ROMANIAN 21ST CENTURY POETRY AND THE INTERNET: IDENTITY MARKETING POLICIES FROM "NETPOETS" TO VIRTUAL READING COMMUNITIES

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Abstract: *This study is an exploration of the Internet as a new medium for both poetical content and its surrounding paratext, focusing on certain less common, yet rather successful reception politics and (user) profiling strategies used by Romanian contemporary authors and/or publishers of indigenous poetry. Leaving out unspecific, global(ized) book marketing Internet approaches, the present investigation aims to map certain particular, local features and efficient tactics that basically rely on the virtual (i.e., Internet simulated) configuration / re-configuration of personal and / or group identities, as an adaptation to the new global cybernetic medium and an original response to the "worldwide" virtual networking of both books and identities. A few selected case studies, illustrating different identity construction policies – form straightforward fictional identity generation to subtler, covert alternative group identity design – are described and analyzed as a phenomenon ultimately aiming to build what is generally thought to be a somewhat unlikely bridge between highly cultural content (or forms) and digital mass culture marketing techniques.*

Keywords: Romanian poetry; media identity; user profiling; reception politics; book marketing

1. ON THE 'VIRTUAL GRAPHOSPHERE' AS A GLOBALIZING PHENOMENON

1.1 Considerations on a new, global dimension of "book culture(s)". From the emergence and proliferation of books as virtual objects (be it in the form of scanned or digitalized paperback formats, free PDF versions or proper e-books), resulting in the expansion of digital libraries and publications, to online bookselling policies and authors' self-marketing Internet strategies, there is a whole new 'virtual graphosphere'[1] out there which is apparently bound to complement – if not replace entirely – the traditional culture of writing as we

(used to) know it. And, naturally – since the notorious 'McLuhan Equation' tells us that "the medium is the message" (McLuhan, 1964:7), i.e., that innovation in the medium/support of the message determines cascades of unanticipated cultural effects and interactions that we aren't ready to spontaneously acknowledge and classify as direct (and sometimes massive) "personal and social consequences" of a new technological "extension of ourselves" (McLuhan, 1964:7) – the rise of the new, virtually infinite medium which is our contemporary cybernetic reality brings about a particular set (or net?) of specific social and cultural interactions at the level of what could be generally described, via a general concept, as the contemporary 'book culture' (or graphosphere). And since the Internet is a 'worldwide' medium, the propagation of the said set – or 'network' – of cultural effects can only be described, willingly or not, as a global phenomenon.

1.2 The 'virtual graphosphere' as an issue: dilemmas in the field of reception theory. In the multitude of global "personal and social consequences" (McLuhan, 1964:7) prompted by the new medium, the transformations in book

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[1] I will use the term "graphosphere" in a restricted meaning, similar to the definition assigned to the concept by Simon Franklin (Franklin, 2011:531). Thus, it should be understood as a comprehensive perspective on the "technologies of depicting signs which are perceived to relate to language: that is, with writing and printing", but in a meaning that is (unlike in Franklin's definition) meant to "extend in time and media" "from cave daubing to ideograms to alphabetic script to movable type to plasma display screens" (Franklin, 2011:531).

marketing (including self-marketing) policies are among the most disputed. Problematic questions arise, mostly, in matters related to reception theory, as to the virtual impossibility for the general public to discern between quality writing and quality self-marketing in a 'space' (medium) which – in theory, at least – allows uncensored / non-reviewed content to proliferate at the same rate as thoroughly/ traditionally 'edited' and/or critically-assessed textual material.

1.3 The Romanian 'virtual graphosphere' as a case. It is in the context of such arguments, generating underlying tension in today's book culture in general, that I have chosen to address the issue of the Romanian contemporary virtual graphosphere as a particular (and perhaps, relevant) case study area. More precisely, I mean to look into certain less common, yet rather successful reception politics and (user) profiling strategies used by Romanian contemporary authors and/or publishers of indigenous poetry, and define them as profitable, virtual personal and group identity strategies, which have so far managed to keep an apparently obsolete literary genre into the Romanian public's focus.

This is why a quick glance at some of the most efficient (i.e., popularity-gaining) publisher or author policies used in recent years (starting with the 2000s) is necessary as a basis for further interpretation.

