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Names and naming techniques as a form of identity construction in *Pupa Russa* by Gheorghe Crăciun

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The present paper aims at analysing Gheorghe Crăciun's novel, ***Pupa russa****, from a multi-layered perspective targeting the naming techniques used by the author as one of the main ways of incorporating his unique concept of the body into his fiction writing. This is the novel where the naming practice, as applied to feminine characters, reaches its peak. Moreover, there is a tendency of following the path of highly motivated names for female characters, thus connecting* ***Pupa russa*** *to previous titles. The connections can be made at the level of internal intertextuality and it will open the discussion towards Crăciun's last novel,* ***Blue Women****, but also at the level of external intertextuality, Leontina Guran as a Romanian Madame Bovary.*

Key-words: *intertextuality, fiction, naming practice*.

1. Introduction

The current paper aims at using Crăciun's novel, *Pupa russa*, as a pretext for a broader discussion focused on the author's practices in naming female characters as being relevant at a number of levels. **The first one** alludes to a redefined definition of the concept of **intertextuality**, here deeply connected with the particularities of Crăciun's writing, where the traditional definitions could no longer cover the textual reality. This redefined concept further divides into external intertextuality and internal intertextuality, both being fully represented in Crăciun's novels.

Defined as *any connection of Crăciun's text with any other text belonging to another author*, *in a perpetual dialogue with tradition and literature*, the external intertextuality connects, in the case of *Pupa russa* to another concept, that of bovarism, as it is reinterpreted in the case of the main character. Crăciun's novel maintains a very interesting relationship with Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* at a number of levels, starting from Leontina as an intended Communist Romanian Madame Bovary and ending with a series of organic similarities of construction and content.

What I defined as internal intertextuality, meaning *any connection among texts signed by Crăciun*, is represented here in the form of the common characteristic

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of female characters as having motivated, and meaningful names. Leontina is not the only example where the name itself is more than a name. Moreover, if in the case of male characters the central movement is that of migration among books (Vlad, Octavian, Gil and George), in the case of female characters, one can easily notice a certain pattern. Leontina Guran is not the only one sharing characteristics with Flaubert's famous character. A character such as Liana Şanta (from the earlier *Composition with Unequal Paralells*) or Ioana Jighira (from *Disembodied Beauty*) are also instances of Madame Bovary in Crăciun's novels, without necessarily being named as such but nonetheless displaying features of jadedness, boredom and having the acute feeling that life happens someplace else. This perspective allows an interpretation of Leontina Guran as the most successful sample of feminine bovarism. Even so, Crăciun doesn't cease to play upon this feature in his female characters because *Blue Women* also displays such portrayals in a greater number than anywhere before.

The second level refers to a **certain degree of experimenting with words**, more precisely to a very subtle play upon language, on the one hand, and writing, on the other. This shows that, even though Crăciun appeared to detach himself from the linguistic field (his early studies focus on generative-transformational syntax) before turning to more literary interests, the separation was never complete. This is visible in his continuous concern for language (which is actually the foundation of his theory of the modern poetry), in what he called *the body and the letter*, two co-dependent concepts and in instances such as naming practices in his novels, which, in the case of female characters, are never innocent or arbitrary.

2. Leontina in the web of intertextual references

Finding himself in a moment critics defined as his top shape, Gheorghe Crăciun launched in 2004 a very intriguing novel whose conception lasted more than ten years, on and off. The book that illustrates this idea best is *The Body Knows Better*, where one can reconfigure, together with the author, the path between the idea of writing *A Romania Madame Bovary* and some of the final stages of writing, also depicted in the novel itself. The two books are intertwined in what concerns the creative itinerary and they can offer a number of useful suggestions to any reader willing to understand the process itself. When reading Flaubert's novel, Crăciun had a distinctive feeling of too much consistency in Emma and so he decides to use this novel as both a pre-text and a literary source that he later models. He has a history in this field, because his second novel, *Composition with Unequal Parralels* is, in part, a reinterpretation in the corporal key of *Dafnis and Chloe* of the ancient author Longos. This time, however, he seems determined to betray Flaubert (Crăciun, 2006, 23):

