

THE POETIC UTTERANCE AND THE INHABITATION OF SPACE. INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUE ROMANIA-CORSICA

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Abstract: Starting from the similarities between traditions, customs, folkloric productions from the archaic Romanian and Corsican space, I will try to show that nowadays the kinship between these two cultures is perpetuated in the area of the poetic imagination. The first part of the study will focus on redefining the role of the poet. "Son of the Sun and the language" (Salah Stétié), the poet has the mission to elevate the language inherited at birth, to reshape it, to reinvent it. The work on language is perfected at the ontological level, the supreme „challenge” of the poet being to say the unspeakable, to express in words the content of a numinous experience, originating from the world beyond name and form. Like the mystic, the poet uses language to convey the experience of an epiphany or a paroxysmal experience or any other state of communion with the sacred, with the ineffable, with the principles that keep the whole Being. The second part of our paper consists in the recognition of these principles, "formative forms" or "poetic entities" (Dumitru Velea) from contemporary Romanian and Corsican poetry. Cosmic song, Poetry represents, par excellence, the "voice" of Spirit, of the One (Self, Uncreated, Consciousness) infinitely multiplied in the ceaseless dynamics of life and in that of the human (self, individual soul, living being, embodied consciousness). Our hermeneutic approach opens a reflection on the depth of the poetic voice that results from the eternal interweaving of ipse and idem. Poetic utterance means experiencing a mystery that crosses your being. More precisely, what I propose is an analysis of the writing adopted by a lyric self aware of its unity with the Self. Seen from this angle, "I am the Other" (Rimbaud), and his kingdom is located on the "other side", in transcendence.

Keywords: imaginary; poetry; numinous; sacred; unspeakable; ontological; the Self

1. INTRODUCTION

Since the dawn of time in both Corsica and Romania, as more or less in every place where "the symbol ontologizes reality" (Marino, 1980:187), folk creations reflect the permanent struggle for the revival of our connection to eternity and the sources of life itself: water, air, the sun, the earth. Contributing to the mental state of the individual, nature and its cosmic events are omnipresent in folk texts. The folk creator conveys a transpersonal perspective, originating from the collective unconscious, determining the way space is inhabited. The repository of ancestral memory, the traditional Romanian and Corsican village resides under the dome of eternity, having "the awareness of participating in a destiny stemming from timelessness" (Blaga, 1972). First sung and then written, folk poetry is the "kernel of national poetry" (Kogălniceanu, 1837). The cries (chjama è rispondi), the moan (voceru), 'deochi'¹

(innocchiato), the strigoii² (i streghi), 'doina haiducească'³(lamentu di u banditu d'honneur), the lullaby: "nani, nani puiu mami..." (i nanni) are just a few examples of the immaterial heritage of Romanian and Corsican poetry. The contemporary poet, whether or not he is aware of the heritage he received at birth - alongside language and through language itself - continues to live "in the cosmic twilight" (Blaga, 1972) of his ancestors. Endowed with the power to act upon language, the poet reshapes its raw material, its popular and mythological background; his double mission - in the case of the Romanian language, but also in Corsican, as we shall see further on - being "the rearing of an honorable language and homeland" (The testament of Ienăchiță Văcărescu). In the alchemical sense of the word "rearing" means transmutation, metamorphosis, elevation. An homage to childhood and the long-gone world of

¹A folk belief wherein it is believed that one might be bewitched by someone casting an evil eye upon them.

²Evil entities from Romanian mythology, similar to demons or vampires.

³A type of song sung by hajduks (freedom fighters, rebels)

ancestors, Ghjacumu Thiers⁴ poem “Lenzole” (Bed sheets) evokes the magic of fairy tales, the moan, the spell of deochi:

Carrying fresh bed sheets/the grandparent's hands/handily/and somewhat enchanted/seem to always be too dark/even when they're not crying./their gestures remind us/of a long forgotten world among these lands//From wings of wind/and white fern leaves/we make out bed/ waiting/for the arrival/of dusk/and for the old lady to deliver us from bewitchment/in her quiver full of tales/we search until inside ourselves/the whirlwind of desires/which come from who knows where/ dozes off. (Thiers, 2006:7).