2. AN OVERVIEW OF CERTAIN SUCCESSFUL IDENTITY CONFIGURATION POLICIES IN ROMANIAN POETRY MARKETING

In what follows, I mean to provide an overview of certain successful, if sometimes rather exotic identity policies which could be roughly summarized as (personal or group) identity-formation or virtual identity configuration / reconfiguration strategies. My purpose is not necessarily to cover all actual cases (i.e., to structure an all-comprehensive image of the online occurrence of poetical text), but rather to select some relevant solutions issued by Romanian editorial and/or auctorial practice, ranging from straightforward fictional identity generation to subtler, alternative group identity design.

This is why, out of a concern for conciseness, I will basically refrain to the in-depth analysis of two poetic phenomena I deem evocative – namely, the 'case' of Iv cel Naiv [Ives the Naïve] as an example of successful self-marketing and self-

profiling, on the one hand, and the more complex 'case' of what I will call 'the Max Blecher Publishing House phenomenon', on the other hand – as well as to the related ('online' and 'offline') interactions they triggered in the book-reading community.

2.1. Ives the Naïve – "a-guy-who-is-fictive", or the 'strange case' of a popular incognito 'netpoet'. Ives the Naïve (in Romanian, Iv cel Naiv), self-described on his 'personal' Facebook account as 'a-guy-who-is-fictive' (in Romanian, 'Untipfictiv')[2], is a poetic mass-phenomenon of the 2010s. Ives started as a self-published incognito poet, by posting light-hearted, imaginative – if rather unsophisticated – poetic texts on his personal website, ivcelnaiv.ro.

The website design (apparently started in 1999) was simple and attractive: reader feedback in the form of comments and likes was allowed for each poem, and the poet himself took the trouble of providing gentle replies to nearly all reader reactions, while visual support was provided by Vali Petridean – a non-fictional person, this time, and an extremely gifted visual artist and illustrator. The effective layout of the virtual support and the steadiness of Ives' posting frequency (with a poem per day as an average publishing rate for years in a row), the one-click-away availability of the texts, along with the sheer accessibility of poetic forms and the popular, naïve-romantic content and themes (seasoned with the minimal dose of creativity required by any successful marketable product) contributed to making Ives the Naïve an unexpectedly fruitful project.

However, the key-element in the mix was definitely the wave of public curiosity – and attraction – generated by the author's fictional / virtual persona, functioning both as a cover for the poet's true identity (a well-kept secret to the day) and as a way of introducing the essential idea of his entire poetic concept. His general motto, "un om căra în spate / un dram de naivitate" ['a man once carried in his attaché / a small drop of pure naiveté' – in an approximate translation] reflects, in fact, the author's *ars poetica*, which seems to be that of becoming "the first healer-poet / the first nanobot to write poetry as a hobby"[3] (Iv cel Naiv, *I, the nano-*

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[2] Written in one word when used as a Facebook surname. See https://www.facebook.com/ivcelnaiv.

[3] Original fragment: "vreau să fiu primul poet vindecător /primul nanorobot care are poezia ca hobby". My translation, R.H. Iv cel Naiv, *I, the nano-robot*, June 2017 (yet unpublished). Available online at

robot). In fact, there are frequent such textual references to the said intended combination of accessible, positive, unsophisticated content and the accessibility of virtual / electronic content, e.g. "now I can fit into / much smaller spaces / than before. you can just clasp me in your fist. / or you can swallow me, if you want, as you would do/ with one of those modern-day nano-robots / who enter your body / through your stomach, your intestines, your blood vessels / to make you well again." (Iv cel Naiv, *I, the nano-robot*)[4]. Accordingly, the netpoet seems to be willing (or even determined) to give up traditional, intricate but cumbersome poetical constructions, in favor of the immediate catharsis the new medium – as well as other technological advances – are able to provide. Hence, anonymity is an identity configuration policy meant to allow the masked author the aesthetic and ethical freedom(s) he desires.