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> *I want to write a Madame Bovary. I have been living for too long with this provincial obsession. (…) I don't write anything. I mentally accumulate scenes, situations, lines, names, bookish recollections. Could Braşov be some sort of Rouen? Until one morning, when I know the title, I have it on the tip of my tongue:* ***The Russian doll.*** *The subject itself is clearer now for me. I know how and where I will betray Flaubert.*

And he really does betray Flaubert, in a very creatively way, because he chooses to interlace the Emma Bovary model with the Matrioshka one and, furthermore, to customize his Madame Bovary by placing her in the context of Romanian Communism. *Pupa russa* becomes, thus, a fresco of the Romanian communist and post-communist world and a fresco of the way in which such a regime can destroy individual destinies.

Sanda Cordoş investigates all the ways in which Crăciun followed Flaubert, but also the ones he decided to change. The way the two novels open is almost identical, one depicting Charles's first day at the boarding school and the other, Leontina's similar experience, all proportions and local specifications kept. The last names of the husbands are also very similar (Bovary and Darvari) and so are the names of the daughters, Berthe and Berta. This is the line of argument that can sustain the idea of *Pupa russa* as a replica-tribute to Flaubert's novel, as Sanda Cordoş herself sees it.

However, there are some differences to be mentioned and they outnumber the similarities: Leontina lacks any emotional involvement, being, in this sense, quite opposite to Emma, whose main feature is her overwhelming passion. Leontina's complexity as a character, as it will become obvious later on, is no match to Emma's fixed set of defining characteristics. Moreover, what defines Leontina is precisely her duality and her excessive corporality, all leading to her wanting everything, not being able to reach it and ending in a pool of frustration.

The level of internal intertextuality is more subtle, maybe because there is no clear outside reference and because everything happens inside Crăciun's texts. The level of internal intertextuality clearly matches the external one and even surpasses it, because the novelist never ceases to make references to previous contexts from his works, to previous moments and characters. This is why one should not marvel at the fact that, for example, the male characters never seem to stay in one book only. They migrate just the way they want to and this is why characters such as Vlad Stefan, Octavian Costin, Gil or George (a metatextual character actually) wander freely, giving an overall impression that Crăciun's books are never limited between the covers of the first, second or third book. There is a shift happening with *Pupa russa*, but it is one that favours the auctorial image.

All important female characters, on the other hand, are each bound to its title: Liana Şanta (the first bovaric prototype), to *Composition with Unequal Parallels*, Ioana Jighira to *Disembodied Beauty* (in itself a very interesting intertext with

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Eminescu) and Leontina Guran, obviously, to *Pupa russa.* This specific treatment of the female characters hints at the author's plan of achieving, step by step, a perfect replica of Madame Bovary in the cultural and historical context of the Romanian literature. All three female characters are firstly defined by their exterior: Liana sees herself just like a fashion inanimate model. Her reflection is her main expression, she sees herself as being just one of the many objects that need to become prettier. There is a very interesting scene in *Composition with Unequal Parallels* where she starts getting ready for going out, applying make-up, doing nails and hair and getting dressed. These actions are not performed as self-inflicting, but with a very detached feeling, with the sense of making someone else more beautiful. At a deeper level, there is a very subtle process of degradation embodied here: she ceases to be a human being, made of flesh, bone and soul, she becomes just a body and, eventually, just a mannequin, just a dummy. She no longer has relevant things to say to herself and this is why, at the end of the chapter, the reader can infer that she kills herself, thus confirming her ex-husband's idea that suicide is a form of self-hate.

