

**BOOK REVIEWS by Al. Cistelean / Iulian Boldea / Doina Butiurcă*****The Masks of M. I. - Gabriel Liiceanu in dialogue with Mircea Ivănescu / Măștile lui M. I. - Gabriel Liiceanu în dialog cu Mircea Ivănescu, Editura Humanitas, București, 2012***

A confrontation between Liiceanu and Mircea Ivanescu, even in the tender form of a dialogue, seems not only unthinkable (supposing it has been performed), but truly unacceptable. The reason for this lies in the disproportion of forces and discordance of *ethos* between the two, to the point where they seem to exclude any chance of cohabitation in / through dialogue. Needless to say, a collaboration of any kind seems just as impossible. As a matter of fact, Gabriel Liiceanu himself realized he was dealing with something almost impossible, since he sets as a premise (in the foreword) the fact that they were living “on extremely distant cultural continents” (p. 5). And still, it is not the cultural “distance” (that might have not been as large as Mircea Ivanescu was simulating) that generates this (yet!) exorcised “impossibility”, but the structural and attitudinal antagonism of the two; on one side, you have this “dogmatic” of the inflexible principles and of “hard” morality, while on the other there is a relativist who dissolves everything in doubt and insignificance (and first of all dissolves himself). What confrontation might result between an individual that is certain of himself and of the correctness of his own gestures and one that is shy and never certain that he even exists, not to mention unable to support an idea or to build an attitude? Between a “fundamentalist” of rigor and a relativist who is only vaguely more consistent than an absence?! Obviously, though, the dialogue is not exactly a fight, especially since this one (‘‘Măștile lui M. I. Gabriel Liiceanu în dialog cu Mircea Ivănescu’’, Editura Humanitas, București, 2012) is performed under the conventions of an interview and therefore Gabriel Liiceanu is interested to get as much as possible out of M. Ivanescu, having to prove enough strategic flexibility as well as attitudinal slenderness. But regardless of the concessions imposed by the genre and goal of the dialogue, the positions remain clearly outbalanced. Even if M. Ivanescu would have been in the greatest shape of his best day (if something like that had ever existed) of his life, the confrontation with Gabriel Liiceanu would still have resembled the one between a ferocious hawk and a poor mouse. Not to mention that, in fact, M. Ivanescu was on his deathbed and living his last days of agony. Obviously, I wasn’t imagining that Gabriel Liiceanu would take him by the throat (exactly then) in order to pull out the secret of the existence, to force him into becoming a „confessor” (Liiceanu is still human, in spite of the fame others try to make around him), but his questions couldn’t have been petting or purely sparing. However, someone who comes with questions and with the hope to get out of the interlocutor as much as possible from his mystery remains an aggressor. And, anyway, Mircea Ivanescu, even if not aggressed by anything, was still a victim (his poetry is also the diary of heroless victimity). To be honest, I felt sorry for poor Ivanescu from the beginning, picturing him being followed through all the corners by Liiceanu’s fierce and

imperative questions, by his radical summons. The scenario of this confrontation could only have been irremediably and eminently unfair: on one side Liiceanu's trenchant spirit, on the other – Mircea Ivanescu's continuous evanescence; on one side, Liiceanu's ultimate breakagerness, on the other – M. Ivanescu with his shadowy consistence; Liiceanu's rigor and abrupt directness raiding over Ivanescu's fragile nuances and his perpetual refuge from a nuance into the other. The poet had, obviously, no chance: no other than that of the leaf of grass standing in front of a tank.

However, if I think better, what other "opponent" would be more suitable for Gabriel Liiceanu than Mircea Ivanescu?! Where would his ultimate fusillades prove to be more useless than in this confrontation with a shadow protected by an armour made of wool? And not of a layer of wool, but of shadows of wool? No matter how many arrows and how patetic Liiceanu fired, they would all fly in the abyss, failing to hit the master of dodging that the poet was. If, at the end, somebody was to experience a feeling of futility, of the uselessness of the assault, it would certainly be the philosopher and not the poet. Basically, Liiceanu was chasing a shadow and hunting a chimera. Therefore the virtual feeling of compassion would have to be equally shared by the two.

