

# SHAKESPEARE AND VOICULESCU: COMMUNION THROUGH SONNETS OR JUST PLAIN COMMUNICATION

PhD. Candidate Sorin Gheorghe SUCIU  
“Petru Maior” University of Târgu-Mureș

## Abstract

Our paper aims to reveal the way in which the dialogue between Shakespeare's and Voiculescu's sonnets works, in and through time. We are using, among others, Mihail Șora's ideas about dialogue and understanding in order to establish if there is a communion or just plain communication, an unevenly dialogue, given the different visibility levels of the two poets' works. In addition, we are trying to point out the elements which permit us to underline the iconic character of our two poets' writings, starting from Sorin Dumitrescu's applicative demonstrations regarding iconology.

**Keywords:** icon-poem, sonnet, epigone, communion, creation

The question on which our interpretation is based refers to the existence of a dialogue, in and through time, a fruitful communication between the two works of art named in the title of Voiculescu's cycle: *Shakespeare's Last Sonnets. Imaginary Translation*.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, our intention is to establish if there is a spiritual communion, across almost half millennium, between Shakespeare's and Voiculescu's sonnets. Another goal is to discover if there is to be found iconic writing (as it is revealed in Sorin Dumitrescu's work<sup>2</sup>) in Romanian poet's imaginary translation of “the divine Brit's”<sup>3</sup> sonnets. There will not be a comparative attempt, because others have done it before us, and, anyway, the space of this paper wouldn't allow such an undertaking. Besides, talking about the poetic imagery (“une creation d'un seul jet”<sup>4</sup>) in the discourse of poetic reverie seen as “polyphony of the senses”, Gaston Bachelard states that a psychologist would consider mandatory the study of an inspired poet, but, such a work would be useless because of the irrelevance of comparing geniuses from the inspiration angle: “the comparison between inspired poets would cause the dissolution of the essence of inspiration.”<sup>5</sup> Of course, taking into account the fact that both Shakespeare and Voiculescu were great artisans of the word, no one could challenge the fact that inspiration had been an important element of their poetic work.

---

<sup>1</sup> V. Voiculescu, *Ultimele sonete închipuite ale lui Shakespeare. Traducere imaginară*, tabel cronologic, prefață și referințe critice de Roxana Sorescu, Editura Art, București, 2010. We have to mention the fact that there is a capital difference between *translation* (plain translation from a language into another) and *imaginary translation* (seen as literary creation, *interpretation*). Ștefan-Augustin Doinaș points out this difference with verses from Lucian Blaga's poem, *Stihuitorul (The Verse Maker)*: “Translating. I always translate / into our Romanian language / a song which my heart / tells me, sweetly babbled, in its language.” (Șt. Aug. Doinaș, *Eseuri*, Editura Eminescu, București, 1996, pp. 133-144). The translation made in this paper comes from the author.

<sup>2</sup> Sorin Dumitrescu, *Noi și icoana. 31+1 iconologii pentru învățarea icoanei*, Editura Anastasia, București, 2010.

<sup>3</sup> Shakespeare's sobriquet in “Eminescu's youthful enthusiasm”, as Perpessicius points out. (Perpessicius, „Sonetele unei iubiri”, studiu introductiv la V. Voiculescu, *Ultimele sonete închipuite ale lui Shakespeare în traducere imaginară de V. Voiculescu*, București, Editura pentru Literatură, 1964, p. IX).

<sup>4</sup> Friedrich Schlegel *apud* Gaston Bachelard, *Poetica reveriei*, trad. de Luminița Brăileanu, Editura Paralela 45, Pitești, 2005, p. 14.

<sup>5</sup> Gaston Bachelard, *op. cit.*, p. 15.

Our short journey into the land of the imaginary translation of “the northern eagle’s”<sup>6</sup> sonnets begins with Constantin Jinga, the one who underlines the iconicity of Voiculescu’s writing: “Voiculescu believes in the edifying power of literature but not in the magic of the text. And that is a fact even if, in his work, the sacred aura of the letter is the result of a deliberated act of «contamination». The text has to work as an icon: meaning, to stylize the significant shapes of the century in a form and on a frame of biblical origin, until they are reaching the stage of a symbol, and to offer them as a support for contemplation rather than meditation. And the only way in which the shapes of the century could be brought to the stage of a symbol is by contact, by painting them on a canvas which was discretely impregnated with already known elements.”<sup>7</sup> From here one could infer a link to that “inner scenery”<sup>8</sup> which Ovidiu Papadima revealed in Voiculescu’s poetry, a scenery which proposes itself for contemplation, as an icon does. Besides, even George Călinescu<sup>9</sup> saw the iconic character of Voiculescu’s poetic work. Despite the obvious Platonism – “I have unlocked the realm of the eternal forms; / To the arch-moulds that call for us to be restored.” *CLXX (16)*<sup>10</sup> - or, better said, just because of that, the Christian root of Voiculescu’s sonnets is to be revealed, as Valeriu Anania<sup>11</sup> did it. He was the one who considered the *Canticles* as a model for our poet’s work, even if the author of the sonnets wouldn’t recognize that.

