histoire des mentalités, où les paradigmes changent, mais l'héritage culturel (géographique et historique), laisse, à jamais, son empreinte sur la forme. C'est pourquoi elle explique les formes fixes en tant que *forma mentis*, sous influence d'une sémantique historique, à partir de l'Antiquité et jusqu'à nos jours. L'imaginaire poétique européen est vu, comme chez Leo Spitzer, à la rencontre de trois axes: la fascination du nombre, l'ésotérisme et l'analogie poétique-musical; l'analyse proprement-dite – c'est-à-dire l'effort de saisir le sens – nous apprend qu'il faut prêter attention et à la linéarité (dimension temporelle) d'un texte, et à sa dimension spatiale, globale, deux axes entre lesquels il y a une tension qui est / naît le sens.

La séquence analytique qui s'occupe de la littérature contemporaine roumaine et les formes fixes (II) présente une vision originale sur un *temps* historique, le communisme, et sur une forme d'écriture, la forme fixe, en les mettant en relation par un trait commun, qui est celui de la violence de l'époque et du langage. C'est pourquoi les textes choisis ont un caractère inédit et ils jouissent d'une analyse très pertinente qui conclut, pour Bădescu, Tzepeneag, Foartă, comme, d'ailleurs, pour tous les auteurs de formes fixes, que c'est la forme qui protège le sens.

L'ouvrage *Sens de la perfection...* relève les difficultés de la littérature à forme fixe à travers le temps et propose une réconciliation de la poétique contemporaine avec cette forme, soulignant que le sens d'un texte ne se construit jamais en dehors de sa forme. C'est pour cette raison que l'auteur privilégie le syntagme-oxymore «expression de l'indicible», ouvrant un domaine encore prêt à l'innovation.

Mirela TOMOIAGĂ

**Carmen MUȘAT**, *Strategiile subversiunii. Incursiuni în proza postmodernă (Strategies de la subversion. Incursion dans la prose postmoderniste)*, Deuxième édition, Ed. Cartea Românească, București, 2008, 386 p.

A sa deuxième parution, le livre *Strategiile subversiunii*, apporte, selon l'affirmation de l'auteur, une seule correction; dans le titre: dans la première édition, l'accent semblait se mettre sur la *Description et la narration dans la prose postmoderniste roumaine*, tandis que la deuxième édition est sous-intitulée *Incursions dans la prose postmoderniste*, ce qui cerne plus exactement la problématique mise en discussion. Structurée en quatre chapitres, l'étude est précédée d'un *Argument*, qui contient l'idée développée à la longue dans tout le livre: «A la différence des autres pays de l'Est, où la résistance aux régimes communistes s'est manifestée sur le plan politique, aussi, dans la Roumanie des années 60-80, en pleine dictature nationale communiste, la littérature fut une forme de proteste face à l'agression de plus en plus violente du totalitarisme»

Le postmodernisme serait-il seulement une fiction théorique? Voilà la question qui se constitue comme titre du premier chapitre, celui traitant des problèmes théoriques du postmodernisme. L'auteur cerne et analyse les aspects divergents du postmodernisme et de la

modernité, en leur préférant ensuite les éléments de continuité. Fruit de l'époque totalitaire, communiste, le postmodernisme roumain est analysé dans sa dimension subversive et politique, avec ses structures esthétiques particulières, manifestant une préoccupation non dissimulée pour l'authenticité de la vie quotidienne, en même temps que pour celle du langage. Carmen Mușat constate que la diversité des poétiques narratives des écrivains postmodernes témoigne du fait que la réalité est conçue comme «un texte qui se génère par soi-même, genèse caractérisée d'un mouvement permanent, pendant que son existence même - ressentie comme *existence* - est systématiquement inscrite dans une réalité dérisoire, banale, quotidienne, non influencée par la propagande du parti»

Le deuxième chapitre, *Éléments pour une poétique du postmodernisme*, circonscrit une série de traits paradigmatiques appartenant au postmodernisme: la diminution de la tension entre la culture de masse et la haute culture, élitiste, la fictionalisation progressive de la réalité empirique, le flou de la dimension temporelle de l'existence, comme résultat d'un processus de spatialisation, la disparition de la notion du centre, l'option pour la description, comme modalité de s'échapper à la «tyrannie du récit» et comme réaction contre l'idée de causalité, la topographie, la «prosographie», la technique du palimpseste, la polyphonie du moi de l'auteur. Tous ces éléments sont privilégiés par la littérature postmoderne, qui imposent le descriptif au détriment de l'épique. Même si la passion pour la description des objets est inspirée aux représentants du Nouveau Roman français, les écrivains postmodernes ne sont pas intéressés à parler des objets, «sinon du monde qui naît à l'aide des mots»

*Réalité, fiction, réalisme dans la prose des années 70-80*, le troisième chapitre discute quelques théories actuelles du réalisme en littérature; la littérature

postmoderne est considérée responsable, selon C. Mușat, de l'inversion de priorité du réel par rapport à la fiction. Le texte postmoderne fonctionne comme interface entre les fictions antérieures et la réalité quotidienne qu'elle reflète et qu'elle produit en même temps. Si les premières chapitres établissent le cadre théorique nécessaire de la démarche, dans le dernier chapitre du livre, *Modèles postmodernistes dans la prose roumaine*, l'auteur considère avec minutie des romans appartenant à Mircea Horia Simionescu, Radu Petrescu, Costache Olăreanu, Ștefan Agopian, Mircea Nedelciu, Gheorghe Crăciun, Mircea Cărtărescu et Daniel Vighi, afin de relever les différents aspects du roman postmoderne roumain. Si Mircea Horia Simionescu impose à la narration des structures musicales, les romans, mais aussi les fictions autobio-graphiques écrites par Radu Petrescu surprennent, par «l'oeil de l'artiste [...] les surfaces du monde, enrégistrant avec acuité les formes, les couleurs et les nuances d'une réalité en mouvement continu, brisées constamment des ombres de la rêverie». La passion du récit se voit chez Costache Olăreanu, celui qui «regarde la réalité quotidienne à travers la page transparente du livre, intéressé non seulement par le naturel de l'existence humaine, mais aussi par sa littéralité». Tout aussi peu préoccupé de la reconstitution des événements, Daniel Vighi est fortement fasciné par «l'impact de la Grande Histoire au niveau des petites histoires personnelles et par la manière dont elles modifient le temps intérieur de chaque anonyme»

Le livre de Carmen Mușat nous fait découvrir l'univers de la narration postmoderne, où «écrire est synonyme avec le vécu», là où «vivre signifie inventer à chaque instant un nouveau monde, construire des mondes possibles qui augmentent la réalité de notre existence»

Emanuela PORUMB

**Mircea ANGHELESCU**, *Mistificțiuni. Falsuri, farse, apocrife, paștișe, pseudonime și alte mistificații în literatură (Mysti-Fictions. Forgery, Farce, Apocryphon, Pastiche, Pseudonym and Other Mystifications in Literature)*, București, Editura Compania, Colecția „AltFel”, 2008, 208 p.