The impermanence of earthly life is admirably expressed by the image of the bed made “of wings of wind and fern leaves”. The resemblance to the “daffodils” in Romanian carols and the resonance of the Corsican word “lenzole” with the Romanian word “lințoliu”, reminiscent of the Romanian country folk's tradition of preparing the things necessary for burial during their lifetime, should be noted here. A symbolic journey to the world beyond, life is a rest, a rest in the shade of the trees. The “wind” wings refer to the alternation between inhaling and exhaling, and the white ferns to the sacredness of Breath, suggesting that there is no refuge outside the Absolute. A place suitable for life and a place of love (“come to the forest to the spring...”, M. Eminescu, poem “Dorința”) the forest is also a place of retreat, of meditation. That is why the poet's suggestion is that the bed, the sheet, the cradle, should be made in anticipation of sunrise, i.e. with the awareness of this fate, from the moment of birth, to death (Sein zum Tode). Being a sort of deep sleep without dreams, death stops the “whirlwind of desires”; in its expectation the early years of life are recalled, the recollection

⁴ Professor emeritus, founder of the Cultural Centre of the University of Corsica, novelist, playwright, poet, translator, Ghjacumu Thiers (b. 1945) is one of the most important representatives of the cultural movement of the 1970s, called Riacquistu (Rinatu Coti) or Inghjennatura (a term, preferred by Ghjacumu Thiers, which means “re-incorporation”, “taking possession”, of the Corsican language and identity). Three of his books have been translated into Romanian: the novel Parfum de glicine (translated by Dana Marina Dumitriu, preface by Florea Firan, Macedonski Publishing House, Craiova, 1996), the play Memoria di l'acqua /Memoria apei (bilingual edition, translated into Romanian by Dana Marina Dumitriu, Aius Publishing House, Craiova, 2004) and the volume of poetry In e dite (translated by Maria Aldea, Argonaut Publishing House, Cluj-Napoca, 2008).

calls to mind protective figures: grandparents, the old healer (signadora).

2. POETIC UTTERNACE AND SPACE IN ADRIAN LESENCIUC'S POETRY

Folklore and ancestors make their presence felt in the poetry of Adrian Lesenciuc⁵. While in Ghjacumu Thiers's poem, life is represented by that “bed”, equally natural and supernatural, in the heart of the forest, in Adrian Lesenciuc's poetic universe, the breath of life comes to dwell in the “blood hut” of the body. Bed, sheet, cradle, hut are part of the same semantic sphere, but the degree of abstraction is increased by placing the tree of life inside the hut. It also has both green and dry branches; from the dry ones we can feel, as a blood incantation, “the quivering of the ancestors”, who continue to live in our body through genetic information, but also through thoughts, memories. Emerging from the collective unconscious, the thought becomes personified, taking on the characteristics of a live being – like a bird, for instance – and can be heard “rustling with grandparents in dry branches”:

...on dry branches/ waiting for the north/ the buds flicker and creek/ through the groans of our forebears/ on cracking branches/somewhere my ripened father/ had dried out/and his yellow shadow/ flickers in silence/falling/under bare feet/many groans/ lift the blood upwards from/the stalked horizon/ thought withers/rustling with my grandparents/ among dry leaves/ cracking/ somewhere father/ still flickers/ through groans of cold wind/ towards the green heart/ my rings fall/ as during late autumn/ under the stone-like slumber... (Lesenciuc, 2014:48)”

As in the Corsican poem, death is associated with sleep, it means sinking into “stone-like slumber”, heavy, crushing and cold as a flagstone. A conclusion to what has been said so far: when the art of the word reaches metaphysical overtones, poetry becomes the bearer of life and the work on

