ANA BLANDIANA. LUCIDITY AS EXIGENCY OF THE SELF

Ana Blandiana is a typical representative, one could say, of the '60 generation, to the extent that the topoi, the themes, motives, and means of expression of its representatives are found in varying doses and with various finalities in her works. It is clear, however, that in this kind of genus proximum which is more or less relative notion of generation, the poet has a well-determined place, differentia specifica needing to be taken into account in the firmest possible way. Ana Blandiana's first volume is titled somewhat programmatically, *Persoana întâia plural* (1964). The title is symbolic, to the extent that it gives expression to the desire of the self to define itself and assert its personality, in conjunction with the world, with a universe looked upon with a fresh eye, of a liminal spontaneity. Spontaneity is not fake, it is not an imitation of intense living in a world that generously opens to senses; on the contrary, honesty is the tone that dominates this verse transcribing experiences marked by fullness and pathos, but pitifulness is absent. The frenzy of living in a lush world, rich in shapes, colors and sounds that allow themselves to be captured produces a sort of expansion of the self, an oversizing of being that extracts its dynamism from the urgency to live, to perceive the world with maximum intensity, to exult under the sign of vital energetism. Communion with the elements, fusion - slightly playful, but some other times bearing the footprint of gravity - with nature's phenomena are dimensions of a lyrical vision expressed in the register of spontaneity and sincerity.

Persoana întâia plural gives the measure of glee feelings, ecstatic and uncensored, anchored in a harmonious, unproblematic universe, in which the lyrical being is capable of living in harmony with cosmic rhythms. The center of gravity of the poems is, however, the *self* that discovers with delight and amazement its own conformation, witnessing the miracle of its own becoming and expressing the euphoria of self-contemplation, of the play of images and forms drawn from the many guises of a protean universe. Lyrical visions now have an extremely clear and aesthetically productive subjective range, the dominant poetic norm being sensoriousness, the direct impact of things. Exuberance, the ecstasy of the fusion with the world, the frenzy of immediate experience - are landmarks of the lyrical vision that can be found in many poems of this

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volume. With the volume *Călcâiul vulnerabil* (1966), the exultancy, amazement and pride of the lyrical self in front of existence and of the miracle of its own composition changes towards a vector of questioning and mistrust; the ability to transfer the weight of things into poetic weightlessness is experienced as a cursed gift, through which the world is perceived not in its auroral transparency, in its bare and simple concreteness, but through the mediation of words, simulacra of reality that replace the vibration of things with their graphic and sonorous unilateral abstractness. Between the actual world and the world of words a threatening hiatus is born, translating nothing more or less than the poet's state of alienation in the face of a reality that conceals in the verb, takes the color of phonemes, and expresses itself only through exposure in the darkroom of vocables that no longer have, as in the case of Romantics, a demiurgic vocation, but are rather demystifying and lack ontological content. It can be very easily noticed how, in this volume, vitalist exuberance, the frenzy of unmediated living among elements leave room to a predominantly doubtful attitude, interrogation clearly replacing the expression of self-affirmation and agreement of self with the world. The word is here a privileged topos; this effigy of the world and of the one who utters it – the word – is impure and unfulfilled, simulacrum of reality and proof of the imposture of the language that betrays the world, unable to represent it faithfully; the word, therefore, is the bearer of an insufficient message that fails to extract maximum value from the potentialities of thought. The word establishes a kind of rhetorical nothingness, it empties reality of its substance, giving it only an apparent image, devoid of essential meaning, of authentic content. Poetic utterance is itself like a curse that turns things into words, the world into inconsistent syllables, the authentic subject into a simple mask that conceals its authenticity; reality becomes thus pauperized, conventionalized, turning into a simple signifier, and between *referent* and *sign* there grows an abyss. ..

A privileged theme of the poetry of Ana Blandiana is, as noted by some critics (among them, Al. Cistelecan) the theme of *candor* seen in multiple modulations and forms; firstly, in her debut volume, candor was a privileged status of maximum frenzy before the beauty of things and before her own self which repudiates ugliness, maculacy, ignobleness. The framework of the first poems thus shapes a lyricism of the purity and fragility of being, a poetics of uncensored, astonished opening to the world,