The fact that they poet is going to also apply to the dialogue the parenthetical tactic and dodging strategy from his poetry, continuously deviating from the course, is immediately obvious, from the first clash / question, however innocent it might appear to be (but Liiceanu was not aware that he would touch the most profound and incurable of the poet's wounds). Asked to develop his first memories, the poet makes a quick dodge and initiates a comment on Stalin's death, taking as a pretext one of Stelian Tanase's TV shows (p. 28 sqs.). When it comes to this type of things, that only regard him partially, he discusses as much as possible with the sensuousness – and art – by which he also dismantles into baroque arabesques the states, in his poetry, escaping from one pretext to the other and from one undefinition to the next. So that Gabriel Liiceanu, if he truly wants to get to something, must prove extreme tenacity and catch him from where he runs in order to bring him in front of the lost or suspended question. It's true that Liiceanu actually stimulates his "deviationism", being so certain of his own tenacity and patience. This running away from the question, the detour through all kinds of stuff, the tolerated or even encouraged twists and turns and then the return of the question assure the authenticity of the dialogue but also the playful script in which Liiceanu pretends to lose the poet's trail (or to follow him on the intentionally complicated paths) only to wait for him on the first corner (and Liiceanu himself speaks of this playful convention of the dialogue in the foreword). There is a certain game in this dialogue, but it has a dramatic background (it's also a gesture of delicacy from Liiceanu to accept, even temporarily, this game of hide and seek and confusion). Anyway, if Liiceanu ever imagined that he would easily get a final confession and then give the absolution, he was wrong: the poet is vigorous enough in his dodging and highly inventive in deviating pretexts. I also think that he wasn't fond of the intrinsic pathetism of the topos itself: he wouldn't accept the dialogue as a cathartic, saving, confession. Although he was dying, he rejected the specific

rhetoric of the *extrema in morte*. And, of course, if he had escaped, he would continue to blather in all the five rounds of the dialogue about the weather (since he was, as a poet, an academic of the meteorological nuances). But Liiceanu obviously doesn't get carried away by these shifts of modesty and humility and often, in order to end them, has to use the pincers and show himself more unrelenting in directness that he actually was (there are some stimulatingly played "angers" that are offered as satisfaction to the poet who, of course, was looking exactly for this). Since there is no other Romanian poet more skillful in crumbling any seed of pathetism, it is no wonder that M. Ivanescu refuses the pathetic aspect of the situation he was in. This is a consistency of Poetics that is kept until death. As well as a full concordance between the ethos of the existence and that of poetry.