In addition, for a clearer image regarding the icon maker’s liberty of expression, we have to say that Sorin Dumitrescu, a painter himself, welcomes the icon painter’s inventiveness, as an innovating artist, but only in the spirit of “the creative fidelity” towards the support-text: “For such an icon-maker, the written *support-text* is not only the prime cause

---

<sup>6</sup> See note no 3.

<sup>7</sup> Constantin Jinga, *Biblia și sacral în literatură*, Editura Universității de Vest, colecția episteme [2] Timișoara, 2001, p. 61.

<sup>8</sup> Ovidiu Papadima, *Peisajul interior din poezia lui V. Voiculescu* în „Gândirea”, București, an XXII, nr. 7, august – septembrie, 1943, pp. 390-398.

<sup>9</sup> Referring to the poetry written between The Great War and WW II, the Romanian representative critic writes: “Not in particularly searching for color, Mr. Voiculescu’s scenery becomes colored through the way in which one sees it. It is to be found here something resembling the Transylvanian glass painted icon, where the color spots are the matter and the drawing lines are accidents which could be removed without harming or destroying the painting. I’m giving only an example which could serve as a base for an icon: «Turn to the sunbathed shore; / Piously flows clear mountains knelt in pines, / There, where is no clear river and no trail / And, peacefully, the pace puts sighs on top of thorns.»” (George Călinescu, *Istoria literaturii române de la origini până în prezent*, Fundația regală pentru literatură și artă, București, 1941, pp. 797-800). Therefore, “the way in which one sees” this scenery seems to give us an idea about Voiculescu’s ego and puts each and every one of us into a contemplating state, a preliminary state necessary for reaching that moment of transposition, through the icon-poem, into the “distance.” The seeing takes the place of looking.

<sup>10</sup> V. Voiculescu, *op. cit.*, p 578.

<sup>11</sup> “Using the tool of artistic ambiguity, the poet builds his cycle of ninety poems claiming the Shakespearian model, but, in reality, he guides himself, not recognizing that fact, by the pattern of the *Canticles*.” (Valeriu Anania, „Introducere” la *Cântarea Cântărilor* în *Biblia sau Sfânta Scriptură*, Ediție jubiliară a Sfântului Sinod, Versiune diortosită după Septuaginta, redactată și adnotată de Bartolomeu Valeriu Anania, Arhiepiscopul Clujului, sprijinit pe numeroase alte osteneli, Editura IBMBOR, București, 2001, p. 870). Even more; “The purest and clearest expression of faith and religious sentiment in the entire Romanian literature is to be found in the work of the great poet Vasile Voiculescu. [...] Through meditation and spiritual exercises of Hesychia (the path of silence and peace in eastern orthodox faith, *our note* S. G. S.) he overtakes the state of ecstasy and reaches up into the entasis state, meaning [...] the meeting of the ego with the Logos. The literary fruit of this experience, or, more accurate, its artistic expression is the cycle *The Last Sonnets of Shakespeare in Imaginary Translation by Vasile Voiculescu*, poems which, in my opinion, cannot be understood without considering the Hesychia. (Valeriu Anania, „Poezia religioasă modernă, mari poeți de inspirație creștină, Vasile Voiculescu - liniștea supremă a iubirii”, în *Din spumele mării*, Editura Dacia, Cluj-Napoca, 1995, p. 165).

of the *icon*, of its *iconographic text*, but its *target* itself. The doctrinaire *support-text* represents for him the *iconographic text's* prototype, its model. In an icon made in the true light of the Tradition, the *iconographic text* has to *refer to the prototype*, meaning the *support-text*, the doctrine."<sup>12</sup> Knowing the fact that Voiculescu's healthy roots, as a man of culture<sup>13</sup>, were growing from *The Holy Bible* and his initiation in Hesychasm occurred within "Rugul Aprins" ("The Burning Bush")<sup>14</sup>, the iconic character of his writing should not be a surprise for anyone. And that, apparently a paradox, in spite of the fact that Voiculescu places himself, organically, out of any ideology, dogma or doctrine.

In fact, the modern art has already implemented a combinatory, mixed form, seen here as an extreme illustration of Umberto Eco's concept, *opera aperta*. Besides, starting from Valery's remark<sup>15</sup>, Renee Riese Hubert and Kathryn Ascheim are presenting, in an essay<sup>16</sup>, the artistic concept of *tableau-poeme*, which underlines the universal character of contemporary art work's "opening". It does not allow a unilateral "reading" (pictorial, textual or auditory). The authors are pointing out the fact that Eco emphasizes on the multitude of interpretations possible, on the ambiguity which emanates from a work of art depending on art consumer's different levels of sensibility, culture, education and intelligence. It seems that this opening is even harder to be avoided in the case of the *tableau-poeme*, where the text mixes with the image remaining, at the same time and, at least partially, apart. According to Hubert and Ascheim, the text and the image, in spite of the differences, are aiming to a hypothetical unity. The interaction between visual and verbal, each of them refusing to melt completely into the other, represents the particular nature of this kind of art. Forms which could never be entirely compatible are added, one on top of another, suffering successive metamorphosis. "The theories of Umberto Eco lend themselves to the study of the *tableau-poeme* (whether or not the critic had envisioned this application), for they take into account the importance of typography, blank-space, and layout – in short, a post-Mallarmé sense of poetry's spatial dimensions. Moreover, the notion of textual permutation which Eco invokes in his discussion of Mallarmé's *Le Livre* might describe the activity or flexibility which is required to read the work of a painter who is seeking to integrate the poetic and the pictorial and to discover what is dynamic in their structure."<sup>17</sup> We used this extreme example in order

---

<sup>12</sup> Sorin Dumitrescu, *op. cit.*, p. 411.