The result: five astounding volumes richly illustrated by Vali Petridean, printed as a borderline product bridging fine art and poetry, published by Vellant Publishing House in Bucharest between 2011 and 2016 (which sums up to almost an album / volume per year)[5]. And to this fine achievement, one could add a few more: posts rarely going down beyond 100 likes per poem (with the most popular reaching ± 2k and the majority ranging between 200 and 800 'like' button hits); the formation of a constant follower community; reaching improbable bookselling records for a poet as one of the few bestselling authors for 2013, in the company of pop-icon Tudor Chirilă and notorious actor Radu Beligan – according to an online news article citing publishing house representatives via Mediafax[6].

Having reached the peak of success in 2013 and at an apparent loss of inspiration in 2014, he

slowly faded from the public eye in the following years. Neither his two following books being published in the same format by Vellant in 2015 and 2016, respectively, nor the ingenious marketing concept behind his last published volume, *Cartea săruturilor* [The Book of Kisses] (2016) – seemingly meant as a collection of poems based on reader accounts of significant kisses – were able to restore the project to its former glory.

The real person hiding under Ives' mask remains incognito to the day, in spite of the many attempts to identify him and the several interviews, including radio interventions, in which he managed to keep his identity a secret. His last posted poem, *Ca-n cer* (word-play between 'cancer' – 'cancer' and 'ca-n cer' – 'just like heaven') published on ivcelnaiv.ro dates back to October 2018 and evokes the loss of one's parents to the terrible disease.

All in all, even if relatively short-lived as a literary phenomenon (like so many other sudden success stories), Ives the Naïve constitutes a case to remember – and worthy of attention as far as the online self-marketing strategies deployed, as well as the implied meta-discourse on virtual fictional identity are concerned.

2.2 The 'Blecher phenomenon' or the ultimate alternative 'launch ramp'. The Max Blecher[7] Publishing House and the Blecher Institute (a book discussion club centered upon young poetry), as well as several related online literary projects and platforms gravitate around the charismatic personality of Claudiu Komartin, the self-taught[8] editor-in-chief of the said small but solid publishing business, making him the main *arbiter elegantiae* for young Romanian poetic vibes. A rebellious-romantic personality and a precocious poetic talent himself, having won the most reputable national award for his literary debut at age 19[9] in 2003, and held in high regard afterwards, Komartin is often described as the 'spearhead' of the 2000s 'poetic generation', for which he had also designed a notable manifesto in 2005, significantly entitled "Performantism"[10].

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https://ivcelnaiv.ro/2017/06/eu-nanorobotul/. [30.03.2019].

[4] Original fragment: "acum încap/ într-un spațiu mult mai mic/ decât înainte. mă poți strânge în pumn./mă poți ține între degete./ mă poți înghiți, dacă vrei, ca pe un nanorobot/ din ăsta modern/care intră în tine, prin stomac,/ prin intestine, prin vase de sânge/ și te face bine." My translation, R.H. Ibidem.

[5] Namely: *Versez* [IVerse], 2011; *Uibesc* [IOlve], 2012; *Nesfârşesc* [INeverend], 2013; *16 poezii de iubire pe care mi le-aş fi scris mie dacă aş fi fost tu* [16 love poems I would have written to myslef if I had been you], 2015; *Cartea săruturilor* [The Book of Kisses], 2016.

[6] See https://www.wall-street.ro/articol/Lifestyle/159207/tudor-chirila-iv-cel-naiv-si-radu-beligan-cei-mai-vanduti-autori-in-2013.html#gref.

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[7] Max Blecher (1909-1938) was a Jewish-Romanian writer whose poetic prose writing was deemed emblematic for the aesthetic creed articulating Komartin's cultural projects.

[8] Claudiu Komartin gave up university studies in languages and literature at the University of Bucharest.

[9] The 'Mihai Eminescu' National Prize, for *Păpuşarul şi alte insomnii* [The Puppeteer and Other Insomnia], Vinea Publihing House, Bucharest, 2003.

[10] Claudiu Komartin, „Performantismul", in *Caiete critice*, 2-3 / 2005, pp. 144-146.

However, starting with the second decade of the century, Komartin's genuine preoccupation for poetry in general and for the writing of his peers gradually turned him into a remarkably efficient cultural promoter. Equally skilled as a poetry editor, a talent discoverer and a cultural activist, he was able to 'market' both his own poetic products and his preferences as a standard of value for the young generations of Romanian poets.