Ioana Jighira from *Disembodied Beauty* is the perfect illustration of the body in a medical, cold sense and the unreachable, untouchable source of Miron's fantasies. This external, subjectivity lacking form is perpetuated as one of Leontina's main features, the same lack of interiority and an abundance of exteriority, in the form of utmost beauty. Ioana Jighira is breathtakingly beautiful and she catches the eye of both Miron Aldea, who is deeply in love with her, and of Gil, who considers her very pretty but at the same time very cold. Miron is the one that feels the effects of loving her in his mere flesh: he functions differently around Ioana, he experiences hot flashes, he stammers when speaking and trembling. This is why the writer's decision to make Ioana experience an appendicitis crisis is, very mildly put, an interesting choice at least. Basically, Ioana's life is put into Miron's hands (he is a failed surgeon whose operating skills are utmost necessary at this point because they are all at a chalet in the mountains when Ioana's crisis starts) and he is constrained to see her as no longer being the subject of his every disturbing, loving thought but as something that needs to be urgently operated upon. The chapter has an open ending and the readers can only infer, to their liking, whether love made Miron able to save the love of his life. On the other hand, Ioana is only an exterior now because every aspect of her sensitive interiority extinguished once her torrid relationship with Michel ended.

Another point their share is the same intense feeling that they are not living their lives to their fullest. This feature is completed by a common weariness and lack of emotional fulfillment in spite of everything happening outside them. It is as though Crăciun never ceased to work on this type of feminine character and this is visible even in his posthumously launched book, *Blue Women*, where there is an obvious display of such feminine characters, an abundance of Emmas in one way or another. Actually, what *Blue Women* unveils is the Emma of the 2000s, a post-postmodern archetype yet to be investigated.

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3. Leontina, the character: Naming as identifying, naming as experimenting

In the context of Crăciun's novels, *Pupa russa* marks a clear shift in what concerns what has become known as the theme of the author, mainly corporality and the capacity of literature to express the body. Leontina Guran's corporality is bidimensional: on the one hand, at the level of her beauty and utter sensuality and on the other, the fundamental duality of her creation and her name. Leontina's main feature, which summarizes all her being, is represented by her name. An onomastic analysis can hint at the character's full complexity and can open up the argument towards the broader context of Crăciun's fiction.

In the chapter *Names,* from *The Art of Fiction,* David Lodge says: *In a novel, names are never neutral. They always signify [...] The naming of characters is always an important part of creating them, involving many considerations, and hesitation* (Lodge, 1992, 37). Lodge continues his analysis in the second part of the chapter by using his own experience as a writer to explain that choosing the names of the characters, in his case, faithfully translated the idea behind their construction. The central idea in Lodge's essay is that the names of the characters in a literary text are rife with difficulties that emerge from the literary nature of the text itself. More precisely, it is the fact that a certain context has the ability to offer nuances to the proper names which are absent from the common use.

On Romanian ground, Augustin Pop also underlines the importance of the context and the fact that the proper name undergoes a process of acquiring new meanings in relation with the structure and general semantics of the text. The literary work, its context and its structure are the critical factors determining both the names of the characters and their interpretation. At the same time, the process of acquiring new meanings also ensures the level of adequacy of the names within the literary work.

Gheorghe Crăciun himself seems to believe, as proven by some of his critical articles, that the names of the characters in novels are not arbitrary. He goes on to say that the names of the characters are *creators of fictional reality and not only* (Crăciun, 2000) in *How to do Characters with Words*, analysing Mircea Horia Simionescu's *Onomastic Dictionary*. Crăciun appeals to another aspect of naming in fiction, mainly the relationship between *the onomastic terms* as he calls it, and the text, which is actually created by these names. The main idea is the same though: there is a great degree of co-dependency between the names and the text. Against the arbitrariness of the linguistic sign, the names of the characters obey to different rules than regular language: *in literature at least, the ways of the Lord (author) are more complicated and, of course, more (linguistically) motivated* (Crăciun, 2000). In other words, onomastic and ontology (of the literary text) cannot exist without each other.

This also seems to be the case in his 2004 novel, *Pupa russa,* where the name of the main character, Leontina, is profoundly motivated in the context of the novel and also according to the auctorial intentions. The analysis of Leontina's name will

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be completed by an overview of the other names of the characters in the novel, for the purpose of establishing a series of patterns in what concerns naming practices in *Pupa russa*, patterns which underline, by opposition, the original treatment for main character's name.