⁵ Poet, novelist, essayist, literary critic, president of the Brasov branch of the Romanian Writers' Union, PhD in military sciences and PhD in communication, professor at the Air Force Academy in Brasov, Adrian Lesenciuc (b. 1975) is editor-in-chief of the Brasov cultural magazine Libris and translator (he translated the book Tipoeame and antipoems by the Argentinian writer Ana Maria Uribe). Poetry books: Child-abyss (1999), Laocoonia (2000), Liam (2001), Blood Hut (2014), Third Game (2015), Water Book. With Borges, looking at the river (2016), gEneida (2019).

language begins its adventure on an ontological level. The poet's supreme "challenge" is to speak the unspeakable, to express in words the content of a nameless experience. Like a mystic, he uses language to convey the experience of an epiphany or a paroxysmal experience or any other high state of consciousness, of communion with the sacred, with the ineffable, with principles that bear the whole Being. Suggested in the lines "my rings fall/ as during late autumn/ under the stone-like slumber", the presence of the snake in the tree (the ringed snake, *Dolichopis caspius*, also called the steppe snake, lives on the edge of forests and climbs trees with great ease) symbolizes both continuity and cycles of life, the passage from one season to another, from one shape to another, from one state of consciousness to another, and, as we shall see below, the unfolding of the poetic self, the creative agency.

A cosmic song, the poem lends the "voice" of the Spirit, of the One (the Self, the Self-being, the Consciousness) infinitely multiplied in the unceasing dynamics of life and in that of humanity (the ego, the individual soul, the living being, consciousness incarnate). For the author of *Coliba de sânge*, poetic utterance means living a mystery that permeates our being:

with the dead girlfriend hugging each other we
recited from the palimpsest poem

(...)

word settles down

for the feast of the poem

it sits in front of me

joining in

letter by letter

unborn

for me to confess it (Lesenciuc, 2014:19).

Poem within a poem, the "palimpsest poem" is woven from a blend of voices (a polyphony reminiscent of Corsican sacred chants), instances of enunciation and layers of reality: the ego reciting the "palimpsest poem" (the oneiric level), the "unborn" (the ultimate, causal level of reality, it is the Word, the utterance by which the worlds, the universes, were created) and the ego transcribing the confession (the level of reality of the waking state). Conceived on the model of the Ouroboros snake, the "palimpsest poem" is the enclave, the part, which swallows up the Whole (the meta-poem *Coliba de sânge*).

Contemplating this brilliant cluster of verses, we understand Rimbaud's statement "It is wrong to say: I am thinking. We should say: I am being thought... The Self is the Other" (Rimbaud,

1999:84). From this perspective, "the Other", "the unborn", is the true "author" of the poem; here he is, in the full dynamic of utterance, narrating the episode of Genesis:

I've been flattening my gyri an entire day/
unwinding my synapses for five days I pulled
on/ DNA strands and on the seventh I rested/
nothing more pleasant than being caressed/ by
spring (that moult spring) and playing with
algae/ underneath where I unravelled my body/
and was dragged to the shore by the fisherman's
net/ the sun burning me like a snowball/ trapped
in the net/ I was dragged to the shore/on the
drab land of the brain (Lesenciuc, 2014:26).

The coming forth of the "unborn", the transcendent self of the poet, takes place on the "seventh day" (Sunday, the Lord's day, the first and last day of the week, a day of celebration, of weddings, of feasts). The "stop" at the "feast" of the poem evokes the experience of a reunion of the soul with its Creator, of a mystical wedding. Having lived in the vicinity of abyss, Adrian Lesenciuc's poem is crafted in the depths of silence, is carved on the walls of eternity, then descends on the vibrating thread of immanence and gets "caught" in the net of thought, in the net of the poet-fisherman's thoughts. Exploring all the possibilities of language to reveal Reality, the poem performs a double movement, first downwards (of the "unborn" in the poet's consciousness) and then upwards (of the poetic self aware of its identity to the transcendent principle, generator and organizer of Creation). The sea – image of the primordial matrix and the unconscious-, through the ebb and flow of waves hitting the shore with "grey dust", keeps the poem in the realm of the unspeakable. An act of knowing, the upward movement of consciousness makes possible the envisioning of a landscape (abstract, stripped of images) of the world beyond name and form, described by "a self with an eye looking on the brain":