When translating into English the book's title: “Mysti-Fictions. Forgery, Farce, Apocryphon, Pastiche, Pseudonym and Other Mystifications in Literature”, a similarity can be observed between the main title and one of the words in the subtitle. Nevertheless, there is a detail, because “mysti-fiction” is a hybrid linguistic unity, invented and patented by professor Anghelescu<sup>1</sup>. We must take into account also another thing, related to the use of “fiction”, which may contrast with Anglo-Saxon theory. The author does not speak about the “novel”, but a wide concept of “literature”, which includes chronicles, diaries and memoirs. The “mysti-fiction” is meant to replace some literary categories that have similar meanings and therefore may produce confusion even among critics. The researcher abandons the notion of literary forgery, because it “resembles however very much what it pretends to be: literature. Namely because it is itself a fiction introduced in a text: a second power fiction, a fiction of fiction, namely a fiction that mystifies its own identity – a mysti-fiction”<sup>2</sup>. According to

the quotation above, only a belletristic work can be considered as a mysti-fiction. Consequently, these texts have problems of identity. They are concealed under a familiar misleading appearance. However, Mircea Anghelescu does not avoid debating the problem of the author's identity. His attention is turned mainly to the motive of the “*found writing*, assigned to a known or unknown writer (simply invented). The procedure was frequent, especially in the Romantic age. Thus, we have to discuss about two relatively different things included in the same denomination. The pretext of the discovered manuscript may be a form of mystification, of hiding the true author (who is often the self-styled editor who claims to have found the text). Or only a literary artifice that imitates the forms of mystification without taking it very seriously (the author does not want to hide and the reader knows that the text introduced into a larger story, which functions as frame, belongs to the same author)”<sup>3</sup>. He supports the assumption with eloquent examples. Thomas Chatterton, who revealed the writings of the 15<sup>th</sup> century monk Thomas Rowley, James Macpherson, who claimed to have translated from Gaelic the poems of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century Scottish bard Ossian, and the Polish count Jan Potocki, are among the well-known forgers.

<sup>1</sup> Bianca Burta-Cernat remarked this in her review: “El nu ne livrează o teorie de import, ci formulează o propunere conceptuală personală” (“He does not present an imported theory, but he formulates a personal conceptual proposal”; “Istoria literară ca rezervor de surprize” in *Observatorul cultural*, no. 418, 2008).

<sup>2</sup> “[...] este totuși ceva care seamănă foarte mult cu ceea ce pretinde să fie: cu literatura. Căci el este însuși o ficțiune pusă într-un text: o ficțiune la pătrat, o ficțiune a ficțiunii, adică o ficțiune care își mistifică propria identitate – o misti-ficțiune” (Anghelescu 2008: 15-16).

<sup>3</sup> “[...] «scrierii găsite», atribuită unui autor cunoscut sau necunoscut (inventat pur și simplu). Procedeele a fost frecventat, mai ales în epoca romantică. Avem astfel a discuta două lucruri relativ diferite cuprinse sub aceeași denumire: pretextul manuscrisului găsit poate fi o formă de mistificare, de ascundere a adevăratului autor (care este adesea pretinsul editor al textului pe care afirmă că l-a găsit), un simplu artificiu literar care imită formele mistificației fără însă a o lua în serios (autorul nu vrea să se ascundă, iar cititorul știe că textul astfel introdus într-o povestire mai largă, care îi servește drept cadru, îi aparține aceluiași autor)” (Idem: 74).

Besides, professor Anghelescu is interested in exploring less famous cases. We refer to Romanian-French writer Rudi Bernhaut alias Adrien Le Corbeau, who sent, in 1912, to “La Grande Revue” from Paris, “an anonymous text (signed X) entitled «Guy de Maupassant intime (notes d’une amie)»”<sup>4</sup>. It appears that the author himself announced his trick and that he imitated the memoirs of a woman who had already published her memoirs. Another interesting situation is “Lady’s Chatterley Second Lover”<sup>5</sup>, elaborated by Felix Aderca, and published in 1934. In the beginning, the novelist declared that he only translated the writing of a certain Clifford Moore. In 1936 he finally acknowledged that he was the author. There is no difficulty in remarking that all these writers assumed a mask, becoming personae in their own works. Therefore, the fictional effect increases. In addition to this, “mysti-fiction” as a concept proved its usefulness and quick adoption when speaking about a recent Romanian masterpiece *Ultimele însemnări ale lui Mateiu Caragiale însoțite de un inedit epistolar precum și de indexul ființelor, lucrurilor și întâmplărilor în prezentarea lui Ion Iovan*<sup>6</sup>. The book appeared after the publication of Mircea Anghelescu’s study. Some commentators<sup>7</sup> grasped the “mysti-fiction” as disguised

in the text. Ion Iovan played the role of the editor who received the diary of Mateiu Caragiale, who indeed had such a diary, but was lost.

Thirdly, a distinction can be made between “persona” and “pseudonym”. The “persona” is more than a “pseudonym”, more than a character<sup>8</sup>, it is a character that mystifies its pseudonym. Consequently, the persona becomes a property of the mystifiction. But, N. Balcescu – Konrad Albrecht, St. O. Iosif and D. Anghel combined into *A. Mirea*, all of them mentioned in the volume, hid only their public name. A persona outside a mysti-fiction is *Émile Ajar*, who concealed both the first pseudonym and the social identity: *Romain Gary* and Roman Kacew.

Fourthly, the interaction between a “mysti-fiction” and a “persona” may be associated with what Jérôme Meizoz describes as *posture*: “la manière singulière d’occuper une «position» dans le champ littéraire. [...] Qui fait imprimer un ouvrage (un disque, une gravure, etc.) impose une image de soi qui dépasse les coordonnées d’identité du citoyen [...]”<sup>9</sup>.