Gheorghe Crăciun defines *Pupa russa*, in a footnote from *The Body Knows Better,* as being neither a realist novel nor a parody and ironical one. *It is a textual hybrid, contrapuntally structured* (Crăciun, 2006, 23). It thus useless to treat Leontina's name as arbitrary, like in the realist novels, or parodical. Nevertheless, the author's intentions in relation to this work are expressed, first in an article, in *Dilema* magazine in 1993, article which was later transcribed in a footnote in *The Body Knows Better.* The text entitled *My Utopia* can be considered an *ars poetica* because here Crăciun explains how *Pupa russa* is the novel of a new Madame Bovary and of a new Matrioshka as well. More precisely, the resulting character is the combination of the two, *a petty Emma of the communist world*, convicted to an eternal mediocre life from the beginning (Crăciun, 2006, 23):

> *I'm dreaming of a Madame Bovary destroyed from the beginning, condemned, who knows that nothing can save her and who still hopes in the possibility of an equivocal fault. For her, suicide would still be a lighter punishment than the life that remains. The bovarism of the woman as a secretion of the fundamentally ill world.*

Pupa russa is thus more than a mere re-writing of Flaubert's novel because the challenge increases: if in *My Utopia* Crăciun asserted *Matrioshka c'est moi!,* in *Pupa russa* he takes Leontina's identity upon himself (Crăciun, 2007, 385):

> *But whose head is filled with these thoughts, yours or mine? Mine, of course, mine and only mine, because LEONTINA IS ME. I know that in every woman's flesh there is a boy hidden, a man, a mister Leon who fears death. This is why lonely women cannot love, cannot give themselves, cannot help but let themselves be raped. Raped raped raped like helpless little girls. Come on, Tina, don't be so outraged, stop crying silently, stop clenching your teeth, and tell me, if you can: have you ever loved someone? Do you know what love is? Or you're just a poor cardboard creature?*

The writer's intention becomes transparent: he wants to understand his female character from the inside, *making somehow the effort to get under her skin and to inhabit her sensibility* (Sibişan, 2004). In other words, this is the ontological part of the book and it is translated, at the level of the narrative perspective, which is mostly Leontina's. The character does not appear easily for the writer, he says that he hates her name in order to be able to love the person carrying it. The creative process is difficult and is similar to that of giving birth (Crăciun, 2006, 314):

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> *I knew I had to knead this woman out of my dirty memories and chloramine scented dreams in order to escape, once and for all, all my masculine misdeeds, all my failures and misachievements of a dual man. But I was bringing her into this world very slowly, just like a creature that scares you with her wrinkled flesh and blind eyes.*

The fundamental duality of the character is visible even from the moment Crăciun imagines it and this will continue, because Leontina is Madame Bovary, and she is also a Matrioshka, she is Leon and Tina at the same time, everything in her mirroring the duality of her creator.

Crăciun declares, in his article, that he wants to write a new *Madame Bovary* and that this idea comes from *a provincial obsession*. Leontina resembles Flaubert's character only in the sense that she is a disappointed woman, possessed by a state of a profound dissatisfaction and at the same time, unable to realize what she is seeking. This discussion will be resumed later on, what is important at this point in the analysis is the fact that the author modifies the model through the lenses of the historical context (Crăciun, 2006, 26):

> *There is an Emma Bovary of the Romanian province of the last 50 years, there is this doll of the fate, making desperate efforts to keep changing her underwear, her dresses and her identities, with the everlasting feeling of failure and with the illusion of the smallest of refugees, there is this precarious, frivolous, fickle, living woman, afraid that her simulacrum of life is slipping away, finally crushed by the avalanche of her own betrayal to which she felt bound by the distinctive feeling that love should be something else, just like in Western films.*

The Emma Bovary model meets Matrioshka (Crăciun, 2006, 25):

> *Facing the new Madame Bovary, the Russian doll. Facing a stiff enough Matrioshka (or Marta, Mara, Alma, Rita, Mari etc.) who never ceases to undress al her accumulated strata of naïve, embarrassed, frightful provincialism. Everywhere to be found, in offices, in teachers' rooms, in waiting rooms, parks, bars and bistros, countless Rodolphe and Leon.*