as insane as someone casting themselves down the
tunnel/ reaching for death with my teeth/ dragging
slumber to the shore catching on hope/ a vast
emptiness and an ego with an eye on the brain// me
looking into emptiness/a landscape with a brain
(Lesenciuc, 2014"26).

The tunnel, death, sleep, the abyss ("immense emptiness"), looking "into the void", the cerebral landscape, are elements that indicate the departure from temporality and the passage into the timeless

dimension of the sacred. Situated beyond any idea, religious conviction, the sacred in Adrian Lesenciuc's poetry has the meaning given by Mircea Eliade, that of “element of the structure of consciousness”.

3. POETIC UTTERANCE AND SPACE IN STEFANU CESARI'S POETRY

Following our intercultural dialogue on Romania - Corsica, we let Stefanu Cesari⁶, a Corsican poet who, although employing metaphors and symbols specific to the island, expressing universal human experiences: communion with the nature of his homeland, love for the language and customs of his forebears, national identity, etc. Awarded the Louis Guillaume Prize, the bilingual (Corsican-French) volume *Bartolomeo in Cristu*⁷ ('Bartolomeu întru Hristos') contains fifty-nine prose poems published under the title *Toi ce pays entre un arbre vivant, un arbre mort/ 'Ssu paesu Tù trà un àrburi vivu unu mortu'* ('You country stretched between a living tree and a dead tree'). “Land of beeches” and land of childhood, Corsica stretches, according to the subtle geography of Stefanu Cesari's poem, “between a living tree and a dead tree”, a location that suggests that life means travel, motion, between the world of the living and the world of the dead. Why “between a living tree and a dead tree”? The answer is given by George Vulturescu, the Romanian “poet of the North”: “Because life is guarded with death/and death is guarded with life” (“Cesar Vallejo climbs Machu Picchu”, unpublished poem).

⁶ Poet, Corsican language teacher and translator, Stefanu Cesari (b. 1973) writes in French and Corsican. He has been awarded major literary prizes in Corsica, including the Prix des lecteurs de Corse (2009), the Prix Don Joseph Morellini (2013) and the Prix Louis Guillaume (2020). Volumes of poetry : *Mémoire de la Nuit/Mimoria di a Notti*, Editura Albiana, 2002; *Forme Animale/A Lingua 'lla Bestia*, Editura A Fior di Carta, 2008; *Genitori*, Editura Les Presses Littéraires, 2010 ; *Le Moindre Geste/U Minimu Gestu*, Editura Colonna, 2012; *Prière pour le troupeau/ Prighera par l'armenti*, Editura Les Cahiers de l'approche, 2018; *Bartolomeo in Cristu*, Editura Éoliennes, 2019; *Peuple d'un printemps/ Pòpulu d'una branata*, Editura Éoliennes, 2021. The poems in this volume are inspired by a late 15th-century fresco, a depiction of Saint Bartholomew on the walls of the chapel of San Pantaleu di Gavignanu, in the land called Pieve di Rustinu.

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This land stretched between a living tree and a dead tree, between the flowering almond tree and the pear tree on which a hawk is resting its wings. This country like a miniature with huts and sheepfolds, is beech-land on the mountain tops. It is the place where we are born and die, where mothers have hordes of children, swift they run behind their fathers, so it is, here everything rises like a rugged sign, like a why unrelated to any question. In this land of childhood, too soon ended, the saints have houses built for them, under whose roof they never grow old. Pillars are driven for fences and sheds, wood is burned for coals, everything that greens like the truth is watched. The shepherds have plenty of cudgels and knives, and their mouths full of scolding verses are all a wound when they chew them (Cesari, 2019:6-7).

