POSTMODERN POETS. CĂLIN VLASIE

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Abstract*: Educated in Cenaclul de luni, the representatives of which adhere at the postmodern poetry, Călin Vlasie cultivates a hyperconscious poetry, with ironical tone, based on `inner action` and biographism.*

Key words*: the 80's generation, poem as a homeostasy, demitization, hyperlucidity, lexical exoticism, psychological space.*

Although he is one of the founders of *Cenaclul de luni* – an exponential group of the 80's, together with *Echinoxul* from Cluj –, Călin Vlasie was advanced, on an editorial level, by the majority of his philology congeners. Mircea Cărtărescu, Florin Iaru, Liviu Ioan Stoiciu, Ion Stratan a.o. had started somehow naturally in the 1980s-1981s, profiting by the discreet (or even direct) supporting from Nicolae Manolescu. The poet, having a psychological education, starts only in 1984 (together with Romulus Bucur, Bogdan Ghiu, Gheorghe Iova, Alexandru Muşina, Aurel Dumitraşcu), the year of the issue of the emblematical composition *Cinci*. Connection with the spirit of the generation is though established in 1981 by means of, let's say, a pre- entrance: the group of 16 poems entitled *Neuronia,* appeared in the detachable supplement of the magazine *Argeş* (no. 2, series `Meşterul Manole`). On the `cover' of the micro-plaquette, the same N. Manolescu appreciated `the perfect geometrical form` of the debutant's poetry, placed in the filiation with the hermetic Ion Barbu and Dan Botta, anticipating this one's evolution `in the direction of a poetry of inner clarities but formally hermetic, difficult, with not a rich but intrinsic vocabulary, often taking the compact aspect of definition and apothegm, in which morality, fable, autobiography will be resorbed and generally any personal element will be dissolved like sugar in the tea.`

However Călin Vlasie had no reasons to rush: there were no signs of polygraphy and his poetry was not easy to decipher, thus causing the suspicions of the ideological censorship of the time. As a matter of fact, publishing of *Neuronia* didn't pass unobserved, the officious of the unique party *Scânteia*, keennessly sanctioning – by means of the uninspired lines of the official reviewer – the unusuality of the writing `that turns the reader aside from the poetry`. Recovered in the author antology – *Acţiunea interioară,* Paralela 45, 1999, collection the 80s –almost entirely (except for the poem *Sfârşitul zeilor* probably felt too precise) the beginning group rigurously delimitates the poet's *imaginary region.* ` Neuronia`becomes the denomination for a poetical structure as well as for an imaginary space populated with fabulous incorporations, some of mythological provenience, most of them malefic: Onomathopeon, Satyrul, Meliopag, Legurpo, Rodopsina, Hemmy the harper, Goolifern from Widkul, the cachalots Physester, Satyrul Blassios, Nymphalida, Demonassa. Such `beings of paper`, as called by N. Manolescu – to which one adds other pseudo-characters in the following poems – compose the constant part of a living organism – the equivalent for a `homeostatical` poetical system. The defining of the poem as a *homeostasis* is associated with the intention of configuration of an intrinsic mythology:

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` Dar raze ar putea recompune/ visul./ Trebuie să ai o poftă nebună/ de a focaliza inconstantul/ De a dezamorsa temple./…/ Spun: în locul mitologiei/ simțul mitologic, poemul/ o homeostazie infinită.'(*Recompunerea zilei.* The artistic intention of demitization by the perception of the degradation of the paradigmatic myths of antiquity, is marked by the parodic-Homeric invocation of the Muse in the first poem (`Cântă Tu cu organita…`) or by using lexical deviations like `Zefs` or `Heladia', deviations suggesting the effort to rebuild the language when it comes to grammatical forms willingly unagreed: `atomuri`, `noționuri`, ` cimenturi`, etc. The entire poetic universe is subject to destructuralization under the imperative of the `mythological sense` caught in his transformation. It seems to be composed of a series of degraded symbols as a result of a non-conventional and anti-normative existence. The `obscure` rhythms of the contemporary poet are solidified on the refusal of naturist pastoral or on the elegiac style: `<Vedeți, iubiți contimporani,/ n-am folosit deloc în/ ritmul meu cuvântul trup/ căci diabolica imaginerie/ ar deveni extrem de/ plângăreață>.`(*Wolfram*) The paradigmatic delyricism of the discourse comes against the inevitable degradation of the established symbols. Even the lyre, the symbol of poetic creation itself, is replaced by the harp (`Mai potrivită vocea unei harpe`) and then by the electronic organ. A fictional representative of the universe, such as Onomathopeon addresses ` the Onomathopeans' that divinize him in an incoherent, ununderstandable language, despite all his `philosophic' labour. Goolifern appears as a crippled god who, falling for the nymph Rodopsina, turns into a bottle of Pepsi. The angel Meliopag, born in a test tube, indulges himself in an automatic experience, etc. All this `diabolical imaginary` takes place with the tacit agreement of the Machineman, sovereign of mechanism (and of the existence of regulations), denied by the authorial voice. *Neuronia* will be reincorporated in the debut volume entitled in `futurologist` spirit *Laborator spațial*, a title imposed by the censorship that had suppressed the initial one, *Laboratorul*, not caring for the idea of a mental laboratory, and had added a paradoxical subtitle: *poeme S.F.* Fortunately, reviewers of good faith recognized the subterfuge and did not start on the fake track of the science fiction commentary. The second cycle of the debut volume, *Magnitudini* – entirely incorporated in the anthology – envisages the temptation of an absolute clarity, comparable to the luminous intensity of a star. Into aspiration for perfection, the poet set about `looking for a fresh sense`– according to a verse – desires the elevation of the discourse. Thus, the lyrical utterance becomes sententious and compact, in an essentialized formula, situated on the border between haiku and ideogram (the lyrical definition of the latter species is remarkable: `cristale/ sunt/ din/ care/ detalii/ s-au/ scurs:/ ideograme`). This kind of condensed lyricism envisages the nostalgia of the primary language that wanted the designation of the concept itself, and not of the signs functioning as parts of the expression. Poetry becomes, under these circumstances, a purely cerebral experience, focused around a brain-word: ` dumnezeule -/ doamne/ ce/ creier/ uriaş/ are/ cuvântul!'. The creator fascinated with the ideal will insist on the process of the poetic thinking itself, derived from the reduction of the selves in an indestructible unity: `puterea/ de-a/ gândi/ simțul/ poetic/ mă/ extrag/ din/ euri`. In the contiguity of *Magnitudini*-lor, at least by the perfectionist tendency, one can place the indedited cycle in the anthology, *Ceață şi aură,* collecting some experimental poems that reveal the manierist hypostasis of an expert in the combinatorial art. Under the semblance of a *poeta ludens,* Călin Vlasie forces here the limits of the language towards the direction of Barbu's hermetism in *Joc secund.* With undisguised demiurgic pride, in a genuine exercise of self-imitation, he creates pair-poems, in conformity with the principle of the echo. Therefore, he conceives a *Scurtă vlasilalie* by syllabic