This complex result that Leontina proves to be at the creation level, a synthesis of archetypes, is not matched in terms of internalness, because, as Carmen Muşat points out, *Pupa russa*'s main character is (Muşat, 2004)

> *an inert and amoral character, to which the reader has no sympathy or dislike reactions, Leontina is a Russian doll, a passive puppet, manipulated*

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> *by a dark and cruel puppeteer, for whom the individual existence has no value, an obedient puppet, unable to fight history, forced to survive by chance. In this position, her destiny is significant for all the broken lives of those who have had the misfortune to live in the communist camp, trapped in a world of moral and spiritual decay. Incapable of love (…) she is also a decorative object, a mechanism, a plastic doll like those designed to satisfy sexual fantasies, a sensual and beautiful woman who, beyond all shiny appearances, lacks consistency, a flat being, with no depth, no inner life, no feelings.*

In the interiority of the character leaves no room for questioning, her extremely interesting feature, her name, deserves a discussion based on two aspects. First of all, there is the genesis of the name, genesis which collocates with the character's considerations about her own onomastic. The second level hints at the name as being able to express the dual nature of Leontina, who has both a feminine side and a masculine one, which is reflected in the name as well.

In terms of real use, Leontina is not such a popular name. In a 2012 statistics both in the US and outside it, the name Leontina ranked outside top 100. However, baby names sites record it as being a variant of Leontine/Leontyne (from French), feminine of Leon, made famous by the opera celebrity Leontyne Price. The name has a Latin origin and it can be translated as *the lioness.*

However unpopular it may be as a real-life name or even a literary one, Leontina seems to be the right choice in the case of the main character in *Pupa russa* exactly because it is not so commonly used and because, accidentally or not, it can actually be seen as comprising in itself other two names: Leon and Tina.

In the novel, Leotina receives the name as a present from her aunt and her godmother who illegally emigrated in America. She never gets to know her godmother, but she envisions her always associated with the US, also projected in her imagination. Even so, Leontina does not appreciate this gift because she considers the name stupid, unfit for a little girl or for a school girl, but rather *the name of a cow, of a lame woodpecker kept in a cage, a name for a mud-dirty buffalo or for an old woman wearing aprons and pleated skirts. It would have been alright to be called Leontina when you were an old lady going in the field or staying at home in the winter, knitting scarves and gloves.* (Crăciun, 2007, 13)

Later on, Leontina realizes that her name does not match her person (Crăciun, 2007, 14):

> *She should have been called differently. This she knew for sure. But how? Wouldn't have it been better to bind her name together in only a few letters? Tina, just like her step-grandmother living over the hill calls her? Why not*

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> *Leon, Leona, the way nobody calls her? Leon the girl, with a boy's name. A little girl like a devil boy. Leontinuşa, Lenuş, Leonica.*

This is actually the moment when she realizes that she has two names, *two names like two babies in the same belly*, *two hidden and opposite names, each one pulling in a different direction, just like two young oxen not getting along in the yoke*. She now understands, not yet eight years old, that she shelters both Leon and Tina, both a masculine and a feminine part. Her name's equation summarizes the character's secret: *LEON+TINA=LEONTINA was written at the end of the anatomy copybook*. (Crăciun, 2007, 51) A childish play upon words which is later relevant in a broader context of a constant concern for language, for words and for the way in which they relate.

Although Leon is the particle that opens up the name, Tina, the feminine side, is the one that reaches full bloom. Leontina becomes a rare beauty, her looks being her most important asset. Her beauty can hypnotize, it can take the breath away to both men and women. This is confirmed by her first portrait in the novel, made by one of her future boarding house peer exactly on the day she arrives there. The scene illustrates the fact that even though Leontina appears to be a wild peasant, she already displays signs of a rare beauty and momentous physical features: *a naughty behind of a nymphomaniac, the perfect outline of her thighs*, *her high waist (maybe a man would have called it intoxicating)*, *beautiful, model-like legs*, *tall, slim, with long calves and fine ankles* (Crăciun, 2007, 10-11). A beauty that Leontina nurses and uses as a weapon, to her benefit, but that ends up exhausted and exhausting.