But one shouldn't exclude the hypothesis that the poet actually wanted to be forced to confess and that all his strategies of refuge and refusal were no more than a test of the honest interest for his own confession. It might be (is it really?!) why he simulates from time to time his surprise in front of the development of the confession ("But I see that I end up speaking of myself...", p. 42) and he tests the tenacity and intensity of the interest in it ("... and, how should I put it, it is a thing that I neither like nor believe to be interesting"). If this is the case (and nothing is certain if we consider the perverse subtlety of M. Ivanescu's poetry), then Liiceanu has clearly managed to pass all the tests of honesty and implication in the dialogue. Anyway, the dialogue achieves some revelations that are fully equal to the spirit of Ivanescu's poetry but, above all, emphasize the tragic layer it is extracted from (and I am not referring, obviously, to the "late revelation" brought shockingly by the subtitle: "I was an undercover officer"; this is one of the self-humiliation and self-impeachment games of M. Ivanescu in which Gabriel Liiceanu allows him to stay for too long). I refer to the truly painful part of the confession, the one where he talks about his sister's death (that had taken place a year before the poet was born) and about his brother's suicide; but especially of his existential feeling of being a substitute, a simulacrum. "A appeared in the world – says M. Ivanescu – to fill a gap, as a compensation" (p. 32) and he lived "under the strange feeling" that he was doing it "somehow on behalf of the dead brothers" (p. 48). He had, therefore, a destiny of mourning ("all my life I had to burry something", p. 49), that he tried to dissimulate ("it seems that I am a funny guy that laughs a lot", p. 48). This profound existential causality justifies the litany rhythmicity of his poetry, the monody of absence that lies in the core of his Poetics. Maybe even his condition of an absent from history ("In a way I have lived, almost all the time, like I were absent from the world", p. 65), of an irrelevant and insignificant witness. The childhood traumas relativize any other dramatic feeling and Liiceanu tries in vain to make him admit that he was wrong by joining a "party stained with blood": "What does the formal adhesion to a party mean when you experience during childhood what I tried to recount to you?" (p. 77). The eventual "moral" drama Liiceanu is looking for could by no means amplify the "existential" and destinal drama of the poet. A confrontation between rigor and relativism develops quite largely from this

point forward, but at the same time it undermines the entire dialogue. Fortunately, Liiceanu does not turn the dialogue into a symposium (their positions were, anyway, irreconcilable and, according to M. Ivanescu, negotiations are pointless since “each one perceives the world from the angle he is in”, p. 65) and thus the debate moves into the underground of the memory narratives, with enough anecdotic features and delicious fragments.

Of course, Liiceanu’s “theme” was not mainly “the poet”, but his confession as a man who had crossed an entire history. But “the poet” cannot be marginalized in the dialogue, at least for the fact that M. Ivanescu was only a “poet”, and one that “(I) was never convinced of the fact that I was a poet” (p. 149). He belonged, therefore, to a very rare, if not unique, species. One might hardly imagine more self-inconsideration than the one showed by M. Ivanescu to the poet that he was. First he boasts about having writing his texts in response to the orders or bets made with Ion Draganoiu (p. 88) and then he declares himself a simple versifier (“I am no more than a versifier”, p. 150). And, to emphasize the self-pejoration, he declines and creative feeling: “Be serious, sir! I only had the awareness of duty, induced by the bet I had made” (p. 154). This insistence to maintain childish declarations drives Liiceanu crazy; but Liiceanu also manages to grate on Ivanescu’s nerves and obtains some fundamental phrases regarding his Poetics: “my principle in poetry was not to lie”, “not to say anything that I couldn’t assume” (p. 155), breaking the wire of what he calls “the Stylistics of self-persiflage” (p. 157). Of all the trenches dug by Mircea Ivanescu around his intimacy, the ones surrounding his poetry are the most impenetrable. He would under no circumstances accept a more serious perspective upon his own poetry. I would dare say that such a grimly attitude translate a hidden – a too-well hidden – feeling of sacrality that mustn’t be violated, of religiosity that mustn’t be displayed. Maybe there is only one moment when the voice of an outrageously pent pride is heard when, brought back by Liiceanu to the theme of poetry, he says: “I never accepted to write poetry where to narrate trifles or lies” (p. 215). It is a sentence that makes the sacrifice of all the twists and wanderings that lead to it worthwhile. Because, at least apparently, Mircea Ivanescu’s poetry seems to “narrate” exactly that kind of stuff, drawing a strategy of gossip in which “the truth /... / related to my life” is encrypted (p. 216). This is a key-sentence, which may stand on the basis of a new perspective of interpretation. Eventually, the poet did not manage to escape from Liiceanu and maybe this had always been his secret wish: not to be overlooked: “I hope, nevertheless, that you will not get out of your hand, like the ribbon from Henric’s sleeve”, (p. 224.) An extremely vivid Ivanescu in a deeply pleasant and genuinely empathetic book (because it assumes its antagonies), this is what Gabriel Liiceanu has achieved through this revelatory dialogue.