The beginning of what can be defined today as a complex and authoritative promotion mechanism (a veritable 'launch ramp' for young poets and poetical discourses) was the 'Blecher Institute', currently counting 199 editions. Basically following the structure of the academic year[11], the weekly meetings of this literary club take place each Sunday evening in a Bucharest café (*Tramvaiul 26* – Tram Route 26). From occasional evenings dedicated to older-generation poetic role-models to the typical events usually moderated by Claudiu Komartin himself, starring two (or sometimes three or four) young, emerging (published or yet unpublished) poets who are required to share some their newest creations with an average audience made out of some tens of their fellow writers, this literary society has become a 'must', a *sine qua non* step in the career of any newcomer who cannot (or would not) access the traditional, state-funded support provided by national cultural institutions.

Of course, the 'Institute' is also a negotiation area, the perfect context for an editor to 'collect' the best (or most promising) authors for his own. Thus, the foundation of the Max Blecher Publishing House one year later (in 2010) naturally followed, aiming at a relatively small number of selected publications per year. The main editorial collection (entitled *Plantaţii* – 'plantations', or 'cash crops') presently counts about 50 titles and features young previously published authors; it is complemented by the approximately 15-title collection *Opera prima* and three others (*Orfeu, Washoe, Hors Collection*), plus the now partially crowd-funded collection made out by the 22 current issues of the consistent and widely-appreciated *Poesis Internaţional* poetry magazine. Also, Blecher publishing annually houses a well-regarded national poetry competition dedicated to previously unpublished young authors on a lookout for an editor willing to sign for their debut.

All in all, the Max Blecher cultural phenomenon is an auspicious launch mechanism providing the full range of promotion services for poets who practice alternative and experimental writing and aim not as much at commercial mass success, but rather at an alternative, high cultural and exclusive status. In other words, Blecher authors and protégés tend to become the favorites of young(er) elites – and form a 21st century self-established alternative to the long-settled elites promoted by the literary establishment.

However, an important feature that quickly lead to the success of this rather small-scaled, but elitist project was the tremendous effort put into the 'socialization' of the House's authors and books, as well as of its 'satellites' (i.e., favorable poetic reading clubs and projects, personalities, bookstores etc.). Quality standards met a clear-cut, attractive aesthetic program and the *spiritus rector*'s personal notoriety and theatrical public persona were directly (and effectively) engaged in promotion strategies (from the impeccable editing of the book-as-object and of Blecher-related web pages to well-organized book launches, public readings in all significant book or poetry events, festivals etc.).

But most of the actual notoriety of the 'Blecher phenomenon' is just as much due to successful – if sometimes, rather aggressive – blogging and online social media strategies. First, just like with Ives the Naïve, the due attention is paid to the visual paratext accompanying the books or book-related events – a regrettably underrated preoccupation with most publishers of the same (or even higher) league. All book and magazine cover art, the Institute's posters, and all web design (from websites to Facebook pages or events[12]) are signed by Ana Toma, whose elegantly imaginative creations and style, displayed on unicolor, simple white or black backgrounds have generated an all-comprehensive, consistent and appealing concept, readily recognizable, both offline and online, as one of the (now, already 'classic') Blecher trademarks.

Second, the group's concern for media visibility – i.e., for Internet and social media (Facebook) publicity, mostly – was (and still is) tremendous. But in this case, Internet posts concerning book-promotion activities and Internet profiling go way beyond the utter showcasing of poetic material. Of course, the steady flow of carefully selected poems or fragments posted on

[11] The two annual 'seasons' during which the Blecher Institute is active are September to November and February to June.

[12] See www.maxblecher.ro, www.facebook.com/InstitutulBlecher, www.facebook.com/CdEMaxBlecher/, poesisinternational.blogspot.com.

the Institute's and the House's Facebook pages, on Komartin's personal page, or blogs, the live video footage of public readings or poetry festivals, the rich and thoroughly organized photographic material, the vast paratext[13] on display (e.g. the featuring of positive critical feedback or of musical and visual associations with the work of worldwide contemporary artists etc.), the extensive video coverage of every Blecher Institute edition are not to be underestimated as part of a creative and well-organized attention-getting strategy.