<sup>13</sup> In fact, "the culture - says Nicolai Berdiaev - is related to cult; it develops starting from religious cult; it is the result of the differentiation and extension of the cult. The philosophical thinking, the scientific knowledge, the architecture, the painting, the sculpture, the music, the poetry and morality, - all are within Church's cult, organically and integrally, into a form yet undifferentiated. The culture is linked to the cult of the ancestors and to tradition. It is full of sacred symbolism; it wears inside the signs and the images of a spiritual reality." (Nicolai Berdiaev, "Destinul culturii" în *Chroniques, II, Le roseau d'or* apud Nichifor Crainic, *Sensul tradiției* în „Gândirea”, București, an. IX, nr. 1-2, 1929, p. 8).

<sup>14</sup> A phenomenon which was created by the meeting of an important part of Romanian intellectuals (whom were stepping aside from the path of Bolshevik roller) with theologians and believers from Antim monastery and other places. The catalyst of this phenomenon was Ivan Kulighin, named Ioan cel Străin (John the Foreigner), a Russian orthodox friar who was rescued by Romanian Army from Odessa, where he was imprisoned by the communists. About this, see André Scrima, *Timpul Rugului Aprins. Maestrul spiritual în tradiția răsăriteană*, Editura Humanitas, București, 1996.

<sup>15</sup> "Il n'y a pas de vrai sens d'un texte." / "There is no true meaning of a text."

<sup>16</sup> Renee Riese Hubert and Kathryn Ascheim, *The tableau-Poeme: Open Work*, Yale French Studies, No. 64, Concepts of Closure, 1984, pp. 43-56, (trad. n. S.G.S.), stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2929907>, accessed at 09.11.2011.

<sup>17</sup> Hubert and Ascheim, *op. cit.*, p. 43.

to underline the differences between the Eastern icon and the Western religious painting (having in mind our goal, to reveal the iconic character of Voiculescu's writings). Those differences were pointed out by Sorin Dumitrescu (the one who reveals the mechanisms of Western iconoclasm<sup>18</sup>) and L. Vorontsova<sup>19</sup>, among others. An *icon-poem* implies, on the contrary, precisely a unilateral "reading" by contemplating the Image which is the very place where the look of the Logos comes to meet our look. In this way, we are taking part in the infinite opening into Logos, being faithful to the canon in which the creativity of the artist is free to express. An illustrative example is Andrei Rubliov's icon of The Holy Trinity.<sup>20</sup> Of course, we are not implying here that Voiculescu was a theologian, not in the modern and tight understanding of the term<sup>21</sup>, anyway, but to reveal that, under the multiple layers of his poems' meanings flutters, always, the heart of a true believer, a place where descended, at the end, his indefatigable mind in pursuit of answers to burning questions.

Now, in order to underline our point of view, we are reminding St. John of Damascus' teachings about the symbolism and the purpose of the icon: "But, because not everyone is a scholar, and there are a lot of those who does not read, The Fathers thought that those must to be painted in icons as deeds of heroism for a rapid remembering of them. Truly, not having in mind God's Passion but seeing the icon of Christ's Crucifixion, we are remembering of Savior's Passion and, kneeling, we pray. We are not praying to the matter (of the icon), but to the one who is represented in it, as well as we are not praying to the matter on which the Scriptures are made, nor to the matter of the cross but to the image of the cross."<sup>22</sup> Anyway, the contemporary poetry reader knows "to read", to unveil the hidden meanings of a poem according to his / hers level of education, culture, intelligence and, last but not least, sensibility, as Eco says. The reader has forgotten, though, if ever knew it (like those illiterates reminded by St. John of Damascus), for Whom or what to look, in an *icon-poem*, for instance. The praying of an *icon-poem* reader is the contemplation, from the threshold<sup>23</sup>, of the face

<sup>18</sup> "In Duecento, the Western apostasy of changing the orthodox canon leveled, for the first time, *the One Church's canon with the style of an era*. This fact led to the alteration of the ecclesiastic canon and, finally, to its disposal as any expired cultural product." (Sorin Dumitrescu, „Iconoclasmul latin. Schisma schismei din duecento și schimbarea dreptarului Bisericii Romano-Catolice” în *op. cit.*, p. 160).

<sup>19</sup> L. Vorontsova, *Icoana Maicii Domnului – „RugulAprins”*, at

[http://www.crestinortodox.ro/comunitate/blog.php?user=Christfollower&blogentry\\_id=3169](http://www.crestinortodox.ro/comunitate/blog.php?user=Christfollower&blogentry_id=3169), accessed at 08.11.2012.

<sup>20</sup> "Knowing about St. Paul's adage (...) eliminates any trace of ambiguity, The Father being the one in the center of the icon, as it is in Tradition, but whom, now, in the Holy of Holies, is blessing His Son's Blood looking at His Eucharistic hypostasis before He, the one in the right, descends into Hell and resurrects «in the grave with His Body». Shortly, before Rubliov the traditional Holy Trinity had an Old Testament source (*Genesis*, 18) and Rubliov's Trinity used a New Testament's one (*Hebrews*, 9, 21; 10, 20)." (Sorin Dumitrescu, *op. cit.*, p. 46).