## AI. CISTELECAN

George Banu, *The Trilogy of the Removal: The Rest, the Night, the Oblivion / Trilogia îndepărtării. Odihna, noaptea, uitarea* (Cartea Românească, 2010)

The most known Romanian theatre writer of the moment, George Banu is the supporter of the type of writing where the print of the essayistic style is prevailing. George Banu's recent publication, *The trilogy of the removal: the rest, the night, the oblivion* (Romanian Book Publishing House Ed, 2010) folds itself on such a stylistic dominant, the author reuniting quotations, impressions, confessions, with a diverse theme, which is generally put under the sign of the *removal*. *The rest*, the first part of the book, is constructed on the principles of the lexical structuring, being marked by the formulas of the firm definitions, by the correlations and the association of terms, notions and semantic nuances, sometimes of the paradox kind („The rest calls for the courage to assume the absence from within the people; the courage of being forgotten by the others“). The semantic field of the rest has its stake both on the beneficial resources and the negative ones of the term (the courage of the rest, the tradition of the rest, interval, as a rest in the denouement of the theatrical spectacle, etc.). George Banu also insists on the functions of the rest, ranging from the recovery ones, the holiday or the remedy to those of social sanction, of intellectual comfort or of secured space marked by a feeling of peace, of interior peace or of a temporary anaesthesia in the tumult of a disorganised reality, even if, it attracts the attention of the essayist, within the commerce of the intellect with its own resources and limits, a certain communicational difficulty can intervene („on a long term, the rest «by Himself » proves to be practically impossible: his own companionship is difficult to bear!"). The rest is, as the author mentions it, an antidote to the incontinence waste, of the entropic dissolution in fortuitous forms and multiple activities, capable of abolishing the identity dynamic of the self. On one hand, the remoteness, the detachment from the daily spectacle represent a way to find again the self, to adjust the personal feelings to the requirements of the moment, to adequate the gestures and the attitudes to revelations, assumed by their own identity structures. What is also beneficial, in the economy of George Banu's book, is represented by the references to the plastic arts (Caravaggio, Delacroix, Van Gogh, Magritte, etc), to the different literary works, especially to the theatre, with its potential of significances and symbols.

On the other hand, one must notice that the reflexions of the essayist regarding the rest are not situated only in a theoretical or philosophical horizon. On the contrary, they are legitimated also by the confessional nature that the sentences acquire, by the emotional load the words imply, by the evocative reverberations of the phrase: „When I want to take a rest I have to sacrifice the theatre. Then I manage, for some time, to fulfil the dream of an unknown Shakespearian character: exasperated by the multitude of roles he was obliged to act, the man only wanted to get rid of them. [...] As this seems difficult to achieve for the rest of his life, I have at least those rare moments where I *rest*



from the theatre. Even if you love the theatre it is good to take some distance from it, every now and then; both from the social one and from the artistic one.”

The second part of the book, *The night*, is configured through the appeal to the principle of comparison with dialectical resorts, the nocturnal regime of the being has a healing, completing and regenerating role, but, on the other hand, being associated to some avatars of the clandestineness or of the occult, where abuses, murders and conspiracies can be deciphered. Talking about the nocturnal metamorphoses of the theatre, George Banu underlines the fascination that the nocturnal exerts over the theatre („In the theatre, the night is mostly Shakespearian. From *Macbeth* to the *Dream...* and to *Hamlet*, it gives a feeling of restlessness and anxiety; it never remains neutral, peaceful and serene. Regardless the context, Shakespeare’s night does not allow people to sleep”; „The universal dramaturgy does not lack «nights». (...). «The nights» of the theatre are numerous, confusing and different. We see them again and again and relive them regularly. They are our nights, the nights of the show within us.” The night is also an essential element of the scenery belonging to Wagner’s drama. The essayist’s trips in diverse cultural areas (theatre, philosophy, painting, poetry) are made through a fascinating writing of analogies and correspondences, a writing that combines the allusion and the paradox, the digression and the analytical verve, in an available and mobile style, which also takes advantage of the expressive iridescence of the words, but also of the feelings’ relief, of the ephemeral accidents of the affects.