To sum up, the reader will find a challenging book, which is far from giving authoritarian answers. Mircea Anghelescu opens a productive direction for future research.

George-Florian NEAGOE

<sup>4</sup> “[...] textul anonim (semnat X) intitulat «Guy de Maupassant intime (notes d’une amie)»” (Idem: 147).

<sup>5</sup> Originally “Al doilea amant al doamnei Chatterley”.

<sup>6</sup> “The Last Notes of Mateiu Caragiale with an Unedited Correspondence and the Index of Beings, Things and Events Presented by Ion Iovan”.

<sup>7</sup> Bogdan Cretu, “Jurnalul apocrif al lui Mateiu I. Caragiale” in *Viata romaneasca*, no. 1-2, 2009; Paul Cernat, “Mateiu Caragiale and &Co., als ob”, in *Observatorul cultural*, no. 470, 2009; George Neagoe “Apocrif” in *Cultura*, no. 6, 2009.

<sup>8</sup> “Au fond, le pseudonyme fait de l’auteur un énonciateur fictif, un personnage à part entière” (Jérôme Meizoz, *Postures littéraires. Mise en scène modern de l’auteur. Essai*. Genève, Slatkine Érudition, 2007).

<sup>9</sup> Idem: 18.

**Livia TITIENI**, *Défis du fragment*, Cluj-Napoca, Editura Limes, 2007, 302 p.

Paru en 2008, le livre *Défis du fragment* de Livia Titieni se constitue en une démarche pluridisciplinaire de l'écriture du fragment/fragmentaire dans la littérature française du XX-e siècle. Comme création littéraire moderne, outre l'ambiguïté constitutive de cette pratique, accréditant des stratégies d'écriture opposées (ouverture infinie et concentration aphoristique) la double connotation de l'esthétique du fragment comme perte et productivité, suscitant à la fois «dégoût» et «fascination», la reconnaissance d'une carence tempéramentale et/ou intellectuelle, et l'orgueil aristocratique, tout cela là fait la vogue du fragmentaire allant jusqu'aux effets de mode. Serait-ce la raison de la pratique du fragment dans la modernité et la post-modernité littéraire?

Dans *Tentatives de définition*, l'auteur insiste sur le fait que le fragment engendre des mutations fondamentales au niveau sémantique et implicitement au niveau de la réception: d'une part il met en oeuvre le principe de destruction de l'ordre "classique", de la continuité et de la cohérence sémantique, de l'autre il "reorganise" la structure (en fait, tout en la décentrant, il la détruit), conformément au rythme interrompu de la pensée naturelle.

Cette négation de la continuité se fait au nom d'un nouvel espace, celui de la discontinuité où la raison rencontre l'émotion. L'artiste a ainsi la chance de manifester ses angoisses, ses doutes, le vide, l'ennui dans l'acte même de la création, vécu comme une libération des canons, mais aussi comme apprentissage, voire une ascèse assumée dans la tentative de "dire le monde", de le faire signifier.

Le chapitre suivant, *Les composants paratextuels et la fragmentation* a comme point de départ l'idée de Barthes qui abusait du terme "déprise" pour laisser au sens tout

liberté de se manifester. Jusqu'à la folie du langage, jusqu'à l'absurde. "Le Réel", disait Cioran, "me donne de l'asthme." La réalité de la littérature est autre et paradoxalement plus durable et plus intense que celle qui lui a servi de point de départ. Les poèmes homériques, affirme Ricoeur, ont survécu au monde grec. Qu'en est-il alors de la représentation et du sens? Autre exemple est celui de Valéry qui niait tout achèvement de l'oeuvre parce cela lui donnait le sentiment de l'impossibilité de modifier, il reprochait à la littérature, au roman surtout, ses conventions. L'auteur s'arrête sur des fragments de Quignard qui sont des réflexions sur la manière dont le passé peut être récupéré, devant l'impossibilité manifeste en connaître les faits autrement qu'à travers les textes. Mais quels que soient ces textes, archives, témoignages, ce sont toujours des constructions humaines qui ne sauraient atteindre l'objectivité absolue. Aussi, en présence de cette "fiction", Quignard va se lancer à la récupération de ce perdu, à un "constructionnisme", s'arrogeant le droit d'utiliser librement ces textes, souvent devenus pré-textes, travail de la citation qui n'est pas sans rappeler Montaigne. C'est ainsi que s'installe souvent un dialogue d'oeuvre à l'oeuvre, "oeuvre palimpseste" allant de la nature au discours et encore du discours au discours sur le discours.

Le chapitre *Les fragmentistes comme poéticiens du fragment* met en lumière l'importance d'une poétique du fragment qui devrait en relever les invariants. Or ce qui frappe dans l'étude des fragments c'est leur hétérogénéité, leur "hospitalité thématique" revendiquée par leur genre même. Malgré cela, on peut constater la récurrence des problèmes abordés en fonction des préoccupations de l'époque et de la pratique scripturale des auteurs. Ce sont les dimensions par lesquelles le fragment s'installe en donnée qui y est pour beaucoup dans le mouvement moderne et postmoderne aussi

si l'on pense à son éclectisme, annulant la dialectique des formes ou à l'ouverture illimitée du texte jusqu'à empêcher la configuration d'un sens, tant soit peu clair ou fixe et avec cela instituant une pluralité d'interprétations. Ainsi la poétique du fragmentaire par son refus de l'harmonie, de l'ordre, du finalisme, de la vérité semble habiter le siècle précédent et se prolonger dans le nôtre.