In this poem, the first of the book dedicated to the holy apostle and martyr Bartholomew, life is not depicted as an end, but rather as a perpetual transformation, a morphing, the wood of the beeches and of the “flowering almond tree” becomes a fence, a pillar, a hut, a corral, a shed, a charcoal, a thistle, and so on. An entire wooden civilization is on display before our eyes, in which, as in Romania, shepherding sheep is an ancient profession, creating ethnographic, spiritual and moral values. Although they have “a lot of cudgels and knives”, the “shepherds” most powerful weapon is the word, their “mouth full of scolding verses” referencing orality, the mouth-to-ear transmission of the heritage of folklore: sayings, beliefs, songs, legends, proverbs, riddles, etc.

Before moving on to another poem, let us point out two similarities between Stefanu Cesari's poetic imagery and that of Adrian Lesenciuc. In *Bartomeu întru Hristos* and in *Coliba de sangre*, elements such as the stable, the spring season, the tree of life, place the poem in a primordial ontological framework. Not only is Corsica the “land of beeches” and the land of childhood, but also Adrian Lesenciuc's *Fagia*⁸. Published in 2001, *Liam* is the love story (“Fagia and Liam love each other in silence”) between the young Liam – the author's alter ego – and Fagia, the “place-with-shells” where he was born and grew up.

While Stefanu Cesari's first poem meditates on wood and the tree of life, the later poem is a meditation on stone and spiritual fulfillment through art.

Only he who knows the craft of stones, chooses them one by one. At the cost of how many days and

⁸ Fictional name for the region of Bucovina

how many injuries, no one knows. No one knows what songs nor what seasons accompany him, But his work, at the mouths of time, is done. The stone must be dry, with no sun at its core. The reddish earth, like old blood, surrounds and seals the house, a labyrinth encompasses life, it is a closed world in a field of almond trees, a closed world building while children are in passing, sheep in transhumance, people in celebration, a closed world for saints, while the body escapes like a sun. Midday contemplation is this craft, a concentration of attention on vague shapes, on beauty (Cesari, 2019:6-7).

Even more mysterious is the figure of the one who knows “the craft of the stones”, when we learn that his work is done “at the mouth of time”. Who is he?! He does not appear to be a simple house builder. Accompanied everywhere by a retinue of “songs” and “seasons”, he possesses a magical knowledge. He knows how to distinguish stones and to choose the one that has “no sunlight in its core”, that is, the one that connects heaven and earth. It is only from these stones that houses are built. Like the island, the fortress or the temple, the house is an image of the universe. It is made of stone and red earth “like old blood”. In the process of regaining identity, of origins, it is necessary to recall the ancestral world of the forebears: “old blood”, “saints”, “transhumance”. The earth, in which the fathers and ancestors rest, “surrounds and seals the house” (just as their blood surrounds the family, the kindred, the nation) so that it may be protected, isolated, and, like the spirit, shaded and regenerating. A symbol of life and a place of trials, the labyrinth signifies seclusion, and the exit from the labyrinth signifies overcoming obstacles, evolution on the spiritual path. The end of the

poem is truly inspirational. An archetype of steadfastness, of strength, the stone can help the poet in contemplating the essence and beauty of Creation, to penetrate the mystery of the turning of words into poetry.

4. CONCLUSIONS

The motif of the stone in Romanian literature is very recurrent. However, there are three seekers of the philosopher's stone who have significantly changed the meaning of the language: Mihai Eminescu, Lucian Blaga, Nichita Stănescu. Today, George Vulturescu, Dumitru Velea, Ileana Mălăncioiu, Adrian Lesenciuc, Cassian Maria Spiridon, Ana Blandiana (and many others, whom it is not impossible to list in the very limited space of this article) are following in their footsteps

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