*The oblivion*, the third part of George Banu’s book benefits of a leading built after all the laws of the narration. The circumstances and the instances of the oblivion are inventoried both in the medical register and in the spiritual one. Even if oblivion blurs or, sometimes, annihilates the past feelings, the past of the human being, it cannot abolish the being’s joy of plenary ceasing the moment. Otherwise, between oblivion and departure, commune semantic inflexions and accents can be identified („In a way, forgetting means leaving, without a destination and without an explicit reason; a traveller without luggage and without landmarks”. The phrase requires, not in a few occasions, the rigid and deep reverberations of the sayings: „We build the memory; we endure the oblivion” or „The lovely holiday of the self (Mallarmé), the oblivion detaches the man from himself”. If the memory validates an ontic identity, it gives the contour of an affective vibration or the relief of a smile, both the oblivion and the distance have the gift of making a gap, of isolating the human being.

The themes juxtaposed by George Banu’s fluid writing in *The Trilogy of the removal: the rest, the night, the oblivion* alternate in a fragmentary, elliptical and supple speech, to philosophical speculation, the aphorism, the quotation, the theoretical commentary or the anecdote, legitimating a superior way of understanding the world and its own existential adventure. George Banu’s writing, fragmentary and allusive, stakes, first and foremost, on the fluidity of the reverie in love with the shapes of the world and of the past’s alluviums, of the memory’ reflexes and the inter-textual iridescence of the

fundamental approached theme: *the removal*. Besides, in an interview, the essayist resized the role and the place of the imagination in the structure of the human personality, stating that “through imagination we do not forget the world, but we find it modified according to our own projections. Our imagination allows us to find the world in this way, as it protects us in order to live it and to know it beyond appearances.” George Banu’s meditations suggest, beyond their idea tic scale, a subtle dialectic of the closeness and distancing, with indisputable ontologic and gnosiological significances. The self placed within the subtle interval of the contraries lucidly assumes its own condition, fairly considering that “to rest means to go on a date with you”, and “finding the authentic, legitimate and deep essence”.

Iulian BOLDEA

Vasile Bahnaru, *The Rise in Decline of the Romanian Language in Basarabia/ Ascensiunea în descensiune a limbii române în Basarabia*, Princeps Edit, Iași, 2011

In 2011 the book written by Vasile Bahnaru (the Director of the A.Ș.M. Philological Institute of Chișinău) entitled “Ascensiunea în descensiune a limbii române în Basarabia” (ISBN : 978-606-523-155-9) was published in Iași in 2011, dedicated to the memory of the Academician Silviu Berejan. The four compartments (Bahnaru, V. Preface) of the volume are: I. Linguistic issues; II. Etymological notes; III. From the history of linguistics; IV. Sociolinguistic issues - polemics, have as a common denominator the study of the Romanian language. The whole volume is an explicitation, a definition of its own conception, just as we read in the debute of the Preface: “Since 1990 we had a certain apprehension, though not always acknowledged, that what I have written regarding the linguistic problems could contain some diversions from the truth, some interpretations being conformist or conjuncturist. On a second reading of articles and studies written in different times I reached the happy conclusion that all of these do not bear the fingerprint of the dominant ideology of these times and as a result this fact has determined me to put together older and more recent studies in a separate volume.” The studies included in the chapter entitled “Linguistic issues” make reference to lexical, semantic, stylistic and grammatical aspects of the vocabulary of the Romanian language. The predilect concept of the study of the chapter is represented by the class of “occasionisms”: “the occasional antonymy”, “lexical occasionisms” (The Bucovinian lexical ocasionisms are created by the author with different purposes - p.25): “neptunizăm, interplanetoplan, lucrurism, lucruristă” (lexical forms excerpted from Em. Bucov’s work) etc. The linguist reports the class of occasional lexems to the different registers of the Romanian language - the stylistic-semantic level, the report of these linguistic facts with the literary language etc. remarking that “in the artistical work the deviation from the existing norms results as a consequence occasional words with certain goals, following aesthetical and well determined