Leon makes himself visible at times, for example, when Leontina becomes a successful basketball player. Leon also appears in the moments when there is a fraternal harassment inside Leontina, a fight between mind and heart, when she feels the burden of the past or when she sees the void in her life (Crăciun, 2007, 237):

> *The disgusting, lucid, infamous Leon, his claws of a motley cat, brought to hysteria by fleas, his tongue of a silver snake, hissing in the weeds of the gutter, his habits overlapping yours, until you become some sort of Tina manly Tina, a fatal, febrile, peppery little woman, with carbide breasts and dynamite legs, strong, tall legs, with small, fine ankles, hardened by the round on the basket field, intoxicating with their curves of Assyrian bass relief.*

Apparently, Leon represents the aggressiveness, the meanness, the negativity and the ugliness in Leontina. Once teen age is over, and with it Leontina's career as a basketball player, Leon seems to draw away. Actually, Leon never leaves Leontina because they are inseparable. In this way, Leontina is perpetually a dual being, perpetually aware of this condition she sometimes finds terrifying. She even senses Leon in the moments she makes love, when Leon is fighting with her lover (Crăciun, 2007, 383-384):

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> *But in her flesh two twin being were swinging, Leon and Tina, the slave and the beautiful master. Leon had always been a perverse and vindicative servant. In fact, it was the sweet Leon who sickened her sensibility cold. No one else but him! The guardian of her inside, her protector in the mists of the flesh. Wasn't he the one who had been keeping her tied for a lifetime to his webbing of rebellion and frustration?*

Leontina's duality also expresses itself at a sexual level, because she has both heterosexual and same sex experiences. Leontina's long line of male lovers is paralleled by a similar line of female lovers, including Brunhilde, the supervisor of the boarding house or Sofica, her husband's maid. All the same, she is never able to find fulfillment in any of these experiences because she seems unable to feel anything. This is one major component of her tragedy and one of the reasons of her damnation.

The name Leontina appears to have a predestined *secret mystic* which, as Carmen Muşat points out, creates a narrative generating magic sound. She also selects fragments where the two parts, Leon and Tina, intertwine and communicate at levels which go beyond the phonetic layer. Every vowel entails multiple poetical association but, even in the context of a fully harmony among vowels, it is the consonants which induce the fracture, in fact the fracture that results in the character's duality (Crăciun, 2007, 39):

> *But the pain of her name resides not in this division of spaces LEON/TINA, but at this point, N-T. Just like a rift between two different bodies, between two different biologies, between two different skin tones and between two different tribes separated by an immense jungle. When Leon met Tina, the earth of her name suddenly burst like a swollen belly with guts coming out.*

The name Leontina thereby becomes *a name with the insides showing*, capable of generating series of alliterations and assonances which bring a *poematic theme* within the text while maintaining its narrative. Interestingly enough for the fundamental duality of the character, the short form *Tina* is rarely used, *Leontina* being preferred almost at all times. The duality is maintained all throughout the novel, neither side having any upper hand.

Once she becomes a *calm and calculated* woman, Leontina start reminiscing the men she had affairs with. This fragment is very interesting because it shows Leontina feeling the need to escape her own skin, which came into contact with so many men, thinking that this is the way of becoming her old self. Another meaningful aspect of the fragment is the fact that Leontina's lovers are denominated

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by using initials only, even though up to that point they had full names. In this way, H, S, O, M, T, D, K, C lose their identity and everyone of then can be replaced at any time with another man whose name starts with the same letter. What they all share is the love and/or lust for Leontina at some point of her life. Their names obey the rules of the realist novel, even though *Pupa russa* is not a realist novel in itself. Horaţiu Mălinaş, Oraviţan, Mircea Neamţu, Hristu Darvari, Paraschiv, Daniel Raicu, Anghel Carp, Dan Iacomir, Dorin Mareş all have arbitrary, regular, non-symbolic names. There is no connection between the name and the character, the names are interchangeable in fact. Such names offer an impression of authenticity and adequacy, it would have been too much if all men had meaningful names. On the other hand, the profession acts as an identifier more than the name in this case because even if the names are present, the accumulation of names and men throughout the novel cancels their individuality in favour of their status as Leontina's lovers. It's as if they leave almost no mark in the novel, just like they fail to leave one on Leontina's soul.