But then, there is mostly the online definition of an alternative, if rather exclusivist group identity, the social marketing of a concept, rather than of the individual economic products it sells (or rather, 'launches'). And this is mainly achieved via the direct involvement of the editor's personal Facebook page and blog[14], which are still the most 'followed' of all related Internet platforms and highlight the main posts on the House's and the Institute's pages, website contents, as well as selected textual material from *Poesis Internaţional*'s blog). Even if the general rhetoric of the paratexts supporting the actual poetic material usually retain a dose of the traditional solemnity of meta-literary discourse (and most of its technical accuracy) with Komartin, there is still a visible, a casual-cool, youthful surface to the discourse and imagery, signaling a visible tendency towards a paradigm change[15].

In addition, beyond the engaging pro-domo use of a personal tone and the direct, dynamic dialogue with target audiences, there is also a certain anti-establishment, identity-configuration policy involving a definite taste for public scandal. An overt (and sometimes less-than-elegant in terms of its rhetoric) anti-Writers' Union Facebook campaign, started after January 15, 2015, on occasion of the "Mihai Eminescu" National Poetry Award is still on-going. Claudiu Komartin initiated an online petition on contributors.ro[16], demanding for the resignation of

the jury having awarded the "Opera Omnia" prize that year to Gabriel Chifu (the vice-president of the Union), against other, much more reputable nominees, such as Mircea Cărtărescu, Aurel Pantea, Marta Petreu, Ioan Moldovan, Liviu Ioan Stoiciu or Lucian Vasiliu. Some tens of writers joined the petition by signing it online. It was the beginning of a long-lasting public media quarrel which resulted (apart from several embarrassingly insulting public exchanges on both sides of the tracks), in several resignations from the Union (not of the jury, but of some tens of other writers who deemed it immoral to cling to their membership against their personal convictions), the challenging of Nicolae Manolescu's right to the Union's presidency (which ended in the court of law), and, on the long term, in a chase for each other's false steps ever since. But perhaps the most prominent outcome was the fact that the waters were parted: since January 2015, authority in the field of literature (and mostly, poetry) has been clearly redistributed between the official / traditional establishment –i.e., mostly state-funded institutions such as the Writer's Union –, and their 'opposition' – i.e., the alternative, progressist, anti-establishment faction, relying on a list of poetic celebrities, among which Claudiu Komartin is probably the most influential to-the-day, via both his editorial prestige and his relentless cultural activism. More than that, if legally there was no real gain in the end for the Union's opponents, their 'move' was a tremendous publicity stunt, achieved mainly due to an efficiently-lead Internet campaign. In other words, if the Union won the legal battle, the 'anti-establishment' mostly won the battle for the online medium – an advantage not to be neglected on the long term, as more and more literary journals, magazines and platforms move 'in the online' in order to reduce costs and gain visibility, while traditional publications sell less and less paperback copies.

In the end, the 'Blecher projects' thus had visibility to win (Claudiu Komartin and his cultural ventures get more and more mainstream media attention as a consequence[17]) and the identity-

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[13] The concept of 'paratext' belongs to Gérard Genette. See *Palimpsests: Literature in the Second Degree*, University of Nebraska Press, 1997.

[14] Namely unanotimpinberceni.blogspot.com.

[15] Literary critic Ovio Olaru also discusses a "mutation in the literary paradigm" occurring with the 21st century poets in *Romanian Poetry of the 2000s. The Setting for a Change in Paradigm* (Olaru, 2017: 19).

[16] *O modestă propunere. Apel către Juriul Premiului Mihai Eminescu – Opera Omnia. Actualizat cu reacţia lui Nicolae Manolescu*, http://www.contributors.ro/ cultura/o-modesta-propunere-apel-catre-juriul-premiului-mihai-eminescu-opera-

omnia/?fbclid=IwAR1gfYOHXaF5jCVmEkpX8WZW0 YMy88GpVU8FXbX1XDEfXg3T_x17_-txPAQ.

