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Radu Vancu and Vasile Leac***

The main stream poetry of the 2000 generation in Romanian poetry is considered to belong to the neo-expressionism. Its claimed roots can be found in the extensions of expressionism in the Romanian literature. These extensions do not represent the mainstream poetry of the '80, the generation of Romanian poets who write before the 2000 generation. However there are voices, like Radu Vancu and V.Leac whose poetry is different because they claim different cultural sources than their colleagues of generation. This paper examines these sources and stresses the originality of the poetry of Radu Vancu and V.Leac.

In 2009, starting from two very interesting PhD theses authored by Cristina Ispas¹ and Georgeta Moarcăs,² I wrote a study³ on the relationship between the Romanian generation of poets of the 2000 and postmodernism. The main idea was that the main cultural background of the Romanian young poets is to be found not in the postmodernism of the 80's, but in the Romanian expressionism and its, sometimes very recent, extensions. There are some very interesting and particular cases of the 2000 generation poetry which are not dealing with the main stream that I depicted in the article from 2009. These particular cases I debate in this paper are Radu Vancu and V.Leac, two poets who are *eccentric* in the generation of 2000. First, Radu Vancu is not so clearly against the main stream poetry of the 80's generation represented by Cărtărescu, Iaru, Traian T. Coșovei, Ion Stratan, Romulus Bucur or Alexandru Mușina. In other words, Radu Vancu is not very affirmative in pointing out that his cultural background includes poets like Angela Marinescu or Ion Mureșan, important representatives for the extensions of the expressionism in Romanian poetry. To the question about the models and the antimodels of the 2000 generation in a special issue of „Vatra” dedicated to his generation, Radu Vancu gives a balanced answer: „there is no dogmatic corpus of literary works that is to be claimed by the members of the generation.” Further on, Radu Vancu insists upon the idea that the cultural sources of his generation are „eclectic”⁴. Things seem not to be the same for other poets of the generation who clearly affirm their affiliation to the extensions of the Romanian expressionism. Instead of opposing the main stream of the 80's generation, Radu Vancu pledges for the idea of diversity. It is not the main attitude for the poets of his generation. Moreover, in a recent interview⁵, Radu Vancu agrees with the idea that the so called „douămiști” are a part of the same generation as the poets of the 80's. He finds the idea

¹ Cristina Ispas, *Fenomenul poetic românesc postdecembrist* (teză de doctorat), Universitatea din București, 2009

² Georgeta Moarcăs, *Expresioniști după expresionism* (teză de doctorat), Universitatea din București, 2009

³ Andrei Bodiu, *Douămiism și postmodernism*, Analele Universitatii "Stefan cel Mare" Suceava serie Filologie, B: Literatura, 2009

⁴ Radu Vancu, „Vatra” nr. 3/ 2009, p. 48

⁵ „Scrisul trebuia să mă scoată dintr-o problemă existențială și și-a făcut treaba” interviu cu Radu Vancu de Ecaterina Pavel, Daniel Puia-Dumitrescu și Dan Țăranu, „Corpul T” nr.3/ 2011

at Bogdan Crețu and Dumitru Chioaru but the first theoretician that emphasized it was Ion Bogdan Lefter in different areas of his work.⁶ The idea of separation for the Romanian generations of poets is not the theme of this paper. Vancu's idea is that he, as a poet, is opened to communication with the other generation and, moreover, that his way of understanding poetry is very similar to that of such poets as Alexandru Mușina, for instance. I can define Vancu's attitude as *relaxed* and *soft*, because he does not define himself in opposition to the main stream of the 80's poetry but in accordance with it. It is clear that this is not the main attitude of the "douămiști" who ignore pragmatically and programmatically the main stream of the '80s in poetry. Vancu's "ecumenical" vision can be also the result of the influence that one of the most important post World War II Romanian poets, Mircea Ivănescu, had upon him. In a way, Ivănescu's cosmopolite perspective on literature and culture seems to be the most influential for Radu Vancu. It is interesting to read the latest volume of poems written by Radu Vancu, *Sebastian în vis (Sebastian in Dream)* both from the point of view of its cultural background and from the point of view of the cultural remarks in the text. I think that Radu Vancu's poetic connection with the vision of the poets of the 80's can be underlined from the perspective of the cultural genealogy that can be found in the volume published in 2010 at Tracus Arte publishing house. First, the volume is situated in the line of Romanian poets who can be considered *poeta faber*, starting with Tudor Arghezi and Ion Barbu, followed by Leonid Dimov and Mircea Cărtărescu. Ivănescu's presence should be found, maybe, in the exploration of the intimate life, a mark of the great poet who died this year. Dimov and Cărtărescu are also present as two of the most important oniric contemporary Romanian poets. Cărtărescu himself considers Dimov one of the most important Romanian poets and acknowledges Dimov's influence upon him. Besides, both Dimov and Cărtărescu developed a deeply ludic dimension in their poetry, a fact that is also relevant for the poetry of Radu Vancu. In the first part of the second canto, Radu Vancu introduces Dimov, in an amusing image, as a character of his poem. Sebastian, the dreaming baby falls asleep on Leonid Dimov's belly. There is, maybe, an allusion to the image of the great poet, walking with his baby niece, after the banning of the onirist movement by the communist regime, an image which can be found in one poem written by Mircea Cărtărescu. This kind of cultural sophistication meets the refinement of the *écriture*. Radu Vancu writes all the seven cantos of the poem using the block-text which is specific for prose, creating the rhythm and rhymes of verse. Regarding the second level, namely that of the cultural allusions in the text of the volume, Radu Vancu's perspective is consistent with his permissive and tolerant vision of the cultural models of his poetic age. In this respect, he is close to the postmodern way in which Mircea Cărtărescu mixes the cultural allusions in his work. In the first canto of the book, we can find an ingenious mixture of remarks connected to culture and also to the specific belongings of a baby. The sphere of elements contained in the first canto of the book puts together: the Nestle condensed milk, the Nuk nose pump, the Rubik cube, the Lego games, the Avent bottle in an explicit or implicit dialogue with fairy-tale characters like Snow White, medieval stories, *Ayenbite of Inwyt*, the multiplied image of Mihai Eminescu, the Shoah and