<sup>21</sup> "(...) theologian is not the one who gets a diploma from The Faculty of Theology. Theologian is the one who hears inside the voice of God, the Word, speaking ([*o theos logos*])." (Efrem de la Vatoped, *Conferință ținută la Facultatea de Teologie*, București, 2000, at <http://www.razbointrucuvant.ro/2012/01/12/>, accessed at 13.04.2012).

<sup>22</sup> Sf. Ioan Damaschin, *Dogmatica*, Editura Institutului Biblic și de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, București, 2001, pp. 214-215.

<sup>23</sup> "To the icon maker, the icon is not a flat surface but a tridimensional space. This plane has the solid structure of the *threshold* – a paradoxical space whose depth fills the interval between *inside* and *outside*. Being given the chance to inhabit a living space which conserves their identity and, much important, facilitates the proximity regardless of the ontological distance which sets them apart, the forms from *here* and those from *the other side* can / are consenting to meet in the perimeter of the icon. Thus, the icon could be seen as a *mantelpiece* belonging both worlds, that unfolding before our eyes and the unseen one, an *interval-strip* from which we can see and be seen." (Sorin Dumitrescu, *op. cit.*, p. 252).

looking at us and welcoming, as a result of our efforts into finding Him or just because something in us pleases His eyes.

Now, taking deeper Zoe Dumitrescu-Buşulenga's analysis regarding the dialogue between Shakespeare's sonnet *LIV* and Voiculescu's sonnet *CLXXV (21)*, we are trying to exemplify what was mentioned previously in this paper, about the *icon-poem*. "In the sonnets *V, VI* and *LIV* of the English poet who adds the truth to the beauty, the ending brings a comparison with the rose, into the same field of the preservation of essences through art: «Sweet roses do not so; Of their sweet deaths are sweetest odors made; / And, so of you, beauteous and lovely youth, / When that shall fade, my verse distills your truth». The Romanian poet, changing the meaning of the image, makes it to refer to the pain of love, to the ordeal endured from the pair loved by him (they are, of course, the young blond man and the dark lady from Shakespeare's poetry)."<sup>24</sup> In Voiculescu's poems the pain is ubiquitous, representing the athanor through which the soul would regain the right to return home: "Love is to be, then, a guise for pain and sorrow? / Another face of it when, maybe, dreams asleep? / Why then it always stays awake inside me, / Without rest even on sweet pleasures pillow?" (*CLXXV – 21*). But who would be the two who are inflicting eternal pain on our poet? "You both tormented me with art in treachery / Like those old hands whom harvest umpteenth roses / In heavy wringers squeezing them and draining / Of sweet perfume, their only thing eternal precious."<sup>25</sup> May they be the same Shakespeare's protagonists, adapted to Voiculescu's poetic universe?

Entering the world of the one in which behalf were crafted psalms<sup>26</sup> dissimulated into imaginary translated sonnets by a high class epigone<sup>27</sup> one could affirm that, at the first sight, the unitary cycle of those 154 sonnets dedicated by Shakespeare to the "androgynous muse"<sup>28</sup> contains the essence of all the possible feelings induced by love, carnal and spiritual, subliming "the northern eagle's", or "divine Brit's" experience during a short period of his life. Dedicated to the mysterious Mr. W. H.<sup>29</sup> (unknown until today even it is supposed to be

---

<sup>24</sup> Zoe Dumitrescu-Buşulenga, „*Ultimele sonete închipuite... în opera lui Vasile Voiculescu*”, prefață la V. Voiculescu, *Ultimele sonete închipuite ale lui Shakespeare în traducere imaginată de V. Voiculescu*, ediție bilingvă, transpunere germană: Immanuel Weissglas, Editura Albatros, București, 1974, p. 19.

<sup>25</sup> V. Voiculescu, *Opera literară. Poezia*, Editura Cartex 2000, București, 2004, p. 581. It seems a good opportunity to remind of Patrick Süskind's novel, *The Perfume* (Editura Humanitas, București, 2000), a novel which was adapted into a movie with great difficulties because of its theme: the creation of the ultimate perfume by distilling maidens, literally, task performed by a monster with a human face and a phenomenal sense of smell, driven by an ideal which determines him to consider suitable any mean in order to attain it.

<sup>26</sup> In an analysis, Ion Oarcăsu considers that Voiculescu's sonnets are "secretive psalms", starting from sonnet *CLXXVI (22)*: "(...) those are my secret psalms, a neverending prayer." (Ion Oarcăsu, *Sonetele – psalmi de taină*, „Tribuna”, an. XI, 1967, nr 43, 26 octombrie în Ion Oarcăsu, *Prezențe poetice*, Editura pentru Literatură, București, 1968, pp. 12-20).

<sup>27</sup> We will come back to this a bit later in this paper, reminding the concept of literature considered as "imaginary translation", a concept theorized by Ștefan-Augustin Doinaș starting from the fertile roots of Voiculescu's idea.

