THE ART OF POETRY IN ANA BLANDIANA'S LYRICAL IMAGINARY

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Abstract: *The aim of this paper is to describe and analyze the concept of poetic art as it has been expressed in Ana Blandiana's lyrical imaginary. The art of poetry has a long-standing tradition in the literary history of the artistic phenomenon, going all the way back to Greek and Latin Antiquity. As the need of explaining the poetic phenomenon becomes more and more necessary throughout time, the art of poetry has been the centre of attention of various scholars and writers as well. A poetic art is a form of self expression in which poets reveal their personal ideas, principles and attitudes towards this vital act of creation which is poetry. Ana Blandiana creates and expresses herself through the means of poetry which is seen as an authentic act of knowledge of the unsettling relations between the man and the universe, as well as an act of revelation of the secret beauty of the soul. Her poetry conveys the most profound emotions, feelings and attitudes through the means of a simple clear and direct language.*

Keywords*: poetry, reflection, art, Blandiana*

The art of poetry (ars poetica), a concept which in a broad sense means the reflection upon poetry, has a long-standing tradition in the literary history of the artistic phenomenon, going all the way back to Greek and Latin Antiquity.

The first surviving works of this type are Aristotle's *Poetics* and Horace's *The Art of Poetry* (originally named Epistle to the Pisos), two remarkable landmarks which served as models to the next literary attempts to reveal the essence of poetry.

Art has its source of inspiration in the real life and Aristotle thought of that when he introduced the term of *mimesis* in his theoretical masterpiece, *Poetics*. Referring to those widely spread literary writings of the Antiquity, the tragedy and the epic poem, Aristotle believed that literary art was the imitation of life itself and its purpose was that of purification (catharsis) of the emotions, especially those of fear and pity. Aristotle said that "*a poet's job is to describe not what has happened, but the kind of thing that might*."[1] Seeing the world as it might have been, through the means of art, people were expected to change their lives.

Horace's poem, the most representative art of poetry of its time, was intended to inform and instruct young poets about the process of creation. His ideas, as well as Aristotle's, have had a huge impact for many centuries to come. *Ut pictura poesis*, referring to the analogy between poetry and painting, is one of the most famous quotes written by Horace.

As the need of explaining the poetic phenomenon becomes more and more necessary throughout time, the art of poetry has been the centre of attention of various

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[1] https://www.britannica.com/biography/Aristotle/Political-theory

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scholars and writers as well. On the one hand there are critics, aestheticians and linguists approaching the subject matter using their own methods, but on the other hand there are writers themselves trying to express their core beliefs upon writing and poetry and all those aspects related to them.

Thus, the concept has been enriched with more than one meaning. Firstly, there are scholars who hold the belief that the art of poetry and poetics, two synonym terms, reffer to nothing but a set of rules to be followed by any writer in his work. From this theoretical point of view the art of poetry is considered to be the discipline which studies not only the structural mechanisms of poetry, or of any other literary genre, in terms of content, form and style, but also the writer's beliefs, aspirations and moral values.

Secondly, there are those who have made a clear distinction between the two terms arguing that while poetics focuses on the theory of literary forms and discourse, specifically in poetry, the art of poetry reveals a reflection upon literature through the means of a literary work.

Thirdly, there are writers who have made it clear that their art is unique and their own principles are to be found in their works. Therefore they have created poetries about poetry in which we may find their personal ideas related to what they are dealing with. There are many foreign and Romanian writers who have written about their own manner of creating poetry so far. Poetic arts are to be seen in each literary movement, but their number increased gradually from clasicism up to postmodernism.

It is widely acknowledged that poets create not only to express themselves, but also to express their attitudes on the historical and social circumstances of their time. Hence, poetry has changed its means of expression and content throughout history.

Poetic arts, as well, have been expressed in different ways from one literary movement to another. At first they had a strong didactic character, being considered as ways of educating the reader in the spirit of beauty and reason through the means of poetic language[1]. In modern times, poets found a style of their own and a personal vision on the art of creating poems.