[17] See Claudiu Komartin's recent interviews on HotNews.ro (March 20, 2019), available at https://www.hotnews.ro/stiri-perspektiva-23039099-interviu-claudiu-komartin-scriitor-ideea-este-gasesti-calea-functionezi-firesc-fara-online-faulteze-tot-pasul-intelectual-sau-sensibil-fara-faca-sclav.htm [30.03.2019], Radio România Cultural (July 18, 2018), available at https://radioromaniacultural.ro/interviu-cu-poetul-claudiu-komartin/[30.03.2019], or the Claudiu Komartin portrait dedicated to the poet by the national

definition politics they employed, mostly by using the online environment – notably, popular social media websites (i.e., Facebook) and areas of the blogosphere (i.e., blogspot.com) – eventually earned them an important marketing asset: beyond the aesthetic program they started with, they have also added an attractive, alternative-progressive moral identity to their services package. Thus, the young author who chooses this alterne path to canonization may not expect a traditional, institutionalized reception of their work; but they will be acclaimed by a large part of the online exclusivist reading community as an author who is at the same time 'trendy', in tone with the 'Spirit of the Age', a progressive thinker (which would also bring him or her closer to the somewhat similar Romantic concept of the visionary poet), and last but not least, a person of strong moral fiber, able to give up or refuse, *a priori*, (sometimes, consistent) financial advantages (such as the ones provided by one's membership in the Writer's Union) for the sake of their moral beliefs. On the whole, this may count as a gain in personal prestige not to be taken lightly.

Furthermore, perhaps following the same line of thought, and adding to the ethical group identity designed via the engagement in the said anti-(the literary)establishment scandal, a definite political stand also became explicit in recent years with the 'Blecher group', again triggered by public content posted on Claudiu Komartin's personal page: this time, it was about the poet-editor's fervent participation in the anti-government civil movements in the last few years, as well as his overt critical take on the government's policies. Also making a stand as a political commentator – according to a philosophy of the public intellectuals' necessary engagement in public affairs which seems to be the dominant progressist moral perspective in Romanian society – and, by consequence, attracting, again, the approval of a rather vast majority of the possible younger-generation frequenting the Net for news, Komartin thus secures an online supremacy in the perpetual battle for audience support.

2.3 Subchapters, follow-ups and further developments. The poetic online identity *topos* pioneered by the 'Blecher group' – i.e., the unconventional, anti-establishment poetic identity understood as significant in the sense that it is meant to trigger a mentality shift widely deemed necessary – has rather thrived in the poetic online environment, becoming a recurrent, popular *topos* with the 'reading elites' which come to inhabit the virtual spaces dedicated to literature and poetry in the Romanian online medium.

One of the most trendy (if short-lived) such 'follow-up' online projects was Laurenţiu Ion's Subcapitol.ro platform, self-described as an online "independent and non-profit magazine dedicated to literature and photography"[18], an "online contemporary photography and literature magazine meant to promote young artists"[19]. Initially promoted, again, by Komartin and the 'Blecher group', the webpage reached the peak of its activity and influence between 2014 and 2017, by mainly featuring 'Blecher' authors and their poetic 'social circle', accompanied by alluring photographic art authored by Romanian young artists.

Another society of young authors that got intensive (online) media support from the 'Blecher institution' was *Zona Nouă*, the literary magazine issued initially on paper, then online (at zonanoua.com) by the students of the creative writing school in Sibiu (mentored by Claudiu Komartin's close friend and fellow poet Radu Vancu). An interesting and valuable initiative, it slowly began to die out after 2017 (after about 7 years of fruitful existence), as the initial editorial group scattered and mostly left the poetic scene altogether.

Beyond related online platforms, the 'Blecher Institute' also set certain standards when it comes to the self-promotion standards of other literary cafés, such as 'Dactăr Nicu's Skyzoid Poets' in Braşov, for instance, a monthly poetry reading club which has currently reached its 39-th edition. Also saluted by the 'Blecher group' and lead by the charismatic nationally-acclaimed poet and university professor Robert-Gabriel Elekes, also a dear friend to Claudiu Komartin and the "Blecher circle' follows the same proven pattern: the attractive and coherent web visual concept (by Roxana Târziu) is accompanied by dynamic online exposure and the correlation of visual, video and text material, all wrapped up in a "cool", smart-casual intellectual atmosphere.