Les titres des chapitres illustrent la clarté de la démarche complexe et la lecture "nouvelle" de Livia Titieni: le fragment comme texte englobant, impur, surmontant la séparation artificielle des genres, le refus du système et de la totalité, et conséquemment de l'oeuvre, du livre, le fragment diariste, la critique du matériel linguistique, l'attitude à l'égard du roman, l'aphorisme comme fragment, le fragment comme critique créatrice, la lecture parcellaire... "La fragmentation est l'âme de l'art", affirme sans ambages Pascal Quignard, mais non sans avoir exprimé au préalable l'écart qui s'est creusé entre le besoin de l'homme et la nature de l'art. *Le fragment comme discours intégrateur, Fragment et système, Fragment et aphorisme* sont autant des chapitres qui illustrent à plusieurs niveaux de signification et paliers de lecture le fait que tous les écrivains de fragments partagent l'attitude de refus de l'oeuvre que radicalise Cioran, dissociant la production "du premier venu en littérature" de l'oeuvre – exigence supérieure, toujours convoitée mais rarement ou jamais accomplie. *Le fragment - un succédané du roman* a comme point de départ l'idée que tous ces écrivains (Barthes, Cioran, Blanchot et Quignard) ont un maître, avoué ou non, Paul Valéry, que l'on prend généralement comme point de départ dans l'exploration des directions esthétiques suivies non seulement l'écriture fragmentaire mais une bonne partie de la littérature moderne. Si Cioran se montrait fâché contre la littérature, Valéry, avant

lui, détestait les conventions camouflées par les romanciers et par les historiens. D'ici à la considérer "une pratique détestable" il n'y a qu'un pas. C'est ici qu'on trouve son origine le pessimisme foncier des "fragmentistes". Conséquences inévitables, la gratuité de l'acte littéraire, la littérature comme jeu et, dans le meilleur des cas, le texte comme signification indirecte. Compte tenu du spécifique du fragment comme littérature par excellence "pensante", le type de réflexion qu'il prétend ou favorise en est un abstrait, courant le risque de dégénérer en paraphrase. D'ailleurs la pratique du fragment est confondue avec sa théorie, d'où le besoin de prendre en compte tout le métatexte fragmentaire.

L'enjeu de ce livre était, le pensons-nous, de mettre en valeur, d'un écrivain à l'autre, les particularités de chacun, ainsi que le cheminement d'une réflexion sur le phénomène fragmentaire solidaire de la réflexion sur la littérature française dite moderne (la riche bibliographie en fin du volume illustre les préoccupations poussées de l'auteur pour ces aspects). Ainsi, nous avons à notre disposition une "tranche" de littérature française qui s'est voulue et se veut toujours sur la crête de la vague, contestant tout, y compris sa propre production, de même qu'une clé de lecture qui s'harmonise à sa spécificité.

La littérature française a longtemps exercé, et, de manière convaincante, son exemplarité quasi paradigmatique, voir civilisatrice, de même que sa vert révolutionnaire, novatrice, unanimement reconnue dans l'espace européen. "Rien ne peut être une chose et son contraire" affirmait Aristote. Si bien des textes fragmentaires semblent dire ou disent "une chose et son contraire", c'est que le sens n'est pas un absolu et alors –auteur, lecteur et critique peuvent communier dans la recherche de l'échange du sens, en vertu de la complémentarité des vues et



d'une commune condition de dépendance à l'égard de la vérité. La recherche dans *Défis du fragment* a voulu s'inscrire dans cet esprit esthétique, herméneutique et à la fois philosophique.

Nicolae ȘERA

**Rodica ILIE**, *The Literary Manifesto. Poetics of the Avant-Garde in the Romanic Cultural Areas*. Brașov: Transilvania Publishing House, 2008 / Rodica Ilie, *Manifestul literar. Poetici ale avangardei în spațiul cultural romanic*, Editura Universității „Transilvania”, Brașov, 2008, 350 p.

The volume (signed by Rodica Ilie, a senior lecturer at the Faculty of Letters of Transilvania University, Brașov) represents the most significant result, until now, of the author's constant interest in the study of the literary manifestos in the context of the European avant-gardes. As a fact, the book is basically related to her most complex and encompassing research, the PhD thesis defended at the University of Bucharest in 2006. The seriousness of the theoretical framework, as well as the richness of bibliographical references and balanced approach are just a few hints of the academic background of the volume. A sequence of the research, regarding the manifesto within the Romanian avant-garde, was published in 2007 under the title *Poetica manifestului literar. Aspecte ale avangardei române/ The Poetics of the Literary Manifesto*. This previous work is built on a theoretical axis, but makes use also of historical and hermeneutical analyses of the phenomenon of the literary manifesto, while the Romanian avant-garde is approached here through interesting case-studies. If the theoretical basis is preserved in the 2008 volume, offering a constant perspective, the hermeneutical approach is

enriched, becoming larger and more sophisticated (in which thematic is concerned) and case studies have been added. The author is interested in the Italian and French avant-gardes, indispensable to a study with this subject, but also in less familiar yet very exciting areas such as the Portuguese and South American literatures (a very interesting chapter was dedicated to this latter). To complete this Romanic avant-garde map, the author also offers a study focused on Romanian manifestos, making use of both hermeneutical and comparative literature skills.

The title and subtitle of the volume circumscribe its two main areas of interest: the theory of the literary manifesto in the context of modern genre studies as well as the explicit area of accomplishment of the avant-garde spirit in the Romanic literary areas. Having emerged on the bases of the reflexive Romantic consciousness, which has become more and more aware during modernism, through the avant-gardes the manifesto tends to abandon its traditional function (that of a hybrid genre) and conquer the status of an independent genre in competition with literature itself. The study takes into discussion the specificity of the discourse of the literary manifesto, marked by a “critical and interrogative, negative and in the same time legitimizing approach” (5)

The theoretical perspective – result of a variety of angles and tones, from assertion to interrogation - gravitates around defining the manifesto as a literary genre. The starting point of the work is the visualisation of a complex of theories regarding the manifesto, in a heterogeneous analytical approach: the author's interest of in understanding, defining and categorizing the concept of *manifesto* within the studies of literary genres meets history of literature and the need for text analysis. The author is interested therefore in illustrating the “affiliation of the literary manifesto to trans-

textual categories, by activating in its external dynamics hyper-textual and meta-textual relations and therefore generating a complex archi-genre, approachable from different perspectives/ „apartenența manifestului literar la categorii transtextuale, el activând în dinamica sa externă raporturi hiper-textuale și metatextuale, generând un arhigen complex, abordabil din mai multe perspective” (20). On the other hand the text takes the form of an ”analysis of the internal dynamics [of the manifesto], which anchors it in conexions which are more than semantic and syntactical, poetical, rhetorical and pragmatic relations (genuinely speculated at the level of its constructions as a discourse)”/ “analize a dinamicii interne [a manifestului], care însă îl ancorează în relații mai mult decât semantico-sintactice, în raporturi poetico-retorice și pragmatice inedit speculate la nivelul construcției sale ca discurs” (20).

As a methodological option the author uses the instruments of a theorist together with those of the literary historian and hermeneutist in a discourse which is permanently connected to the idea of *dynamics, metamorphosis and opposition*. In the hermeneutical section, there are two dominant formulas in which focalization are concerned: the first is the large perspective, focused on literary movements as well as vast spaces or important periods of time. The second is centred on case studies, dedicated to writers considered by Rodica Ilie as determinant for the subject of the volume (G. Apollinaire or Fernando Pessoa).