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creating a discrete posture of the verse, with clear drawing and softened musicality, cultivating the halftone and the nuance. There is, here, at the strict morphological level of the poem, a certain paradoxical contradiction between its content of lyrical feelings and emotions and the lyrical expression through which these emotions are decanted, a more or less evident contrast between sensory exultancy that comes to life in these poems and the vague, delicate form of images, the fresh, almost translucid aspect of the verse. The poet feels life, at this point, not like release of adolescent energy, as disturbing vitalist élan but rather, increasingly as a foreboding of a vague trauma, as a premonition of guilt and impurity. The premonition of a universe subject to maculation and to the unjust laws of degradation - moral and physical - is accompanied by a very acute awareness of her own limits, by a perpetual indecision, translated in the inability to choose between pure and impure, between, as the poet goes, "herds" and "lotuses". From sensuality and candor to the dynamics of problematic questioning, the lyricism of Ana Blandiana crosses the road from teenage utopias, to the raw living of life, to reflection and questioning. Out of this oscillation between primordial innocence and the awareness of existential evil derives Ana Blandiana's poetry solemn side, written in the register of melancholic gravity, but also by virtue of a metaphysical code present, in a rather coded manner, in almost all the poems of maturity.

In her last volumes, the poetics of Ana Blandiana goes beyond the exultant sensoriousness and architecture of verse, returning, in a meditative and elegiac mode on its own structure and on the place reserved to the chimerical being in a universe where concreteness turns into illusion and dream received all the appearances of reality, even turning into a generator of *possible* worlds, of beings dreamt by others, which, in their turn, are fashioned by an architecture of the oneiric, in fact an attempt of finding a timeless and non-cosmic paradise in which the increate is presented under the form of a ghostly and spectral mirrors' game that grants to beings but an evanescent subsistence, belonging to the species of the graceful and ineffable. The doors of the real open thus into a hallucinatory universe of a dream perpetually changing, favoring the metamorphoses of beings with the steamy body of Chimera and with the imponderable of fugitive, always inconstant and irregular impression.

Reflection on one's condition is in harmony with the return, initiatic and problematic, upon scriptural adventure, upon the way in which the

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word takes on meaning and the text manages to overcome its limitations and inhibitions in order to draw the face of the world, the figure of a polymorphic existence. Rather than linger in the ecstasies of utterance, the poet feels "ink" as the hallmark of evil, as guilt, to the extent that she is unable to transcribe the innermost recesses of her soul, the subtext of the real, stopping at "text", at mere appearances. Another favorite theme of the poetry of Ana Blandiana is that of the bucolic, a topos configured in images of extreme transparency, where the grace of ecriture is bordered by the weight of the telluric, of the space transcribed in light touches; we do not deal here with a striking picture, with determined and precise lines and clear, perfect contours, but rather with a poetics of suggestion of impressionist tint, where preeminence is given to vagueness, to nuances and halftones, combined with a perception of infinitesimal subtly embedded in the groundwater of the poem. It is a very special type of Bucolism, where the lyrically translated sensation or perception has an undeniable meditative aura, turning with ineffable hunger for clarity and transparency on their own, manifesting in this way, an obvious self-reflective penchant. Some other times, in the fragile landscape design, often having the accuracy and austere simplicity of Japanese engravings, one finds the same obsession with life and death, indissoluble states of a universe impalpable in its essences, a universe where appearances have no other sense than to envelop / reveal an obscure meaning that the human being seeks in vain to decipher. The mystery of life and death, of premonitory sorrow and vitalistic jubilation are engraved in delicate pen, but no less determined, in most aspects of reality, where the great questions of existence remain camouflaged, in a dialectic of ineluctable opposites. The volume *Arhitectura valurilor* is, as the poet shows in a preliminary note, "the mirror of a mindset in which exasperation and humiliation, anger and despair, shame and rebellion melted in the feeling of imminent end as the only alternative to a just as improbable salvation." In the verse in this book moral intransigence becomes again the norm that presides over lyrical visions, the atmosphere of the poems is an apocalyptic one, of collapse of the worlds, of annihilation of the being and of alienation of the consciousness that no longer sees any hope in either present or future. The feeling of dehumanization can be clearly perceived from the grotesque vision grotesque of the "rodent god" of that "Apollo of garbage" or of "traveling worms," paradigms of an agonic world, of a declining and

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delirious History in which statues are "lies" and emperors reign for only a moment.