<sup>28</sup> Perpersicius, „Sonetele unei iubiri” studiu introductiv la V. Voiculescu, *Ultimele sonete închipuite ale lui Shakespeare în traducere imaginată de V. Voiculescu*, București, Editura pentru Literatură, 1964, p. IX.

<sup>29</sup> „TO. THE. ONLIE. BEGETTER. OF. THESE. ISSUING. SONNETS. Mr. W. H. ALL. HAPPISESE. AND. THAT. ETERNITIE. PROMISED. BY. OVR. EVER. LIVING. POET. WISHETH. THE. WELL. WISHING. ADVENTURER. IN. SETTING. FORTH. TT.” (<http://www.shakespeares-sonnets.com/dedication>, Copyright 2001-2011 © of this site belongs to Oxquarry Books Ltd.). The ambiguity of this dedication caused much trouble among the critics. The “begetter” word's semantic richness included the idea of inspirer, along with that of creator, co-participant to the act of creation. The word is not being used nowadays as a noun, the dictionaries

William Herbert, Earl of Pembroke, the one to whom Shakespeare already dedicated the *First Folio* edition, or Henry Wriothesley, Earl of Southampton<sup>30</sup>), the sonnets contain a love triangle formed by “the blond young man” (the one who is the protagonist of 126 sonnets), “the dark lady” (promiscuous, mysterious and cruel) and the poet himself.<sup>31</sup> But, the major differences between the two works of art, taking into account the language barriers either, are pointed out by Roxana Sorescu: “This tripartite structure (feminine, masculine, neutral – not in the dual gender sense but in that of not having a gender) it is possible in Romanian language but nearly impossible in English. It is an important distinction towards the symbolical structure of Shakespeare’s sonnets, where we have three characters: the man, the woman and the poet, linked by love to the other two whom are supposed to be in love (on the premise of two sonnets). In Voiculescu’s sonnets we have a larger range of characters: the woman, the man, the Genderless, the poet - linked by love to all three of them -, but also the Other, a character who could be named as the Inspirer, a character on whom the poet is tied by love, total obedience and infinite admiration. He is never named and we could identify him as Shakespeare or Grace, God’s Grace, Who’s ubiquitous, beyond space and time, in all its apparent hypostasis.”<sup>32</sup> Moreover, Perpessicius also observes the fact that Voiculescu “carries forward, seemingly, as the sonnets numbering implies (CLV - CCXLIV), the suggestions of that rib (talking about Eve, the term is proper) from the Shakespearian cycle devoted to the Dark Lady, substituted here with the Brown Lady. Specifications are excessive, anyway, and meant to lead anyone astray instead of clearing the path. Refined work of an experienced craftsman, adorned with so many memorable verses, inlaid with infinite art, often using, on the steps of his genius antecessor, the classic allegory or the unraveled comparison (as the moon phases in the *Sonnet* CCXIII), Voiculescu’s sonnets, if imitate here and there, are no parody nor pastiche.”<sup>33</sup> Referring to the same subject, Adrian Marino seems to support Perpessicius’s opinion: “Was there the intention of continuing, making a pastiche after him? It seems like it at a first sight. But, as one progresses in reading, one realizes that permanently pertaining V. Voiculescu to Shakespeare seems senseless. The substance of his poetry is, for the most part, scarcer than that of the «northern eagle genius’», different, anyway, and concentrated exclusively on the erotic side. It is true that, sometimes, V. Voiculescu adopts a kind of «Shakespearian» tone, as the granddaughter could affectionately wear grandma’s old brocade frock admiring herself in the mirror with curiosity and coquetry. But she soon realizes that it not suits her and drops it. It is precisely what the poet does. With a surprisingly

---

showing it as a verb only, “beget”: 1. Formal – to cause something to happen or be created; 2. an old word meaning «to become the father of a child»” <http://www.macmillandictionary.com/dictionary/british/beget>.

<sup>30</sup> Rolfe, W. J. Ed. *Who was "Mr. W. H."?*. From *Shakespeare's Sonnets*. New York: American Book Company, 1905. *Shakespeare Online*. Accessed at 27.11.2012. <http://www.shakespeare-online.com/sonnets/whowaswh.html>.

<sup>31</sup> Mabillard, Amanda. *Introduction to Shakespeare's Sonnets*. *Shakespeare Online*. accessed at 12.09.2012 <http://www.shakespeare-online.com/sonnets/sonnetintroduction.html>.

<sup>32</sup> Roxana Sorescu, „Eros și magie în spirit renescentist”, prefață la V. Voiculescu, *Ultimele sonete ale lui Shakespeare. Traducere imaginară*, tabel cronologic, prefață și referițe critice de Roxana Sorescu, Editura Art, București, 2010, p. 59.