The volume represents an attentive mapping of the problem of the literary manifesto in connexion to the phenomenon of the avant-gardes. It is a useful tool for academic study, but also, due to its interrogative and analytical qualities, an interesting study for the specialists, both for those interested in the avant-gardes and in the studies of genres. The reader is

also offered, with a care suggesting didactical talent and experience, a complex of auxiliary tools, from selected bibliographies (for each chapter) to large quotations from the actual manifestos, breaking the academic rhetoric and offering glimpses of the living spirit of the literature of the avant-garde.

Andrada FĂȚU-TUTOVEANU

**Alexandru MATEI**, *Ultimele zile din viața literaturii, Enorm și insignifiant în literatura franceză contemporană (Les derniers jours dans la vie de la littérature)*, București, Editura Cartea românească, 2008, 385 p.

S’occupant du champ littéraire français, Alexandru Matei discute des problèmes d’autonomie littéraire: pourquoi jouir d’une modernité effacée dans les conditions où il existe des simulacres de modernité comme le minimalisme, perçu comme négociation forcée entre les écrivains minimalistes de type Biedermeier, qui „exaltent la province et la «terre», en d’autres termes, la France profonde, marginale“, qui n’est pas touchée du danger de la civilisation, en narrations légères, délicates (le style Christian Bobin) et ceux qui projettent une sorte de vision aussi idyllique que la précédente, mais plus résistante par rapport à „la société occidentale capitaliste, peuplée de personnages bizarres“ (p. 9, p. 341): espèce de minimalisme bucolique, moins sophistiqué ou „autofiction Amélie Poulain“, après une expression de Jean Pierre Salgas, les deux provoquent de réactions très fortes de l’agonie.

Le littéraire est parsemé d’exceptions et de réinventions de termes. „Les nouveaux libertins“ vivent sous le signe de la cruauté et de la volonté de scandale, „d’exploration des frontières communes à l’humain et à

l'animal" (p. 158). Frédéric Beigbeder et Régis Jauffret sont des dandys qui ont comme seule condition de vie celle d'épater et d'ultragier les limites. Cette révolte est leur seule façon d'être écoutés et d'attirer l'attention. D'une part, la cruauté langagière s'oppose à l'autofiction ouverte, aux „effets de vie“ de Marrie Darrieussecq et même aux expériences dionysiaques et élitaires d'Anne Garreta, Pierre Michon, Pascal Quignard ou Pierre Bergounioux. D'autre part, le libertinage devient une stratégie d'annuler le réel ou de l'excéder: en écrivant ainsi, les libertines ne font qu'exprimer leurs doutes sur la littérature. Certes, dans ces conditions, le moi semble être seulement un observateur très raffiné qui possède soit une rhétorique traditionnellement française de l'identité et du désir, soit une urgence sociale, substitut de la séduction. Entre ces limites, il y a des auteurs très différents: Eric Chevillard qui utilise parfaitement le paradoxe et le thème de l'aliénation, Patrick Deville qui se revendique des avant-gardes Oulipiennes, Emmanuel Adely et ses habilités de garder l'ambiguïté sexuelle du protagoniste, en faisant la preuve du minimalisme formel. Il nous reste aussi la littérature antimoderne, représentée par Pascal Quignard, produit incontestable de l'histoire.

Bref, il s'agit de mêler les théories de la modernité littéraire française avec celles anglo-saxons, avec le risque d'exposer de disputes intellectuelles qui font le délice du discours critique. Le binôme „moderne – postmoderne“ se revendique d'un excès d'information. On se rend compte de la diversité de formules littéraires françaises actuelles par une dystonie de la façon dont on pense le monde, soit-il un monde spectacle, soit-il un monde anomalie, un „nouveau monde monstre“, après une expression de Philippe Muray et de Maurice Dantec. C'est-à-dire, le protéisme des discours sur le littéraire contamine la vision plus large et

plus démocratique de la littérature. Sinon, il s'agit d'une telle diversité de discours que le phénomène étudié perd ses limites intrinsèques et acquiert des nouvelles contraintes: une autre forme d'expression en fonction de la région qui l'a adopté, un autre nom et des traits similaires aux ceux d'origine. Incontestablement, „le récit influe sur nos manières de voir, d'autant plus efficacement qu'il propose, sans imposer“, comme Alain Rabatel nous prévient. On arrive ainsi à une liberté maximale, étant les possesseurs d'une réalité „en construction“, brisée par les possibilités presque infinies de fournir du matériel aux micro univers littéraires, en se situant toutefois dans le champ littéraire.

Par conséquent, voir le monde en noir et en blanche pour mieux radiographier le réel restitue une image bricolée des phénomènes étudiés et, à la limite, une image artificielle. On s'interroge plutôt sur le sens du littéraire que sur le trajet de la littérature. Les raisons sont diverses. La première, c'est le besoin de faire possible un dialogue interculturel, décelé par un „outsider, ni français, ni américain, quelqu'un qui a étudié le français à l'école et la culture pop anglo-saxonne dans la rue“ (p. 11). Le plus important reste le discours français sur la littérature, réverbéré par une vision culturelle sur la littérature, restituée par Antoine Compagnon, Jacques Rancière, William Marx, Vincent Descombes ou Lionel Ruffel. Il nous reste d'imbriquer le réel et le littéraire, en gardant une perspective sceptique sur les niveaux d'interprétation: on est seulement des narrataires dans un monde superficiel, qui fait des photos en sépia aux objets restreints, mal fabriqués et soit trop gros, soit infiniment petits.

Certes, la symétrie des phénomènes littéraires n'est que parfois réalisée. L'un des intérêts majeurs de la thèse d'Alexandru Matei est de penser cette évolution des formes littéraires par le récit

aux normes théoriques. Les motifs sont multiples: à cause d'un excès, c'est-à-dire d'une anomalie synonyme à une étrangeté hors le littéraire, on arrive à focaliser le contenu sur la réalité même. Ensuite, il s'agit d'une littérature mineure, ensanglantée par le métadiscours, dont les références semblent être au moins extra-culturelles, sinon médiocres et périphériques. On joue des références comme d'un piano désassemblé ou mal accordé. Finalement, l'agonie de la littérature se transfère aux instances qui échappent au contrôle rigoureux, pour faire la preuve d'une recherche illimitée. Ainsi présenté, l'évolution des trajets des discours narratifs est essentielle à la bonne compréhension et à la bonne interprétation des textes narratifs.