As a whole, the work of Ana Blandiana is the document - consisting of fervor and anxiety – of a consciousness that assumed, in full exercise of moral lucidity and exigency, its own destiny and the horizon of mystery, the convulsions of a delirious history and the aporias of a declining time. Meditation on writing and writing go hand in hand, therefore, with the radiography of empirical reality, just as the ritual of utterance is simply "ordering," simply incarnation of the poet's own destiny. The underlying moral of the works, the antinomic symbols of wakefulness and sleep, the bucolic framed by metaphysical thrill, the signs of passage and of devastating time, discrete expressionism, the overwhelming and melancholic meditative contour of poetic images and pictures, the fantastic of oneiric extraction, and transparent or less obvious symbolism, are some of the dominant features of Ana Blandiana's work. The human being and her work are inextricably linked; ethical intransigence and the acuity of observation are born from extreme availability to the beauties and contradictions of the social or of the universe. The writer consistently pursued his "shadow," just as the human being "beyond the work" made us witnesses of an exemplary, flawless morality. The ethical theme of responsibility and commitment to the existing mechanism of existence is recurrent in the verse of Ana Blandiana. The poet feels, with intense pain, her inability to discern the limits of good and evil, to decant moral values with sufficient rigor, to distinguish the unstable, uncertain border separating moral extremes. Out of this suffering, depicted clearly in melancholy, austere lines, the ontological and gnoseologic intransigence of the poet is reborn; it summarizes a concept of net colors, unequivocal shapes, firm and inviolable values; the dynamics of poetic images is based on the antinomic tension between knowable and unknowable, between thought and word, between uncreated and created, all these oppositions expressing, of course, the need for clarification of ethical concepts, for transposing moral will into the reality of the unequivocally materialized option. Time, the unstoppable outpouring of moments and disfigurement which they cause to the being - is another topos featured in this book. Ana Blandiana displays, with extreme poignancy and clarity, the way in which time leaves its mark on the consciousness, altering human personality and instauring the play between identity and nonidentity. For the lyrical self,

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the past is the one that changes the present and the being finds out it is unable to regain its roots, the "traces" of its passage through the world. The universe, existence, placed under the umbrella of the past, appear to have all the features of an "alphabet" with signs whose meanings have been lost, gone forever. Facing time, man is unable to find answers to questions asked by the universe, he confesses his inability to decipher through an authentic, unfalsified "reading" of the secret, hidden, signs of a universe of perpetual metamorphoses and degradation due to Chronos.

Under pressure of skepticism, enchantment turns into "disenchantment" and the lure and charm of existence into disillusionment, while the gaze that lingered over things with some candor and perplexity, now assumes the risk of interrogation and the lucid passion of the relapse into doubt and uncertainty. The absence of the communion with the elements, of the organic bond with the universe, is experienced as guilt of the lyrical subject who has lost the "key" to the enigmatic meanings of the cosmos, failing to assume existence as an organic whole in which the being is able to integrate, to find at least serenity and balance. Lucidity, the alienating power of thought, the withdrawal of affects into the dissolution of the interrogation without a clear answer - are factors that generate this awareness of sin, of the guilt of losing ties with the world, of the "solidarity" with the elemental. The experiences of the poet become now increasingly volatile, passions blur their contours, emotional dynamism becomes kind of slow, fugitive moments are transcribed in a sort of slow motion that increases their intensity, freezing them the eleat way in a kind of timelessness that promotes the *sleepiness* experienced by the lyrical self as a state of regression *ad uterum*, of return to the virtual domain of the uncreated where the substance - to speak in Aristotelian terms – had not yet received the form, had not yet clearly defined its contours. The aggressiveness of a world of objects whose "norm" is anomia leads to the search for sleep, for "non-birth" to this retrenchment into an interiority which proves in fact to be an identification with the cosmos. But the dissolution of the self leads to a crisis – of communication and understanding - but also to an attempt to retrieve the "biological" roots of its own being through a kind of anamnesis of the somewhat archetypal, mythical figure of the Father.

The status of the being conquered by the thrill of a "slow pan-eroticism" (Octavian Soviany) oscillates between the fluidity of the aquatic