<sup>33</sup> Perpessicius, *op. cit.* în V. Voiculescu, *Ultimele sonete închipuite ale lui Shakespeare în traducere imaginară de V. Voiculescu*, București, Editura pentru Literatură, 1964, pp. X-XI.

personal, vibrating temperament and a grave, almost rough, erotic sensibility, he overtakes, in his moments of true attainment, any reminiscences.”<sup>34</sup>

Back on track, after this short underlining of the uselessness of a comparative endeavor, we will deal with the symbol which links the sonnets pointed out by Zoe Dumitrescu-Buşulenga, the rose. Obvious symbol of love, the rose represents, in Christian iconography, “either the chalice in which dripped the blood of Christ, the transfiguration of those drips or the symbol of Christ’s wounds.”<sup>35</sup> Likewise, relevant for this interpretation is another aspect of rose’s symbolism: “Accordingly to F. Portal, the rose and its pink color could represent a symbol of regeneration, taking into account the semantic relationship between the Latin *rosa*, *rose*, and *ros*, *dew*, *rain*. *The rose and the pink color*, says he (Pors 218), *were the symbols of the first step of regeneration and initiation in mysteries*.<sup>36</sup> Therefore, we will observe that the spiritual dialogue is sustained by the Romanian poet accordingly to the principles which will be exposed later in this paper. The last verses of the sonnet *CLXXV (21)*, “And rose’s grace fills all whom will be touched... / So will be I, by yours relentless tortures, / Through gift of poetry distilled in verses / From now embalming you in aeon’s fragrance”, could evoke the empty tomb of Christ guarded by the angel after the Savior’s body ascended in the Holy of Holies. The Christ figure assumed here by Voiculescu is suggested by “rose’s grace” phrase, being known the fact that, after Christ’s “death”, the Holy Grace works on our decayed world’s level. Besides, who could be the ultimate poetry if not He whom creates (*poiesis*) and continues the world. Indeed, the pain is a perpetual “guise of love”, His love for the representatives of fallen humanity, the young man and the Dark Lady (who became the Brown Lady in Voiculescu’s sonnets), Adam and Eve, ultimately. According to Sorin Dumitrescu, “the tradition of Weeping / Requiem / Burial icons, which are praising Christ’s funeral, requests to color in pink the heaven-sepulchre of God’s Resurrection. Many are considering these heaven-sepulchres from the icons of the Holy Week as medieval icon makers’ licenses regarding the ecclesiastical canon.”<sup>37</sup> Jean Chevalier and Alain Gheerbrant are also revealing the fact that, in the 7<sup>th</sup> century, “Beda says that *Jesus Christ’s sepulchre was painted with a mix of white and red color*. This two constitutive elements of the pink color – the red and the white – appear with their traditional symbolic value, on all the levels, from the profane one to the sacred; in the distinction which is made between the offerings of white and red roses, as in the difference between the notions of passion and purity, on the one hand, and of transcendent love and divine thoughtfulness, on the other.”<sup>38</sup> The vanishing points of Voiculescu’s sonnets, as in the icon, are taking our sight downwards, into the depth, onto the threshold where we are welcomed by the look of Him Who permitted us the view of the empty sepulcher as an advance vision of “the ultimate view of our tombs at the term of the Second Coming.”<sup>39</sup> “Embalmed” in the fragrance of poetry’s

---

<sup>34</sup> Adrian Marino, *Opera postumă a lui V. Voiculescu: Ultimele sonete închipuite ale lui Shakespeare* în „Contemporanul”, Bucureşti, an. XIX, nr. 6, 5 februarie, 1965, p. 3.

<sup>35</sup> Jean Chevalier, Alain Gheerbrant, *Dicţionar de simboluri. Mituri, vise, obiceiuri, gesturi, forme, figuri, culori, numere*, vol. 3, P-Z Editura Artemis, Bucureşti, 1995, p. 176.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 177.

<sup>37</sup> Sorin Dumitrescu, *op. cit.*, p. 266.

<sup>38</sup> Jean Chevalier, Alain Gheerbrant, *op. cit.*, p. 177.

<sup>39</sup> Sorin Dumitrescu, *op. cit.*, p. 272.

creative gift, life distilled into the pain's athanor, the protagonists of Voiculescu's sonnets would face the decay inflicted by time on any existing thing belonging to this world.

Arriving at our second objective, following Mihail Șora's ideas about dialogue and understanding, we can observe that the true communication<sup>40</sup> occurs only when the subjects are "free", meaning that they should be able to express only what their conscience would allow and not something which is not compatible with their internal structure. There is no need to insist on this matter regarding the dialogue between our two poets' art works. Another condition, according to Mihail Șora, is subject's "equality in dignity", meaning that both of them have to rise to the higher level of their stature which is prefigured in the "to-be-potentiality" which radiates from the point of convergence of the "Universal potentiality". Because history put them on different levels of visibility, the principle of "irreducibility" (one subject of a dialogue should not be reducible to the other) would not work, the result being a monologue disguised in dialogue, an "alignment" meant to assume a position which would enclose one of the partners' freedom, forcing him / her to adopt a direction which is not in his / hers nature to take. From here, one could make a link with Harold Bloom's "anxiety of influence"<sup>41</sup> and with Ștefan-Augustin Doinaș' idea of Voiculescu as a "major epigone". If it is to fit Voiculescu in one of the revisionist rapports theorized by Bloom we should choose a combination of *clinamen*, *tessera* and *demonization*, with emphasis on the latter, because our "epigone"<sup>42</sup> completes master's work on a "higher" level, his "imaginary translation" becoming "the geometric point of a cultural encounter: the reviving of an old pattern, the actualization of some spiritual potentialities by molding into this pattern an authentic lyrical feeling, a unique experience."<sup>43</sup> Ștefan-Augustin Doinaș continues saying that for the major *epigones* "the creative spirit of an admired predecessor shows itself as an *invisible text*, inscribed into the culture of humanity. Writing *as the master would write*, if he lived instead of them, they are realizing a work of art which prolongs in time the spirit of the model, creating, thus, what Voiculescu names an *imaginary translation*: a work of art having an unchallengeable personal value, which acknowledges a spiritual bond with the model, ensuring for it a kind of «inner life»."<sup>44</sup> According to the essayist, this imaginary translation,

---

<sup>40</sup> We are talking here about the dialogue between Shakespeare's and Voiculescu's cycle of sonnets.