⁶ The idea of an extended postmodernism is one of Ion Bogdan Lefter basic ideas în Postmodernism, "din dosarul unei bătălii culturale", Pitești, Paralela 45, 2000

the Gulag or with elements like Beauty and Eloquence which evoke the authors of the European Renaissance. This mixture, connected with the personality of the new born strengthens the idea of *ludic*, essential for the author of *Sebastian în vis* (*Sebastian in dream*). The title itself is a Romanian version of a famous book by Georg Trakl, *Sebastian in Traum*

In an interview published in the quaterly „Corpul T”, Vasile Leac answers a question regarding the poets towards whom he displays affinity. „ I do not know if I feel any resemblance with the poets of my generation. Many of them write deep, in a traditionalist manner- I don't know if the term traditionalist is good- and they are very important poets.”⁷ There is a clear irony in Leac's words, for whom another literature than the one written by his generation seems to be, truly, more important. In the same interview, questioned about his literary models, Leac answers that he reads mainly prose and, seldom, poetry. Regarding the prose writers, Leac speaks about Becket, Joyce and Salinger⁸ It is interesting that, like Vancu, he recalls, as literary models, Leonid Dimov, “ whom I like very, very much”, then Mircea Ivănescu and Cristian Popescu.⁹ We can find common features between Leac's and Vancu's cultural models. This affinity between the two stresses the fact that in their generation they are eccentric, their cultural models being not the poets that are significant for the extensions of expresionism like, for instance, Angela Marinescu and Ion Mureșan. The main stream is what Leac's calls “the deep, traditionalist poets.” I think that we can assimilate the term “traditionalist” with the term “neoexpressionist”. At both Vancu and Leac, there is a fascination for the *poeta faber*, but also, on the other hand, for *ludic* and for *irony*, features which can be found at Dimov, Ivănescu, Mircea Cărtărescu or Cristian Popescu. One of the earlier volumes of poetry written by V.Leac is intitled *Dicționar de vise* (*Dictionary of Dreams*) a title which is a cultural echo of the famous *Cartea de vise* (*The Book of Dreams*) by Leonid Dimov. Like Dimov, both Radu Vancu and Vasile Leac preserve something from the” anxious and drilling spirit of the anvantguard.”¹⁰ In his most recent book of poetry published in 2010, *Toți sînt îngrijorați* (*Everybody is worried*)¹¹ V. Leac proves a real explorative dimension of his poetry. In fact, all the three parts of the book offer different approaches to poetry. First of all we may emphasize that in all the three chapters: *Între noi* (*Between us*), *No signal* and *Hei, stranger!*, a connection with the interest of Leac for prose can be found. In fact, the author takes a total freedom in elaborating the poem, developing it at the border between poetry and prose. This feature is clear in the last part of the book because the poem is written in a prose-like manner, over the entire surface of the page. But apart from it, the echoes of prose can be found starting with the first poem. On the other hand, this form of the poems is misleading because Leac's poems develop as an original combinations of onirism, *surrealism* and postmodernism. The oniric roots can be found, for instance, in the imagined situations in real spaces like Nordkapp. In the far north of Europe, Leac imagines the life of a scholar, probably a student in marine biology. The *surrealist*

⁷ “Intenția mea a fost să-l fac pe cititor să surădă” un interviu cu Vasile Leac de Ecaterina Pavel, Daniel Puia-Dumitrescu și Dan Țăranu în „Corpul T” nr2/2011

⁸ idem, p.64

⁹ idem, p.64

¹⁰ Rodica Ilie, *Manifestul literar. Poetici ale avangardei în spațiul romanic*, Brașov, ed Universității Transilvania, 2008, p.281. In the same field of the definition of avantguard, Adrian Lăcătuș, *Urmuz*,2002

¹¹ *Toți sînt îngrijorați*, București, Ed. Tracus Arte, 2010

features can be found at the level of poetic imagery. Both the oniric and the *surrealist* aspects are filtered through a strongly confessional voice. This voice is structured in a postmodern manner, with connections to the biographic poetry specific for the main stream of the 80's generation, at poets like Cărtărescu, Iaru, Alexandru Mușina or Romulus Bucur. With Romulus Bucur, V. Leac has in common the usage of different icons in the poem: a dog, a pair of gloves, icons from the doors of toilets.

As I mentioned at the beginning of this paper, both Radu Vancu and Vasile Leac are eccentric in the so called generation of the 2000. On the other hand, they are, as you have seen, poets who connect, in very original manners with the main stream of the poetry of the 80's and with other important voices of the Romanian post-World War II poetry. Alexandru Cistelean defined the art of the "douămiist" poets as „neoexpressionist and not postmodernist”.¹² Radu Vancu and Vasile Leac continue the postmodern Romanian poetry adding new approaches, new poetic ideas. *Confessional, ironic, ludic, oniric*, believing in the art of *poeta faber*, Radu Vancu and Vasile Leac are still, even though important poets, at the margin of their generation. Nobody can say until when. The quality of their poetry can make them become central at any moment.

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¹² Al Cistelean în www. atelier.liternet.ro