A poetic art is a form of self expression in which poets reveal their personal ideas, principles and attitudes towards this vital act of creation which is poetry. Thus, a poetic art is a „*poem in which a writer reaveals his own view upon poetry creation*." (DLRLC, 1957)

This paper's aim is to describe and analyze those aspects comprised in the concept of poetic art as they have been expressed by Ana Blandiana's lyrical imaginary. The aspects refer to: the essence of poetry, the condition of the poet and poetry, the relationship between the poet and his own art, poetic rules and techniques applied in the process of creation etc.

Ana Blandiana is considered to be one of the finest Romanian neomodernist writers. Although she is best remembered for her astonishing poetry, she also wrote essays, fantastic short stories and a novel, all of them having a remarkable artistic value.

Romanian poetry flourished in the 1960 and 1970's after more than a decade in which writers were forced to write according to the communist ideology. Those who refused to do that were forbidden, arrested or forced to leave the country.

[1] Nicholas Boileau, *L'art poetique. French neoclasicism* is one of the most famous treatise which brought into discussion the didactic character of poetic art

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In the 1960's a new wave of young poets found the courage to reestablish some of the most important modernist ideas upon the art of poetry banned not too many years ago. They believed that poetry was an art and had to be characterized by pure lyrism, meaning that poets were meant to express themselves, their emotions, feelings, beliefs or ideas by means of their art.

Neomodernist poets succeded in creating a style of their own which was characterized especially by innovation of expression and vision. Iulian Boldea, a well-known Romanian scholar of neomodernist movement, stated that *"the neomodernist poetry is, we could say, a poetry animated by the ideal of expressive novelty, of vision, attitude and style mutations*." (Boldea, I., 2011:79) He also stated that *"The reaching into the lyrical self dynamics, the evaluation of the abyssal tectonics of the myths, the reinvention of the confession with its adjacent subjective and reflexive valences, the emphasis given to the eros, are the themes and constants of lyricism that gave the identity of neomodernism*" (Boldea, I., 2011: 80).

Ana Blandiana is no exception to that. She is a typical representative of the neomodernist literary movement, an exceptional poet, who was extremely appreciated ever since the publication of her first poetry, called *Originalitate*, in *Tribuna*, in 1959. Literary critics have quickly considered her one of the most valuable after war poetess.[1]

Throughout time she has written and published many books of poetry for she has received as well as many foreign and Romanian prizes. Her work has also been translated in Hungarian, Polish, English, German, Bulgarian, Italian, Russian, French and other languages.

Her poetry, written in the spirit of her generation, reveals an authentic creative self who expresses a vision, a sistem of ideas, an aesthetic conception, an original style, beyond the universe of words it creates it. For the artist who is trying to understand the world, the poets are authors of visions, „*those in whom the rays of reality penetrate strangely refrained by the touched substance of the soul, a substance which doesn't let itself to be touched but for to be able to overthrow and deepen the meanings*." (Blandiana, A., 1984: 7)

Moreover, the poet unveils the essence of lyrism, the mission and responsability of the lyrical creator who by „*giving up the necessity to reproduce the world, he chose the way of showing not its own face but the shattering visions that it can produce in his soul.*" (Ibidem: 8)

Thus, Blandiana creates and expresses herself through the means of poetry which is seen as an authentic act of knowledge of the unsettling relations between the man and the universe, as well as an act of revelation of the secret beauty of the soul. Her poetry conveys the most profound emotions, feelings and attitudes through the means of a simple clear and direct language.

Literary critics have seen in Ana Blandiana a poet of ideas who has always acted in the way of spiritualising her emotions, refusing to be spontaneous, trivial or superficial. Her poetry is shaped by her meditative spirit which tends to be having a certain passion for truth, knowledge and for the exemplary moral attitude. Eugen Simion stated that Blandiana's

[1] Piru, Al., 1975, p.369, o consideră „*cea mai valoroasă poetă a ultimelor decenii şi cred că nu voi exagera susţinând că după război nici un glas liric feminin, afară de acela al Magdei Isanos, dispărut prematur în 1945, n-a avut un ecou mai adânc.*"

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poetry avoids the traditional themes of the feminist poetry and gives the impression of a superior game of the spirit.[1]

Blandiana's creative spirit displays the predilection for a simple meditative full of ideas lyrical discourse, based on a strong aspiration to purity.