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and the agrestal stability of the telluric, between the will of establishing a personal physiognomy and identity and the inability to choose one's own life, one's own face, under the circumstances in which the disturbingly complex mechanism of the universe is subject to a blind determinism, to an implacable haphazard. The impossibility of option finds its expression in the poem *Martorii*, a show of moral aporias, of continuous, meaningless and logicless metamorphoses, of the incarceration of being in a *given* shape, predestined by a blind, implacable haphazard. It would appear that *bellum omnium contra omnes* seems to be the motto of this unsettling, multiform and undifferentiated universe, where the supreme law is represented by substitution, devouring, abolition of individuality, blurring personalizing contours and where beings and animals are meant to be and die at a frenetic pace. The eye becomes, in this poem, the privileged instrument of Apollonian knowledge, thirsty for harmonious form, complete in itself, but also a "window" to the polymorphism of the universe, in which outer elementality is reconciled with innermost dynamics. In contrast to physiological bodily spasms, with the instinctual fervor of the body, the *eye* represents the universe, it is the generator of visions dominated by balance and stability, that determine the shape of things with strict accuracy and infinite nuances, releasing surfaces and contours out of the many guises of the universe. Sight itself receives moral emphasis: "Mai vinovaţi decât cei priviţi/ Sunt doar cei ce privesc,/ Martorul care nu împiedică crima,/ Atent s-o descrie,/ Scuzându-se «Nu pot să fac/ Două lucruri în acelaşi timp»/ Sau «Portretul victimei, îngeresc,/ E mai important decât viaţa ei/ Pământească». It can be seen that the poetics of Ana Blandiana go beyond the exultant sensoriousness and architecture of verse, returning, under meditative and elegiac regime, onto its own composition and onto the place that is reserved to the chimerical being in a universe where concreteness turns into illusion and the dream received all the appearances of reality, even acting as a generator of *possible* worlds, of beings dreamt by other beings which, in their turn, are fashioned by an architecture of the oneiric, after all, an attempt of finding a timeless and non-cosmic paradise where the uncreated appears to us as a ghostly and spectral mirrors' game that does not grant beings but an evanescent subsistence, belonging to the species of the graceful and the ineffable.

The doors of the real open, thus, into the hallucinatory universe of a perpetually changing dream that favors the metamorphoses of beings

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having the steamy body of Chimera and the imponderable of the fugitive impression. In this poem, and also in others of the same type, the world, with everything in it, is made of the ephemeral and perishable substance of the dream by a sleepy and cranky demiurge that brings out of universal latency, from the "spindle" of possible worlds, unstable, hypnotic forms; the images of repose, sleep or flow, of the "sleep within a sleep", seen as a reflection of the chimerical self in his own dream - are recurrent. Dream, reverie, sleep, the expressions of passage from one world into another universe lead to the configuration of a "de-realized" universe where the dream and the concrete world are found under the tutelage of the same compelling need for passing through the "customs," in a diffuse brightness, in a horizon chilled by the premonition of extinction. Reflecting on one's own condition is in harmony with the initiatic and problematic return, to scriptural adventure, to the way in which the word assumes meaning and the text manages to overcome its limitations and inhibitions in order to draw the face of the world, the figure of polymorphic existence. Rather than linger in the ecstasies of utterance, the poet feels "ink" as the hallmark of evil, as guilt, to the extent that she is unable to transcribe the innermost recesses of her soul, the subtext of the real, stopping at "text", at mere appearances. It is not the word that the poet is looking for but rather its metaphysical reflection, its shadow of mystery and awe, of suggestion and gracefully ritualized agony. Between visionary enthusiasm or emotional perception and bookish tone a hiatus is growing that the verse of Ana Blandiana attempts to diminish, even by adopting her own text as pretext of her ecriture, by the intense visualization of bookish images, by self-reflectivity and self-referentiality, in other words. Ink – assimilated to "livid mud," brings images of the abyss, of nothingness where the being sinks, as in a nightmare of infernal architecture, animated by quasi-terratological representations, although having all the data of the imponderable and translucent chimera.

The topos of the *name*, which designates, through an often alienating signified, a body, a life, a destiny is linked to the theme of identity, of the unremitting, relentless quest for the self that the poetry of Ana Blandiana took up it in many ways, modulations and situations. In a world subject to all determinisms, relativizations and convulsions, in a universe that changes its appearances at a frantic, disconcerting pace, the fervor of the quest for one's self has a determined and significant, ethical and visionary turn. The