communicative goals, and that is why it is totally justified.” The orthographical fluctuations existing in the Romanian language over the river Prut imposes the foundation of a new concept in the domain, and this is the opinion of the linguist continuing the tradition of innovation proposed by Silviu Berejan in the 80s. The correlation between morphology and lexicology, between transitivity and voice, the semantics of certain lexical units, actual issues regarding the lexicography in the Republic of Moldova are valuable studies encompassed in chapter I. The second compartment entitled Etymological notes incorporated 14 microstudies not of the etymology of certain words but of identifying the semantics of the original etymon with the aim to explicitate and concretize the meaning of these words on the level of evolution of the Romanian language (Bahnaru V. p.8.). The study methodology is varied, the linguist using with the same scientific rigour the comparative method, the comparative-historical method, the contrastive method for words such as: *nebun*, *negoț*, *a scăpăta*, *rost*, *a abandona*, *aberant* (*mad*, *trade*, *to come down in the world*, *backlash*, *to abandon*, *aberrant*) etc. The third compartment, *From the history of linguistics* includes three articles linked to Romanistics in the Republic of Moldova up to 1990. A special place in constituting Romanian and European linguistics was offered by Vasile Bahnaru to the work of Bogdan Petriceicu Hașdeu, in two of his studies: “B.P.Hașdeu în contextul lingvistic european” (B.P.Hașdeu in the European linguistic context) and “B.Petriceicu Hașdeu și problemele dezvoltării lingvisticii moldovenești” (B.Petriceicu Hașdeu and the problems of linguistic development in Moldova). The linguist from Chișinău makes ample references to the encyclopedic preoccupations of the Romanian scholar, to his philological preoccupations on Slavic and Indo-European languages in the domain of etymology and lexicology, sustaining its European value: “Hașdeu was the direct forerunner of the great Swiss linguist, F. de Saussure in several respects: he distinguishes the language in abstracto and the language in concreto, and realizes the diachronic-synchronic distinction etc.” (p. 259). The theory of uninterrupted continuity of dialects, the theory regarding the circulation of linguistic elements, the theory of dialectal discontinuity are other elements in which B.P. Hașdeu imposes himself in European linguistics - based on professor Bahnaru’s opinion. The fourth compartment of the volume is entitled *Sociolinguistic issues* and includes especially studies published in magazines. The attention of the author is drawn upon problems of culture of the Romanian language spoken in Basarabia under the fata influence of “harmonious bilingualism” on the Romanian language from Basarabia. Issues of wooden language, their propagation in the post-totalitarian language use are discussed. In this point the linguist Vasile Bahnaru becomes the authoritative voice, he criticizes the “alleged heroes” of the research of the Romanian language, who in the totalitarian period were “either not known, or managed with prudence their comfortable existence” (p.8.). The polemic spirit is strongly accentuated in the problem of the “Moldavian language”. “Who needs Moldavian language” is the question very much rhetorical, also the subtitle of the article “Between fiction and reality” (320). The author criticizes vehemently the linguistic insertions foreign from the spirit of the Romanian language which gradually make their way in the Romanian language spoken within Basarabia. The lexical patterns, the unspecific linguistic calques, the



cumbrous syntactical constructions are all dangerous. The fundamental concept of the book is that of the “Romanian language in the Republic of Moldova” and it rejects the idea of the “Moldavian language”.

**Doina BUTIURCĂ**