Irina GEORGESCU

**Simona SORA**, *Regăsirea intimității. Corpul în proza românească interbelică și post-decembristă (The Return to Intimacy. The Body in Romanian Post-World War I and Post-December 1989 Fiction)*, Bucharest: Cartea Românească Publisher, 2008, 290 p.

In her first single-author book (originally a Ph.D. dissertation), Simona Sora, a distinctive voice in contemporary Romanian literary criticism, proposes a (re)definition of intimacy, as "reading theory and practice".

Concurrently, Simona Sora's book places in close proximity two historical periods equally marked by "the retracing of intimacy". The succession of the chapters foregrounds changes of mentality – and, implicitly, changes made in literary paradigms by the 1933 and 1989 landmarks; they align "on the one hand, an existential Lebensphilosophie, and on the other hand, a self-reflexive age, which follows the postmodern mannerisms". Consequently, after an introduction, the book's second

section reviews some aspects of literary modernity in the work of Romanian inter-war canonical writers such as H. P. Bengescu, Camil Petrescu, Mircea Eliade, Garabet Ibrăileanu, Anton Holban, Max Blecher or Mihail Sebastian. The author believes that the most important corporeal metaphor of the inter-war period is "the bodily soul" which, in H.P. Bengescu's novels, functions as a textual motor, an "interior, moving, versatile axis". Re-reading Camil Petrescu's *The Bed of Procrustes* in this light, the narrative motor appears to be "Fred Vasilescu's secret: the fact that he lacks an inner self... and he thrives on the holes in the texture of his existence, drawing his sap from an as yet non-existent self". That Anton Holban adopts the agenda of foregrounded intimacy in a self-reflexive way (in the novel *Ioana*) generates a subtle analysis that is also a polemic against the novel's canonical interpretations: "It is not the recovery of love or the experience of jealousy and its transcription that the novel centers upon, but the fulfilment of a funeral rite: in fact, the death of the love-novel is foregrounded, so as to transform the lived experience into a «dead letter». Ioana can only be (re)possessed by her transformation into *Ioana* – the novel's novel".

The third part, "The Body of the Postmoderns – a Contemporary Egodicy", recapitulates changes of vision due to the 1989 landmark. The inter-war corporeal metaphors (death-in-life, the virtual image of the body in the mirror) become, in '80s literature, bookish images (the body-book, the textual body). In the inter-war novels the salient metaphor of the bodily soul had been the token of a unifying vision and aspiration for integration. In the collective novel *The Woman in Red* (by Mircea Nedelciu, Mircea Mihăieș and Adriana Babeți), by contrast, the central metaphor, or rather anti-metaphor, is the autopsy. "Reading is dissecting". Thus, in

Adrian Oțoiu's novel, *The Skin of Things or Dancing with the Peeled-Off Lady*, the reading process models intimacy: "the textual razor made to hover, just like the Stendhalian mirror, over the fictional body of the narrator, and underneath it, separating the zones exactly like a surgical demarcation line which reflects the worlds, but also concentrates them either in a reversible time or in a mixed-up space, rhizomial and fractal-like".

Both Gheorghe Crăciun's novels and his theoretical texts develop an obsession with the writer's double incapacity: "How can one reconcile one's (own) body with the character's letter, and how can one describe the (character's) body with (one's own, or the others') language?" Thus the body becomes a co-ordinate of the writing, in G. Crăciun's novel just as in Mircea Cărtărescu's trilogy, *Blindfounded* – where the textual web is organic.

The substantial "bodily differences" between the 1933 and 1989 horizons have to do with "holiday entertainment novels" as opposed to "narrative skin-sheddings" that are self-referential and textual in nature. Whereas the 1933 novels had focused on a unitary body, the *locus mysterii* of an analysable self, the 1989 novels feature "body-as-form, fragmentary" and "delineate the boundary between the I and the world, a universe-body that can be traversed by in-roads and mapped". What sets the 1989 novels apart is their hierarchy reversal: brain becomes "thinking flesh", flesh "a relay of the existential synapses" (Simona Popescu). Their authors turn the defining inter-war syntagm, "the soul as body", into "the body is the soul".

Eventually the intimacy between reader and text read can be viewed as a central concept at the work's ultimate semantic level inspired by French reading theories of the 1980s which defined the critical intimacy of the reader and the text. Despite the author's caveat at the start of the book, it might have been desirable to devote

somewhat more space to this interesting topic. Nevertheless, one can only praise Simona Sora's rigorous method and the plurality of openings to other disciplines – ranging from hermeneutics, literary history and the theory of reading, to comparative literature – and her use of psychoanalysis, social sciences and philosophy. Her book, well-structured, fluent and persuasive, creatively bridges between older and newer narratives of intimacy.

Elena CRAȘOVAN

**Mircea A. DIACONU**, *Qui a peur de Cioran? Cioran étranger (Cui i-e frică de Emil Cioran? Cioran străinul)*, Edition Cartea Românească, Bucarest, 2008.

Publié en 2008, le livre est approprié à une époque qui fait la promotion des idées qui découragent les auteurs - les thèmes, les commentaires semblent épuisés, il n'y a pas une réalité essentielle, une véritable connaissance, mais inventé, construit, la hiérarchie est abolie, tout est relatif. Dans ce contexte, Mircea A. Diaconu vient avec une nouvelle perspective sur Cioran. Le titre, ingénieusement choisi pour promouvoir le livre, incite à la lecture et promet un autre côté de la légende. Le livre satisfait le besoin de nouveau lecteur contemporain; l'auteur utilise une analyse relativement novatrice dans l'espace roumain: il esquisse le portrait de l'homme-écrivain par ses témoignages. Les sources autobiographiques, les correspondances utilisées dans une étude ne sont pas une invention de cet auteur, mais l'exclusivité de cette technique revendiquée par la critique rend en livre unique. C'est aussi une nouvelle perspective parmi les études de l'auteur, qui a conçu des biographies sur Mircea Streinul, Cezar Baltag, Ion Creangă,

Calistrat Hogaș, mais l'utilisation de cette tactique n'est pas exclusive.