Poetic arts are to be found in each volume of poetry published by the author. The reflection upon the poet's condition and upon poetry has been a major theme which she has approached not only in her poetries, but also in her essays and prose writings.

Blandiana's lyrical imaginary reveals the orphic hypostasis of the lyrical self. The poet is seen as a privileged person just like Orpheus, the archetype of the inspired artist, whose singing charmed everything that was in the universe, including the gods.

Blandiana herself stated that she had always had the strange and paradoxical feeling that someone else was writing through her and she couldn't do anything to stop it, but to write. "*The artist* - as André Malraux said – *creates not necessarily to express himself, but he expresses himself in order to create*." (Malraux, A., 1952: 62, apud. Dubois, J., et alii, 1974: 21) The poet exists in order to create:

Cantecul nu e al meu, / El numai trece uneori prin mine / Neinteles si nestapanit, / Numele meu il imbraca usor / Asa cum zeii vechimii / Treceau printre oameni / Imbracati intr-un nor. / Nu stiu cand vine, / Nu stiu cand pleaca, // Unde e-n timpul / Cand nu e in mine, / Destinul meu nu-i decat să astept / Bunavointa clipei straine. / Locuita de-un cantec, / Parasita de-un cantec, / Poate chiar vaduva unui cantec / Necunoscut si iubit, / Nu merit frunzele voastre de laur / Decat pentru umilinta / De a-i fi ramas credincioasa / La nesfarsit. (Locuită de un cântec)

The lyrical poet reflects in her work all those aspects that time and self experience have left behind and were kept by her spirit. This idea can be found in her (simply called poem *Op:*

Timpul scrie pe trupul meu versuri /Atât de complicate incât /Aproape de necitit, / Îsi noteaza pe pielea mea ideile/ Fara să mă intrebe. /Litere lungi, rasucite, superbe / Mi le incolaceste pe gât, / Îmi mâzgaleste in jurul ochilor, / În jurul buzelor raze subtiri, / Le ingroasa, / Apoi, ca la sfârsitul unui op, /Se iscaleste pe fruntea mea inca rotunda, / Fara sa marturiseasca / În ce scop / Transmite prin mine / Aceste mesaje / Si cine / Va trebui sa ma citeasca / Și să ii raspunda. (Op)

Blandiana uses the myth of Orpheus to also suggest the act of moral responsability which a poet must take into consideration when dealing with the art of creating poetry. Thus, the poet must speak only the truth for this is the price it needs to be paid for the privilege it was given to him. In this way the poem *Biography* (*Biografie*) is more than eloquent:

„*Copil fiind obsevasem că frunzele / tremură în ritmul gândului meu / Şi, când mă îndepărtam, tulpinile plantelor / Se aplecau, gata să se smulgă, urmându-mă. // Apoi au început să alunece păsările / Stoluri, stoluri deasupră-mi, / Oprindu-şi cântecul, ca să-l asculte pe-al meu. / Şi numai când şi fiarele au pornit / Să se adune cuminţi pe urmele mele / M-am speriat. Dar era prea târziu. // Nu mai am dreptul să dau mă opresc. / Orice poem nespus, orice cuvânt negăsit / Pune în pericol universul / Suspendat de buzele mele. / O simplă cezură a versului / Ar întrerupe vraja care dizolvă legile urii, / Vărsându-i pe toţi, sălbateci şi singuri, / Înapoi în umeda grotă-a instinctelor" (Biografie).*

[1] Simion, E., 1989, p. 151 consideră că poeta „*lasă impresia unui joc superior al spiritului*", fiind „*din ce în ce mai mult gravidă de idei.*"

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A poet is invested with the gift of creating poetry, but this gift is a tragical one for it makes its bearer into a solitary person who struggles hard to find the right words for the right meanings. In order to express this idea Blandiana uses, in her poem *The Gift* (*Darul*), the legend of the king Midas who was punished to turn everything into gold:

„*Tragic mi-e darul, asemeni pedepselor vechi. / Ce strămoş mi-a greşit ca să-i port – lauri – vina? / Tot ce ating se preface-n cuvinte / Ca-n legenda regelui Midas. / (...) / Cerul nu pot să-l privesc – se înnorează de vorbe, / Merele cum să le mușc împachetate-n culori? / Dragostea chiar, de-o ating, se modelează în fraze, / Vai mie, vai celei pedepsite cu laude. / Vai mie, vai, arborii nu scutură frunze, / Numai cuvinte cad toamna bătrâne şi galbene, / Munţii înalţi îi iubesc, dar se clatină munţii / Sub povara împerecheatelor sunete. / Aş vrea să adun vorbele toate-ntr-un loc, / Să le aprind, să dezbrac lumea de ele, / Dar s-ar scoroji trupul lumii asemeni / Frumosului prinţ cu piele de porc din poveste. / O dată cu ele ar arde şi lumea lipită / Pe partea interioară-a cuvintelor, ca-ntr-un album... / Nu ştiu eu oare desparte sau nici nu se poate desparte / Lumea de lumea cuvintelor mele de-acum?*" (*Darul)*

Analysing Blandiana's lyrical poetry it can easily be noticed the fact that she deliberately sacriffices its form, or expression, in favour of its content, or meaning. The poet herself said that the expression of poetry must be "*less epatant, as less bright and devoided of ornaments as it can be, for it shouldn't distract the attention from what it only covers and from what – fatally and often disastruosly- could not exist outside the concrete matter which is called word.* (Blandiana, A., 1986: 21)

Distrusting the language of poetry is another constant aspect which can be seen not only in Blandiana's lyrical imaginary, but also in that of other poets of her generation. Nicolae Manolescu, a famous literary scholar, noticed the fact that "the generation of the 60's was the partisan of a poetics of the natural, experiencing painfully the inherent artificiality of any literary text." (Manolescu, N., 2001: 271)

The poet does not want her poetry to shine and to be nothing more than a beautiful structure made of many rhetorical figures. All that she wants is her poetry to reveal meanings and visions in order to enlighten the spirit of the reader. In this way the poem *Hunting* (Vânătoare), expresses best this idea:

N-am alergat niciodata dupa cuvinte, / Tot ce-am cautat / Au fost umbrele lor / Lungi, argintii, / Tarate de soare prin iarba, / Impinse de luna pe mare; / Nu am vanat niciodata / Decat umbrele vorbelor / E o foarte iscusita vanatoare / Invatata de la batrani /Care stiu / Ca din cuvant / Nimic nu e mai de pret / Decat umbra / Si nu mai au umbra / Cuvintele care si-au vandut sufletul.

Thus, the words are mystifying the living world by carrying insufficient meanings and being uncapable of conveying the potentialities of thinking.

The essence of poetry is its allusiveness and neomodernist writers found those means of expression to define their art in this way. Ana Blandiana is no exception to that. She claims that "*the eloquence of poetry is not measured through the chaining of words anymore, but through the silence between them. The ideal to be fulfilled is to express less so that you could suggest more*." (Blandiana, A., 2010: 161).

Poetry is silence, it only uses words because it is inevitable. A poet struggles to find new ways to express meanings and visions for this is the only possible destiny that he was meant for.

Scriu cu alb pe alb/ Deşi ştiu că nimeni/ Nu va putea să citească,/ Nici chiar eu,/ După ce voi fi uitat ce am scris./ Binele este întotdeauna/ Greu de înţeles – / E mai uşor să accepţi un eres/ În paradis/ Decât o jertfă benevolă omenească./ Mă încăpăţânez/ Să

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scriu alb pe alb/ Deşi mi se spune / Să folosesc cel puţin/ Litere cu sclipici,/ Când desenez ramuri de măslin/ Sau fapte bune/ Plictisitoare./ Dar, / Acum şi aici,/ Nu am decât o culoare/ Care poate/ Să le cuprindă pe toate/ Şi scriu cu alb pe alb/ În zadar. (Scriu cu Alb pe Alb)

As a neomodernist writer, Ana Blandiana reconsidered the aesthetic practices of the art of poetry. Pure lyrism was then seen to define poetry, a personal inner poetry that revealed thoughts, feelings, emotions and visions of the lyrical self. She only creates to express herself and this is the main characteristic that her poetic arts are concerned with.

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