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permutations and alliterations, making in the mirror of the womb-poem condensed lyrical statements, more than hermetic, with rather euphonic effects: `Turn ca un laser în zare rod / voltaic pe un voal cu / stele: ştii nave mai pure? / Lire în priză, era un meşteşug / sfânt, un gând în seri / minate / Nori în ramă s.o.s. test rar / flori ca sfârşitul unei / practici, râd tineri cu atee / arcuri şi poze peleide// (*urc la zero/ pe-/ ste lave./ lin irizat/ sunt înse-/ mnat./ ramses-ra/ o/ actinie/ cu polei*`. In the register of parnasian preciosity, valorizing the lexical automatisms, too, the poems in *Ceaţă şi aură* indicate the maximum unbearable degree of the poetic experience in the sphere of language. Poetry technical expert, Calin Vlasie rehabilitates in the volume *Întoarcerea în viitor* (1990) an older technique such as alliteration, giving it new dimensions and following in Macedonski's footsteps. The contemporary poet rediscovers the rhetorical figure fascinated with the inner cadence of the verse, with its implicit musicality. Everywhere there are examples: `Aprinde versul reversibil`; `Vezi Afres cum din far ies / rafale de fraze`; `Erau înseriaţi în nişte rafturi / Perfect real`; `Steaua de ceară / Trecerea`; `|i-au ieşit simţurile / din minţi / tot umblând prin / camera mea, simţi` etc.The use of the process culminates in the last piece of the volume, *Maximum-maximorum*, where alliteration is combined with the vocalic inversion and forced caesura (like *Ceaţă şi aură*, by the way). Lyricism is at times overwhelmed by such sterile exercises of virtuosity and of a certain preciosity, evident at lexical level by using rare or simply invented words. Thus, Călin Vlasie satisfies his vanity of a creator for whom the act itself does not have any more secrets. It is a kind of poetic `engineering`, developed in competition with the textualism operated in the prose of the ’80s generation. In *Întoarcerea în viitor* one can perceive the poet’s strenght that wins the language without giving it up. Sometimes treating it with indifference, sometimes tenderly, ironically forcing it or hugging it with fake affection, the creator shapes his verb according to the image of his phantasms. Textual aridity is antagonized by the alternation of tones, whether dark-skeptical, or calm-euphoric (a fake euphoria, an apparent calmness). Often with `nervii biciuiţi`, the poet whips the poem, if foreboding the danger of the truism and of factic emotion. The essence of lyricism comes directly from the ironic-affectionate mesalliance between the lucid consciousness and the miracle of existence. A mobile spirit by his structure, in a continuous agitation, with incontrolable inner depth, the author of *Un*-ui *timp de vis* (1993) does not prove to be a dreamer at all. The germinative dream, the romantic dream fulfils in his case, I would say, a psychedelic function since it reveals his spirit. However, inner life is recovered not by the stuffiness of the spirit under a psychedelic effect, but by a lucid analytical dissection with an almost scientist harshness at the level of introspective methods. The poets acts like a clinician, who records the soul reactions in a cold, detached manner. Not arbitrary a sequence from the final cycle *Psittey* is subentitled `Foaia de observaţie`. In this case of minus-affectivity and surplus of lucidity one inevitably reaches the cerebral overbid, like in *Vis de creieritate*, as reduntantly defined in the eponymous poem in the group *Plantaţia Saal:* `Un pământ din creiere/ unde să zboare/ creiere de păsări/ printre creiere de/ plante şi creiere/ de stânci, armonizând/ cu alunecarea/ creierelor de maşini./ Un greu tic-tac al/ creierelor care să/ învârtească/ bătrânul/ obositul/ creier omenesc`.The act of creation means the rethink of existence outside the emotion and overflowing the ballast of the mind. Therefore, the conscious becomes fundamental, the conscious that irritated by the diseases of the spirit, wants to control the actual data. The poet’s hyperlucidity institutes the dream/ the imaginary that is opposed to reality, but paradoxically ordered by a clarifying reason: `Totul este bine cunoscut/ Totul îmi pare clar/ E adevărat că mi-au trebuit câţiva/ ani câţiva zeci de ani/ ca să devin senin/ după o

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lungă vară secetoasă/ Deşi am 33 de ani nu sunt isus/ nu am dezvoltat nici o religie/ nu am murit/ deci nu am înviat// Să reținem:/ existența întrece visul/…/ Vorbesc în ritmul unei vorbiri firești/ fără metafore/ Metaforele sunt o jignire a existenței/ O existență clară ca un cer senin/ după o lungă vară secetoasă`(*Existența întrece visul*). Retractation from metaphor, directly expressed in the end of this poetic art actually represents the attempt of the postmodernist poet to elude the depreciation of the language and the stringent need for authenticity. `The natural language' – or the clearness of the discourse – at which he programmatically accedes represents a mélange of practical and abstract things, a sort of mésalliance between `Abstractor patricianul` and `plebeianul Concretor`, with the inventive expressions of the author. The assumed scientism and lexical exotism have the purpose to moderate the tension provoked by the aggression of shapeless ordinary universe. A poetic thinking, I would say, an axiomatic one wants to deliberately put order into the world of paper, trying to reconcile the `common sense` with `the grace of imagination`. Under such circumstances, the poem is not as hermetic as it is compact in expression, of a quasi-perfect geometry. The sought clarity is firstly conditioned by the economy of the poetic means but can be achieved in as far as the feeling will be well-controlled by repudiation of the sentimentalism. This implies the simplification of the methods and a continuous effort of clarifying the lyricism in an artificial and austere climate. In the first poems the poet preferred the aseptic air of the *laboratory* where he could tame his chimaeras. This time he takes refuge in the perimeter of vacuous intimacy by means of *Camera de vise*, or more adequately *Casa de aer*, where the being seems to dissapear, actually reifies. This way the subjectivity will be eroded by impersonality, since `The self is infernal, *we* is Edenic` – one states in a sequence of *Psittey*. Against the being's dislocation, the poetic ego will be usurped by a representative of alterity. The once exposed egocentrism (not without irony: `nu mai puteam fără el/…/ fără acest însoțitor de lux/ care este eul meu`) is gradually attenuated as the lyrical subject depersonalizes himself, lost in the captivity of the text and reality.