The only man who seems to escape this tendency is Dr. Hristu Darvari, who stands out by succeeding to marry Leontina, even if their marriage is not a happy one due to the utter lack of feelings that defines his wife. Leontina cannot love him, she cannot even love her daughter, Bertha. Another reason why the doctor is outstanding is that his name could hint at a noble origin, maybe even a Greek one. It could even be asserted that is role in the novel is to save Leontina, thus the possible reference to Christ but since Leontina is a *Madame Bovary destroyed from the beginning, condemned, who knows that nothing can save her*, the doctor obviously fails, not even his love being able to change anything inside her.

The group treatment is also possible when referring to Leontina's friends. Their names are also realistic one and they translate a very possible diversity under similar conditions. The trademark in this case is the shortened form: Cami, Cori, Ildi, Lu-y together with Melinda, Miruna, Emilia, Crina, Nicoleta, Gerlinde, Brunhilde, Anne Maria, Isabelle, Agnez also fail to reach Leontina's dry internalness. These names allude at the multi-cultural environment that defines the school Leontina attens (the high school she goes to is in a small Transylvanian town, where there are Romanians but also Hungarian and German natives, living and working toghether). Again, any overloading of significance would have been too much: Leontina's name is too laden with intention, meaning and ontology to leave even the smallest amount of such space to another character. Moreover, their place and role in the novel is by no means equal to Leontina's and this is why their names

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as just as innocent as in real life. There is a very interesting effect created through the contrast between the army of (irrelevant) female characters (there are some pages in the novel depicting the women supporting the *nomenclature*, all looking the same for the men that harass them and obviously, they are all nameless) and Leontina's fully motivated and significant name.

4. Conclusions

This paper aimed at presenting some of Crăciun's techniques in naming female characters, techniques that also allude to broader points than just names. Concept such as intertextuality (both external and internal), bovarism, experimenting with words and with corporality, and writing with the letter and with the body all come into play when trying to capture the Romanian author's sheer complexity of intention and construction. Names, in the case of female characters with Crăciun, are not just names, they signify either at a pure and playful first level, like in Leontina's case, or at a more profound level, where names are not necessarily relevant in themselves but in a web of significance, like Leontina's preceeding archetypes from previous books. In this way, Liana Şanta is the teacher that seems to come out of Coşbuc's poetry, living in an idyllic environment at the countryside, where she teaches but being nonetheless unable to enjoy anything in her life once she decides she no longer has something to say to herself. Ioana Jighira is almost from the start an empty being, who uses the exterior to express things that are no longer inside, even though there is Miron always willing to assign very deep and human implication to her existence. Love uses them up, it exhausts them, both in the case of Liana and Ioana. The reader is more than free to infer that once they stop being interiority and start functioning as mere exteriorities, their role in the novels also wears down, thus explaining their fading away (according to the interpretation, due to a suicide accident for Liana, and to an acute appendicitis for Ioana).

This paradigm doesn't end with *Pupa russa* On the contrary, in the case on *Blue Women* there is an even broader spectre of female characters expressed by exteriority and lacking not necessarily a healthy level of interiority, but the willingness and availably to deliver themselves to the man they love, for example. The option to be part of something seems to no longer available in the context of post-postmodern world and this is why the main form of sexuality in *Blue Women* is a mechanical, feeling-lacking, Olympic-sport prototype one. On the other

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hand, the female characters in Crăciun last novel, when not being only interested in exterior, are simply glossy magazine type beauties. This is why the feminine instance laden with meaning is the image of the actress (Nicole Kidman), but not as human being but as emission of a role and nothing more.

Identity is a theme that Crăciun liberally sets about to define in his own *forma mentis*, involving all his major themes and concepts. Onomastic, ontology, language, significance, corporality and duality, all come together in *Pupa russa* to depict a very original naming strategy and a very seductive and challenging female character at the same time.

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