L'oeuvre a un aspect de collage, de mosaïque, elle semble un livre infini: on peut citer sans répit de ces lettres, des cahiers personnels de Cioran, puis interpréter des traits de caractère. Le livre surprend le public par le grand nombre des citations (certaines citations sont répétées tout au long du livre). Ces détails sont naturellement intégrés dans le livre et c'est tout le mérite de l'auteur. Le risque de ces livres monopolisés par une seule technique est de devenir monotone, ennuyeux. L'écriture de Mircea A. Diaconu sauve de nouveau la situation.

La voix de l'auteur, l'intervention subjective dans le texte sont des requises de l'esprit de l'époque. Cette participation émotionnelle est discrète parce que la voix de l'auteur est ombragée par la voix de Cioran. Le personnage parle librement dans ce livre, il domine son auteur.

Les perspectives sont conçues par des contraires (pessimiste-optimiste, nostalgique-heureux, roumain-français, Balcani-Rășinari-Paris, carpe diem-vivre au présent-vivre à l'avenir), l'auteur veut *apprivoiser* les dualités et créer un Cioran sensible, accessible. Ses arguments sont indestructibles – sa voix est le mot de Cioran.

Le livre finit par les mêmes prémisses avec lesquelles il a commencé: l'image de l'écrivain ne coïncide pas avec celle de l'homme. En outre, ce livre est destiné à révolutionner – si l'on considère que Cioran est un nihiliste, on voit de ses lettres qu'il est très prudent, il conseille à son frère de prendre soin. Si certaines déclarations prouvent la haine contre la Roumanie, la honte d'être roumain, fermez les yeux: on voit un homme qui regrette la vie à Rășinari comme berger, proche de la nature. La citation est reprise, – Cioran aime travailler la terre – ce que la réponse aurait été bien mieux utilisée en Roumanie à une autre époque.

Le sens des démonstrations peut être résumées comme suit: Cioran fait l'apologie du suicide, mais il ne se tue pas. C' est à dire, il écrit quelque chose et il fait d'autre chose. La différence entre la fiction et la réalité ici est subtile, mais elle devrait être remarquée. On ne doit pas confondre la fiction, l'écrivain et la réalité, l'homme. Le démarche de Mircea A. Diaconu envisage la source autobiographique, ce qui est plus proche de la vie que de la fiction. L'écrivain et l'homme se rencontrent ici; ils deviennent en plausible portrait devant des lecteurs. La liberté du personnage *contamine* le lecteur, lui aussi libre d'interpréter l'identité de Cioran.

Ce livre est le produit de son époque, curieux de savoir les biographies des écrivains. Les seules sources (bibliographiques) de Mircea A. Diaconu sont les lettres et les documents de Cioran qui n'étaient pas conçues pour être publiées.

*Qui a peur de Cioran*, c'est polémique par sa structure – il ne contient pas de références critiques, autres que des citations de Cioran. Son apparition peut susciter de nombreuses voix autorisées de l'exégèse de Cioran. Le livre est donc susceptible de devenir une oeuvre-écho.

Le pouvoir de la citation, les comparaisons avec des caractères dostoïevskiens, la métaphore de l'ombre de Cioran prise de Vișniec, les traits toujours en débat, toutes cela ancrées dans l'écriture d'un effort cohérent, clair, donnent de charme à l'édition.

En supposant que, Cioran était effrayant, après avoir lu ce livre, personne n'a plus peur de lui. Enfin, on proclame la l'humanisation de tous les monstres, dragons, nihilistes, génies.

Ioana MANTA

**Lucian RAICU**, *Dincolo de literatură, (Au-delà de la littérature)* antologie și comentarii de Carmen Mușat, Editura Hasefer, București, 2008.

*Au-delà de la littérature* prouve qu'on peut faire de la critique d'une manière surprenante, par l'approche qui existe entre l'auteur et le lecteur, et par la clarté du discours qui convainc en dehors des questions dont les réponses ne sont pas exhaustives. L'argument écrit par Carmen Mușat met en évidence la difficulté de donner unité à ce livre, qui est, en fait, une variation inépuisable sur le même thème, dont la cohérence est née de la fragmentation, de l'obsession de l'auteur d'y entrevoir les métamorphoses de l'esprit créateur. Le but de la critique littéraire n'est pas d'expliquer l'œuvre, mais de la re-écrire, d'en élaborer une phénoménologie. Ce livre-ci constitue un découpage sémantique sur le thème de l'esprit créateur. Les fragments sont parfois accompagnés par des commentaires, un Lucian Raicu face-à-face avec lui-même, son discours contre le discours de la critique contemporaine.

L'objet de la théorie littéraire créé par Lucian Raicu est plus que la littérature, son discours est une plaidoirie pour la reconstitution du moment génétique de l'œuvre, pour la contextualisation de la lecture et de l'interprétation. L'étude a un aspect de liberté à cause du mélange entre les commentaires critiques, les confessions, les observations théoriques et les souvenirs, qui convergent vers une synthèse utopique.

Selon l'auteur, une condition et un devoir de la critique littéraire c'est le retour vers les grands problèmes de l'humanité, vers la condition humaine. L'œuvre contient quelque chose de secret, quelque chose qui se trouve au-delà de la littérature, et cet inconnu est le lieu où le critique veut arriver. L. Raicu essaie

d'abord de définir la spécificité de la critique: «la critique n'a pas de passé, n'a pas de futur, ni de nostalgies, ni d'espairs, elle dit autre chose que ce qu'elle dit, et alors elle est obligée à tout dire». Le critique retourne l'action de son écriture vers soi-même, il parle de sa présence dans la proximité de l'œuvre, de la joie provoquée par la communion de la littérature avec l'être, du dialogue entre la conscience de l'œuvre et celle du récepteur. Par conséquent, il envisage les œuvres comme étant plus autobiographiques que les confessions, à cause de la liberté donnée par l'inspiration. En ce qui concerne la relation entre l'auteur et le critique, l'écrivain distingue entre l'artiste médiocre qui méprise la critique, et le vrai artiste qui connaît le grand prix de la critique. L'abus interprétatif détruit le vivant, ainsi que la vérité authentique de l'œuvre. Envisageant une mission du critique littéraire, l'auteur proteste contre l'imposture de la critique, que serait un regard biaisé sur le monde des œuvres dont elle est censée venir à la rencontre. L'œuvre est pour Lucian Raicu un objet esthétique et, afin de mieux la comprendre, il doit se situer à l'extérieur de son œuvre. Le critique est un lecteur épris de son étude qui re-vit la vie de chaque œuvre qui établit à l'aide des lecteurs des liaisons entre un livre et son auteur. Il met à l'origine de l'écriture un choc, une rupture issue même d'un mensonge qui est plus convaincant que la vérité. Il voit la vie d'artiste comme une vie de héros, capable de sacrifice et capable de sentir la douleur du passé, sans que son écriture dépende des circonstances.