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television (TVR1)on April 3, 2018, currently available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bGCqzLk4uHg [30.03.2019], to provide a few examples.

[18] Original description: "SUBCAPITOL.RO este o revistă online de literatură şi fotografie, independentă şi nonprofit". My translation, R.H. See http://www. subcapitol.ro/ (the homepage). [30.03.2019].
[19] Original description: "Revistă online de fotografie şi literatură contemporană ce promovează tinerii artişti". See http://picdeer.com/subcapitol. [30.03.2019].

However, since 2018, a progressive decrease in aggressive online self-marketing tactics seems to have set in, even if self-promotion is still present under the form of less theatrical, and thus, more discrete individual posts, regarding book events, launches, authors' recent publications or ad-hoc reviews of their favorite recent reading. A syndrome, perhaps, of the new-establishment's comfortable settling in the new medium: it may very well be that the outcome of the battle for the Romanian virtual poetic space is, at least temporarily, decided.

3. SUM-UP: CONCLUSIONS ON MORAL IDENTITY AS A RELEVANT MARKETING ASSET

If we were to summarize, at this point, the two online identity-configuration strategies we've looked into as selected case studies, we can surely notice that they have an essential common point to be remembered: both Ives the Naïve and the 'Blecher phenomenon' are ultimately based, in one word, on different types of ethical 'user' profiling, involving, one way or the other, a certain redefinition of traditionally established poetic practices and discourse, with a key or base element in content accessibility (however differently defined). And by 'accessibility', we can understand both the actual ease-of-access – as most content is just a few clicks away and is, just as important, free of charge –, and the preoccupation for a higher degree of openness towards the general (online) consumer public in either the poetic form (as with Ives the Naïve) or the paratextual discourse and material accompanying it (as with the 'Blecher group').

Thus, the new medium imposes a compromise (not necessarily to be understood in a negative moral connotation) between high cultural forms, such as poetry, and mass reception mechanisms, reducing the gap between elitist and popular discourses by enforcing a dialogue which seems to be felt by present-day generations as a rather acute necessity. Both discourse and identity politics are thus transfigured and (re)configured within the new virtual "extension of ourselves" (McLuhan, 1964:7).

A direct consequence of this change is the growth in importance of the ethical message and the moral identity of both its sender and its receiver, as personal content becomes – unavoidably – more prominent. The effective public management and/or manipulation of one's moral identity (as an author or a publisher) as well as the (re)definition of the audience's moral portrait as similar may therefore come down to ingenious user profiling strategies,

for both ends of the communication channel are affected. In the two cases analyzed here, Ives' fictional self-profiling as a naïve dreamer responds to a general necessity for innocence, kindness and for artistic expressions which can function as an escape from everyday hardships with its readers – a definition of art that ultimately fits the *katharctic* 'aest-ethics' of mass-culture itself; whereas the group identity defined by the 'Blecher phenomenon' is, in the end, an updated resuscitation of the 'rebellious', anti-establishment youth culture pioneered by the generation of the Sixties, i.e., a covert reference to an ever-reoccurring cultural phenomenon which characterizes periods of massive cultural mutation.

As a consequence, self-empowerment policies such as self-marketing, but also as (moral) self-(re)definition are of the essence when traditional institutions or authoritative, well-established entities and discourses lose credibility or tend to be dismissed as outdated and conservative. Also, we should note that capitalist ethics basically authorizes personal and group identity-marketing as a perfectly moral and competitive endeavor. Consequently, such strategies are not to be deemed immoral by default – at least, not before severe de-synchronization between one's (or a group's) authentic ethic or aesthetic beliefs and the 'marketed' ones can be proven.

This is why, even if the mere idea of it is often frowned upon by the conservative, the possibility to distinguish between two clear-cut, separate cultural paradigms, i.e., between 'high' culture and 'mass' culture gets thinner and thinner, especially inside – and due to the expansion of – the digital environment. Nonetheless, the ensuing dialogue (or negotiation) mustn't necessarily be understood as a fundamental failure to maintain artistic quality standards, as it may very well prove to be a win-win situation in the years to come – after the natural initial clashes and convulsive mutations come to an end –, by eventually favoring a seemingly improbable 'merger' able to balance quantity and quality requirements in present-day cultural production.

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