<sup>41</sup> Starting from Shakespeare, either – "A Shakespearian reading of Freud, which I always prefer to a Freudian reading of Shakespeare, or anyone else", shows us that Freud suffered of Hamlet complex (the real name of the Oedipus complex), or of an anxiety of influence regarding Shakespeare." (Harold Bloom, *Anxietatea influenței. O teorie a poeziei*, Editura Paralela 45, Pitești, 2008, p. 20) –, a writer whose mark affected posterity, the theorist explains the process: "(...) the strong poem is the fulfilled anxiety (...). Above all, matters (...) the fact that the anxiety of influence comes out from a complex act of «strong» misinterpretation, a creative interpretation which I call «poetic misprision». What writers could express represents the consequence of the poetic misprision rather than its cause. A major or «strong» misinterpretation is the first step; it has to be a profound act of the reading which is a kind of falling in love with the literary work. This kind of reading is probably idiosyncratic, even if its ambivalence could be dissimulated." (Harold Bloom, *op. cit.*, pp. 20-21).

<sup>42</sup> We are using this term without its negative connotation (pejorative even, so evident in Eminescu's works, for example) and in the light of that meaning which comes from ancient Greek mythology, *Epigonoii* being the sons of the seven kings who went to siege Thebes and six of them died during their attempt. Starting a new expedition, the *Epigonoii* would succeed in conquering Thebes, avenging the deaths of their fathers and thus proving themselves worthier. The myth is revived by Șt.-Aug. Doinaș when he theorizes the concept of "major epigonism" or "imaginary translation". (Șt. Aug. Doinaș, *Eseuri*, Editura Eminescu, București, 1996, pp. 133-144). See also note no 1.

<sup>43</sup> Ștefan-Augustin Doinaș, *Orfeu și tentația realului*, Editura Eminescu, București, 1974, p. 194.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 193.



this major epigonism, confers to the author of the model work of art the only aura from which he have not yet benefited, that of the reviving from the own ashes, as the Phoenix. “The drama of the model work, as a spiritual act, resides in its limitation: Shakespeare wrote 154 sonnets, and not one more. The Shakespearian spirit, revived into an epigone like V. Voiculescu, breaks – so speaking – the quantitative limitation of the British text, adding to it another 90 Romanian sonnets. In this way, the great Will’s poetic work abolishes a part of its own exile, lives a new life, parallel with that ensured by the radiation of the initial text.”<sup>45</sup>

Going forward, and according to Mihail Şora, a dialogue’s protagonists are placed, each of them, into a tripartite opening: horizontally, towards the World and one towards the other; vertically, towards the World of Values which is to be reached with the self fulfillment of dialogue’s subject. The fourth possible dimension which could be added to this tripartite opening is the inner one, the convergence into the zone of the “intermediate potentialities” or, even further, towards the “Universal potentiality” which includes all of them.<sup>46</sup> The question here is if that fourth dimension of the dialogue, the inner one, opened in the case of the communication between our poets’ cycles of sonnets, because it is obvious that the opening works on the first three levels. And it seems that this fourth opening operates if we keep in mind what Ştefan-Augustin Doinaş pointed out regarding the imaginary translation, namely the fact that the cycle of Voiculescu’s sonnets defines the geometrical space of a cultural convergence. Correlated with Nicolai Berdiaev’s affirmation<sup>47</sup>, we can affirm that, from the dialogue started formally, through the opening towards those four levels discussed above, it is reached the communion in spirit between our two poets’ works of art. The consequence of this communion is the birth of the *icon-poem* where, arriving on the threshold driven by the élan of the positive *Eros*<sup>48</sup>, our sight could be welcomed by the merciful and caressing *Agapè*. And that would be because “(...) we know and have believed the love which God hath in us. God is love; and he that abideth in love abideth in God, and God abideth in him.” (*I John*, 4, 16).

Taking an overview, with the help from some Romanian critics who pointed out the resemblances and, more important, the differences between the works of the two sonnets authors, we tried in this short paper to reveal the way in which constitutes itself the iconicity of Voiculescu’s literary creation, on the one hand, and to establish if, through the dialogue across centuries, it is reached the communion in spirit between these works of art, on the other. Thus, using Zoe Dumitrescu-Buşulenga’s analysis, the one who points out the substitution of Shakespeare’s image of beauty and truth, distilled in poetry like rose’s perfume kept in “crystals”, with that of Voiculescu’s eternal pain, we aimed, through rose’s symbolism, to reveal that, by the convergence, on the threshold, of the vanishing points of the sonnet *CVXXV (21)* arises the image of Savior’s empty sepulchre, a promise of Resurrection with the body made to the man who persists in his faith. Voiculescu’s art, as Constantin Jinga underlines, stylized the fruitful dialogue with the Shakespearian works of art, taking through the ennobling eternal and accepted pain’s filter common elements of the poetic universe of

---

<sup>45</sup> Ştefan-Augustin Doinaş, *Eseuri*, ed. cit., p. 136.