As a sequel to *Plantația Saal* – the debut volume – Călin Vlasie rigorously designs and delimits a particular area in the cycle called *Psittey*, knowingly placed in the epilogue of the anthology. It is actually a continuous poem, quasi-confessional, composed of 11 anti-elegies, as an implicit response to Nichita Stănescu's elegies. In the apparent form of an epistle – rendered by the subtitle of this exemplary cycle – simili-memories are gathered here, memories from vault or *letters* to the `beyond` sent from the `cave` of the totalitarian system. The mysterious `city of exile` equally means a material perimeter, perceived as a dungeonous universe, and a *psychological space*. Despite the warning of the author (Jumbling, PSITTEY does not mean <Piteşti> at all, as my critics thought over the years), Psittey includes within its significant sphere autobiographical connotations, too, as one can see in an old poem in *Întoarcerea în viitor:* ` Sunt tot în P. oraşul exilului/ unui număr uluitor de țânțari/ fluturi lampanți şi ciori/ care ghilotinează liniștea.// *Fii pe pace!/ Nu te emoționa!/ Nu te exterioriza!/* Mă gândesc la ion barbu ion pillat/ cezar baltag daniel turcea/ miron cordun călin vlasie/ ce-or fi făcut ei în P./ în ore ca acestea de exilate/ muzici.`(*Capul 8 : Extemporalul)*. In its fictional configuration, Psittey is the city `care se naşte în singurătatea şi/ haosul sfârşitului de mileniu`, when hopes are designed inevitably in a misty future. City residents who represent a `psychocentre` (or `Core of the World`) - the `Psitteyens`, some `tiny people` - live automatically, like stereotype operating mechanisms. They are, however, metaphysical forces, too, since they act in an ordering manner and can reactivate the primordial elements (`Acolo unde se naşte, se dezvoltă, e maturizează/ un psitteyan, aerul, apa, focul, pământul şi ideile sunt/ imediat şi puternic activate`). In a

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word, Psittey is the `homeland` that the poet `living in a laboratory` can not understand any more.

The skepticism of the poet, who took refuge in the imaginary, the acute perception of illusory life and acceptance as an existential principle of Stoic indifference or apathy sometimes gets accents similar to those in Eminescu's *Glossa*: `S-ar putea să fie o iluzie. Nu ştiu. Încerc să mă/ concentrez în stilul K.W.-35. Iată ce descopăr:/ un cerc din ce în ce mai îngust al conştiinţei şi/ o nemaipomenită debandadă a măştilor şi tot mai / multe voci care nu se văd./ Ce vor toate acestea? Nu vor să ştie nici de unde/ vin, nici încotro se îndreaptă. Vor să ştie cine le/ dirijează./ Mult timp am crezut că personalul este superior im-/ personalului. Am dezvoltat chiar o filosofie. Că-/ tre anul 35 am început să-mi dau seama că in-/ dividul a murit odată cu dumnezeu. `Noi` este/ superior lui `eu`, `tu` şi `el`. `Noi` este un/ imens magazin în care câteva idei sunt multipli-/ cate în miliarde de forme sensibile./ O paradă îi un paradis.` (*Psittey, II*). For Călin Vlasie – probably the most active in reality of the writers from the '80s – poetry means action, *Acţiune interioară*, as indicated by the title of the author anthology. Undertaking the old dichotomy body / soul or matter / spirit, the postmodern poet imperceptibly moves the emphasis, on grounds of synonymy, towards the separation between incarnation and psychic. The frequency of terms derived from the same word family (psychia, psych and psycho, psychocentre, psychotherapy, etc.) mark the emphasis placed on the convulsions of the spirit. Creative, non-oniric action institutes an imagined but *existent* world (as the motto of the first cycle suggests, too: `This things do exist since they are imagined`) under the auspices of the germinative visions of cerebral origin. When he declares ` din nou imaginam viaţa` or `imaginam poemul`, the poet does not oppose an invented super-reality reality to reality, but suggests the effort of biographical reconstruction. He stands as building a `personal construct`, in line with the principle of G. Kelly displayed in the beginning of *Întoarcerea în viitor:* `We are interested in discovering better ways to help people rebuild their lives so as not to be victims of their past. `Highlighting the features of the postmodernism of the '80s, Liviu Petrescu – in *Poetica postmodernismului*, 1996 – noticed the expansion of a `new anthropocentrism` which with Călin Vlasie represents , in connection with the postulate about authenticity, a re-humanization of the technicist model in the modern age. The author himself defined (in *Poezie şi psihic*) postmodernism as psycheism. For him the psychological reality is the only possible and bearable reality as the poet establishes a world in which mental life completely replaces external life. In a style that bears the seal of his agitated being - for whom physical and metaphysical *anxiety* becomes constructive - Călin Vlasie imposes its unmistakable personality in the context of the '80s poetry.

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