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name is thus a cloistering linguistic reality, which alienates and confers no sense, but rather closes the being in a utopian, atypical and procrustean contour, making it incomprehensible and reducing its initiatives to a minimum. The name also causes a crisis of knowledge, through its arbitrariness, outlining a truly infernal circle from whose malebolge the being is trying to escape, trying to regain true linguistic garment; this search, this journey through the elements of the universe is solved only in the volatile and mysterious empire of –somnia, in the fluctuating field of dreams, the one that facilitates the entrance into the ecstatic, paradisal realm of archetypes, of Goethe's "Mothers", the only one where the meeting between being and its own essence is possible and at the same time beneficial. The dramatism of the quest thus seems to be solved by reconciliation with oneself, the dynamics of the initiatory journey through the appearances of the world comes to rest in a possible, virtual beatitude, even if the mystery effect never ceases to make its presence felt, dominating the architecture of poetic vision. Witnesses thus become the real culprits "Vinovaţi nu pot să fie/ Doar unul, doar doi sau doar trei,/ Când armate de martori privesc/ Şi aşteaptă să se sfârşească,/ De bătrâneţe să moară călăul,/ Şi victima a doua oară, de uitare,/ Să se sfârşească de la sine răul/ Cum se sfârşeşte pur şi simplu un tunel…/ Stăm spulberaţi/ De propria-ne-ntrebare/ ca de-o spânzurătoare/ Un drapel". The sense of dehumanization springs from the grotesque vision of the "rodent god" of that "Apollo of garbage" or "traveling worms," paradigms of an agonic world, of a declining and delirious History, in which statues are "lies" and emperors reign only for a moment, a world of collective guilt, of silent and therefore false witnesses ("«În van, răspunde timpul, aşteptaţi:/ La judecata marilor coşmare/ Şi martorii sunt vinovaţi»"). These lines designating a world of agonic pallor, with apocalyptic dimensions that awaken despair, also include some images that suggest a sense of confidence in salvation, in the moral values of freedom and human dignity, when the world will regain its genuine image and ethical norms will no longer be disfigured, violated at someone's discretion.

The volume *A treia taină* of 1969 is not, perhaps, as Eugen Simion believes, so much a "return to the state of purity of childhood" as it is an evolution in the order of knowledge. Starting with this book, Ana Blandiana leaves the fragmentariness of vision and the pure solipsism present in the first volume in favor of global knowledge, which calls for

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universal structure. The lyrical self is, here too, related to the facets of the universe, it betrays stunned analogies and equivalences with the being that finds itself, not without some pride, in all the aspects of becoming, exposing itself to a real curse that causes its reactions and feelings only depending on the relationship with the other, with the non-self. In this way, in order to become aware of herself, to descend into her own soul or to assume an identity authenticated by the endorsement of sincere emotions, the poet has to recover hidden links - but no less tyrannical – with the universe, a universe that bears the strong imprint of her own face and in which the mysterious presence of elements does nothing else than confirm her very presence in the world, we are here far from the method of synesthesia, rather we are dealing with an empathic profound experience of the world, with a clear, indisputable reaction of identification of the self with the elements. Ana Blandiana undertakes here a sort of knowledge-experience through empathy, seeing everywhere, her own face and, conversely, projecting her own soul in the protean universe. Such an attitude is also present in the poem *Cântec*, a melancholy meditation on the theme of passage: ("Lasă-mi, toamnă, pomii verzi,/ Uite, ochii mei ţi-i dau./ Ieri spre seară-n vântul galben/ Arborii-n genunchi plângeau.// Lasă-mi, toamnă, cerul lin./ Fulgeră-mi pe frunte mie./ Astă noapte zarea-n iarbă/ Încerca să se sfâşie"). Another favorite theme of the poetry of Ana Blandiana is that of the bucolic, a topos configured in images of extreme transparency, where the grace of ecriture is bordered by the weight of the telluric, of the space transcribed in light touches; we do not deal here with a striking picture, with determined and precise lines and clear, perfect contours, but rather with a poetics of suggestion of impressionist tint, where preeminence is given to vagueness, to nuances and halftones, combined with a perception of infinitesimal subtly embedded in the groundwater of the poem. It is a very special type of Bucolic, where the lyrically translated sensation or perception has an undeniable meditative aura, turning with ineffable hunger for clarity and transparency on themselves, manifesting in this way, an obvious self-reflective penchant. Colors, forms, flavors and sounds that give contour to these bucolic landscapes have the flavor of time or the fluid accents of the thought that utters itself, ordering the evoked space and time with melancholy fervor: "Lasă, toamnă-n aer păsări,/ Paşii mei alungă-mi-i./ Dimineaţa bolta scurse/ Urlete de ciocârlii.// Lasă-mi toamnă, iarba, lasă-mi/ Fructele şi lasă/ Urşii

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neadormiţi, berzele neduse,/ Ora luminoasă.// Lasă-mi, toamnă, ziua, nu mai/ Plânge-n soare fum./ Înserează-mă pe mine,/ Mă-nserez oricum".

Some other times, in the fragile landscape design, often having the accuracy and austere simplicity of Japanese engravings, one finds the same obsession with life and death, indissoluble states of a universe impalpable in its essences, a universe where appearances have no other sense than to envelop / reveal an obscure meaning that the human being seeks in vain to decipher. The mystery of life and death, of premonitory sorrow and vitalistic jubilation are engraved in delicate pen, but no less determined, in most aspects of reality, where the great questions of existence remain camouflaged, in a dialectic of ineluctable opposites.

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