<sup>46</sup> Mihail Şora, *A fi, a face, a avea*, Editura Humanitas, Bucureşti, 2006, pp. 178-188.

<sup>47</sup> See note no. 13, p. 3.

<sup>48</sup> And not just that “in part love, carnal and distracted, which is not the true love.” (Dionisie Ps. Areopagitul, *Despre Numele divine*, IV, 12).

love. “Rose’s Grace” suffering on the shrine of the love for the people is the promise of distance’s<sup>49</sup> proximity.

### **Bibliography:**

- Anania, Valeriu, *Din spumele mării*, Editura Dacia, Cluj-Napoca, 1995.
- Bachelard, Gaston, *Poetica reveriei*, trad. de Luminița Brăileanu, Editura Paralela 45, Pitești, 2005.
- Bloom, Harold, *Anxietatea influenței. O teorie a poeziei*, Editura Paralela 45, Pitești, 2008.
- Chevalier, Jean. Gheerbrant, Alain, *Dicționar de simboluri. Mituri, vise, obiceiuri, gesturi, forme, figuri, culori, numere*, vol. 3, P-Z Editura Artemis, București, 1995.
- Damaschin, Sf. Ioan, *Dogmatica*, Editura Institutului Biblic și de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, București, 2001.
- Doinaș, Ștefan-Augustin, *Eseuri*, Editura Eminescu, București, 1996.
- Doinaș, Ștefan-Augustin, *Orfeu și tentația realului*, Editura Eminescu, București, 1974.
- Dumitrescu, Sorin, *Noi și icoana. 31+1 iconologii pentru învățarea icoanei*, Editura Anastasia, București, 2010.
- Jinga, Constantin, *Biblia și sacrul în literatură*, Editura Universității de Vest, colecția episteme [2] Timișoara, 2001.
- Mabillard, Amanda. *Introduction to Shakespeare's Sonnets*. *Shakespeare Online*. 20 Aug. 2000. (accessed at 09.12.2012), <http://www.shakespeare-online.com/sonnets/sonnetintroduction.html>.
- Marino, Adrian, *Opera postumă a lui V. Voiculescu: Ultimele sonete închipuite ale lui Shakespeare în „Contemporanul”*, București, an. XIX, nr. 6, 5 februarie, 1965.
- Marion, Jean-Luc, *Idolul și distanța*, trad. de Daniela Pălășan, Tinca Prunea-Bretonnet, coord. Cristian Ciocan, Editura Humanitas, București, 2007.
- Oarcăsu, Ion, *Prezențe poetice*, Editura pentru Literatură, București, 1968.
- Papadima, Ovidiu, *Peisajul interior din poezia lui V. Voiculescu în „Gândirea”*, București, an XXII, nr. 7, august – septembrie, 1943.
- Șora, Mihail, *A fi, a face, a avea*, Editura Humanitas, București, 2006.
- Voiculescu, V., *Ultimele sonete închipuite ale lui Shakespeare în traducere imaginară de V. Voiculescu*, București, Editura pentru Literatură, 1964.
- Voiculescu, V., *Ultimele sonete închipuite ale lui Shakespeare în traducere imaginară de V. Voiculescu*, ediție bilingvă, transpunere germană: Immanuel Weissglas, Editura Albatros, București, 1974.
- Voiculescu, V., *Opera literară. Poezia*, Editura Cartex 2000, București, 2004.

---

<sup>49</sup> “Therefore, the distance, as di-stance, says: only duality allows thanksgiving, communion increases with the length from which one regards the other. Di-stance: becomes my fellow only he who gets forever out of me and my personas. It is with me only the one who stands before me. (...) The definition of the distance defines us as one of its terms and therefore is eluding us to the other precisely in that moment when it exerts attraction. The Other, intimately a stranger, disappears precisely in its apparition and defines itself as the indefinite. No image, no concept and no negation of some image or concept suits the unthinkable and does not reveal him. If we approach the distance rigorously, one of the terms becomes unapproachable. (Jean-Luc Marion, *Idolul și distanța*, Editura Humanitas, București, 2007, pp. 277-278).

Voiculescu, V., *Ultimele sonete închipuite ale lui Shakespeare. Traducere imaginară, tabel cronologic, prefață și referințe critice* de Roxana Sorescu, Editura Art, București, 2010.  
Voronțova, L., *Icoana Maicii Domnului – „Rugul Aprins”*, (accessed at 08.11.2012),  
[http://www.crestinortodox.ro/comunitate/blog.php?user=Christfollower&blogentry\\_id=3169](http://www.crestinortodox.ro/comunitate/blog.php?user=Christfollower&blogentry_id=3169).

*This work was partially supported by the strategic grant POSDRU/CPP107/DMI1.5/S/80272, Project ID80272 (2010), co-financed by the European Social Fund-Investing in People, within the Sectorial Operational Programme Human Resources Development 2007-2013.*