Quand il parle de la nécessité du jeu dans une œuvre, Lucian Raicu se rapporte à ses souvenirs d'enfance, aux livres qui ont influencé les vies des auteurs, au fait que devant la feuille blanche le vrai créateur ne sait rien, que l'œuvre entière peut être réduite à une seule phrase, une seule pensée portant le message de la vie, qui est née dans la solitude.

Il pose des questions, il y donne des réponses multiples, il montre aux lecteurs sa manière de faire de la critique avec les incertitudes, la participation dans le cœur de l'œuvre, il fait une distinction entre les grands artistes et les artistes en général et nous invite de voir aussi sa vie, parce qu'en parlant des autres, il parle de lui-même. Il croit que les génies naissent dans une époque géniale, que la création soutient des lectures répétées. La critique stimule la création, mais elle n'aide pas l'auteur à mieux écrire. Le plus grand devoir du critique doit être la compréhension de l'œuvre et ce que constitue la passion et l'obsession de Lucian Raicu est le processus de l'élaboration, de la naissance, écrire signifie de la magie.

Contrairement à ses apparences fragmentaires, le livre garde une unité compositionnelle due à la recherche intinterrompue de l'esprit vital, de quelque chose caché dans la profondeur de l'œuvre, du triangle formé par l'auteur, le critique et le lecteur; un auteur ancré dans la réalité qui encode le message et parle d'elle-même, un critique qui cherche à comprendre le texte et un lecteur qui peut être en même temps auteur ou critique et qui, en lisant, veut trouver son propre être. *Au-delà de la littérature* tente d'expliquer et la naissance du livre, et son interprétation. Edition posthume d'un de plus importants critiques roumains de la fin du 20<sup>e</sup> siècle, elle restitue un profil, un programme et une cartographie de réflexions qui orientent le lecteur dans le labyrinthe des bibliothèques imaginaires.

Ioana HORA

**Marius GHICA**, *Geneza operei literare. Repere spre o poietică (The genesis of the literary writing. Markers toward the edification of a Poietics)*, Paralela 45 Publishing House, Pitești, 2008.

Marius Ghica's "*The genesis of the literary writing. Markers toward the edification of a Poietics*" – a fundamental study in its try to give a close approach to the *theoretician* that Paul Valéry was, but, as the title suggests, even more than that –, presents itself as a re-edition (revised and enlarged) of his 1985 debut book called "*The Making of the Poem*".

The book is, in the last resort and in what it has more authentic, a pleading in favour of a reapproaching of the Aesthetic Studies to Ontology. According to Marius Ghica, the fact would be attainable if the present perspective upon the *literary production* – which is seen as a „complete product offered to the senses and to the intellect” (p. 225) – would be replaced by an understanding of it in its *dynamic* estate. In other words, the production „needs to be understood energetically, as accomplishment arrived to its own completion” (p. 225) - recapitulating, in the *final* product, the entire process of its elaboration, but at the same time remaining *opened*, therefore *unfinished* if related with the possible *reader* – and this happens thanks to the reader himself, who, as a *different person than the author of the text he reads*, will necessarily have a different understanding of it. As a matter of fact, in the early Greek thought, Marius Ghica says, „*poiesis* did not designate the genesis as execution, but the action of bringing into presence, of bringing and exposing something as appearance (*eidōs*) in the open. What did not yet exist obtains a countenance through *poiesis* and is thereby put into being and brought to existence” (p. 222).



Appealing, through Heidegger, Constantin Noica and Mihai Şora, to the Greek ethos taken as base in the edification of an *ontological poietics* and surpassing, in this way, the „making as execution”, Marius Ghica leaves behind, as invalid in the speculative field, exactly the *empirical poietics* of Paul Valéry as it is revealed to us in the first part of the study, from which the demarche had started.

Seen by the French writer as an alternative to the biographical abuses made by the historians of literature in his time, the valeryan *poietics* could offer a new type of literary history, a „*History of the spirit as producer or consumer of «literature»*” that „*could be realized without pronouncing the name of a writer*” (p. 17), since important is not as much the *person* behind the literary product, but mainly „*the machine* that fabricates, through words, the poetic state, a mechanism that has no identity” (p. 135): more precisely, the author seen strictly in the moments of creation, when he himself had become a *product* of the effort that the *poietic* act requires.

For Valéry, the thought that the naive reader can afford to ignore this labour is unacceptable, and *Poietics*, as a „science”, should have this exact purpose, of showing the process through which the author composes and builds what will appear in the end as *a monument of the spirit*, the limits that he will self-impose or that he will undertake for the edification of his work, ultimately manifesting over him, rising him from under the law of the *arbitrary* and putting him under that of the *general*.

Thus, following the nodal points involved in the poietic creation, Marius Ghica offers us a *hermeneutical* reading of the valeryan annotations that concern *the making of the poem* in chapters such as „*Poetry and poetic state, the beginnings of the poem*”, „*The waiting and the attention*”,

„*Poetic invention*”, „*Inspiration*” etc. His study reveals a rigorous composition and proves a careful reading that manages to have a deep perception of the roots of the valeryan thought.

Contained in his ample attempt to show the „*paths to a po(i)etic based on the being*” is also the answer that Marius Ghica tries for the question „How does a revelation – which in essence is ineffable – transform into a work of art?” (p. 227), or in other words, „*how* does spoken words turn into poetic saying?” (p. 203). His answer is based on Mihai Şora’s „Salt of the earth” and states that „if poetry is based on the craft of the poet, it is a poetry of good «word-matching», which is a matter of talent rather than depending on a *téchne*” (p. 223). The purpose of poetry would be, from a phenomenological perspective, to give back words the flooding of being that was taken from them by daily and scientific use of language.

Although we do not *completely* agree with the author’s speculative intercession from the last part of the book, Marius Ghica’s study remains a fundamental one when it comes to the reception of the valeryan creation – it even contains a full translation of the *La Jeune Parque* made by Ştefan Aug. Doinaş, and a chapter containing Paul Valéry’s confessions regarding the genesis of this poem –, but also through some of the theoretical aspects we already pointed out, that can constitute a base for new researches.

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