

## Paul Celan and Ghérasim Luca. Psychoanalytic Readings A proposal of pre-, non-, post- oedipal poetics

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**Paul Celan and Ghérasim Luca. Psychoanalytic Readings proposal of pre-, non-, post- oedipal poetics:** This study aims to be a proposal of psychoanalytic readings of the works of the poets widely known as the most important German and French speaking poets of the late twentieth century, both born in Romania, namely Paul Celan and Ghérasim Luca.

**Keywords:** Paul Celan, Ghérasim Luca, psychoanalytic readings

### ВЪВЕДЕНИЕ

In 1920, Freud was convinced that „with the progress of psychoanalytic studies the importance of the Oedipus complex has become, more and more, clearly evident; its recognition has become the *schibboleth* that distinguishes the adherents of psychoanalysis from its opponents”. More than sixty years later, Jacques Derrida presents, in Seattle, an extended study on Paul Celan’s poetry entitled, surprisingly or not, *Schibboleth*, inspired by two Celanian poems bearing the same name. The seeming „coincidence” draws attention to the fact that actually the connection between Oedipus’s complexes in its various forms, especially those that attempt to refine and/or rephrase it and the poetics of one of the most important lyric authors of the end of the last millennium is no coincidence at all. By „various forms” we consider more than Otto Rank’s or Melanie Klein’s approaches that elaborated the concept of pre-oedipal positioning with the superego development in the background, but also later analyses such as that of Jacques Lacan, that considered oedipal complex responsible for introducing the subject in the field of symbolic order by his disengaging from a captive dual relationship that resides between a son and his mother. This type of oedipal positioning of the subject can be easily identified in the anthumous work of Paul Celan that presents only one single occurrence of the term „father” (*Vater*), and that is the joint form of „Puppenvater” – denominating the master of a puppets’ play, who is the puppeteer. On the other hand, the occurrence of the combination „mother-sister” is numerous, probably by hundreds, which indicate a setting (that could have been deliberate) in the very core of oedipal complex, doubled by the emasculation of father, by mere obliteration of his presence and choice according to the symbolic cultural order of Lacan, for a *Muttersprache* („maternal language”) in detriment of *Vaterland* („native country”, „father’s country” or „paternal” in German). Therefore, the absence of paternal figure from the works of Celan could be explained by a classical mechanism of emasculator’s emasculation, considering the „emasculator” any other brutal instances of ideological nature that caused the death of both parents during Nazi concentration camps in the war, as well as Celan’s own exile from Romania under the Russian influence in 1947 – towards a „schizophrenic capitalism” as Deleuze would have said it. Moreover, the poet’s neurosis developed within oedipal complex might clarify on the edge Celan’s suicidal option in 1970 if we recall of his mother doing the same apparently in the waters of the Bug river when she found out about her husband’s death (Celan’s father); the poet did the same gesture about thirty years later, this time in the Seine in Paris. Nonetheless, we intend to further investigate these similarities.

### ИЗЛОЖЕНИЕ

If Paul Celan appears to embrace the oedipal setting, expressing it on the reverse (by „emasculator’s emasculation”), Ghérasim Luca refuses its premises from the very beginning, advancing in 1947 the „non-oedipal positioning” in his volume *Amphitrite, mouvements sur-thaumaturgiques et non-œdipiens*, that includes the famous poem *Passionnément*. Needless to say that both Celan and Luca have Ashkenazi Jewish origins

and they were Romanian residents and met each other long before their settling in Paris when they were friends. Moreover, they are connected by their suicidal destiny that impacted Ghérasim Luca in February 1994 that let himself dive fatally in the Seine as well. Much noise and speculation surrounded this fact of self-performance almost ritual of his disappearance: supposedly, Ghérasim Luca did not dive in the river, but he entered its waters from the bank fully clothed in February and kept on walking until freezing waters engulfed him entirely. This happened when he was 81 years old and he did it with a certain calm and grandness that indeed seem „super-thaumaturgical and non-oedipal.” Luca was Celan’s senior by seven years. During the time Paul Anstchel spent in Bucharest (1945-1947), the Romanian surrealist gathering (formed of Gellu Naum, Ghérasim Luca, Virgil Teodorescu, Dolfi Trost and Paul Păun) had its climax in poetic manifestations – Ghérasim Luca, alone or in cooperation with other authors, publishes in just two years about eleven volumes, among which there is the well-known *Dialectique de la dialectique*, in which he suggested in the context of accelerated Stalinization of Romania, „the limitless erotic attitude of the working class”. This kind of deliberate rhetorical excesses of the surrealists in Bucharest convinced Paul Celan, a close acquaintance of them, to declare in prose writing (available in Romanian only) „the partisan of erotic absolutism.” Far from being a coincidence, this is the first time when Paul Anstchel (his real name) signs right within the text with the pseudonym of Paul Celan. As I intended to demonstrate in my book *Re-actualisation of Meaning. Paul Celan and Romanian Avant-garde*, 2007, the coagulation of the young men’s expressive identity could not have been possible without direct contact and experimentation of techniques „invented” by surrealist writers in Bucharest immediately after the end of the Second World War. At the same time, his debut takes place during those years with a poem first published in Romanian and entitled *Tangoul morții* (*Death Tango*), that is the famous to be *Todesfuge* (*Death Fugue*).

Arrived in Paris, Celan in 1948 and Luca in 1952, both of them make their official debut in the same year, the first with *Möhn and Gedächtnis* (*Poppy and Memory*), and the latter with *Héros-Limite* (1953), writing in German and French respectively, although both of them knew well both languages. They were friends as well, spent time playing volleyball on Sundays and Celan’s wife, Gisèle Celan-Lestrange, illustrated in 1963 the volume *Sept slogans ontophoniques* (*Seven ontophonic slogans*), of Ghérasim Luca, published by the same Publishing House (Brunidor, Paris/Vaduz, Liechtenstein) that Celan chose to issue his limited edition of poetry collections such as that dedicated to Heidegger (*Todtnauberg*, 1968, that I extendedly analyzed in my book *The Lyrics of Paul Celan and the Contemporary Thought*, 2013). These poets’ friendship cannot be condescending, because of its time span and it certainly has some affinities, including those of poetical nature and in their background, of psychoanalytical nature. In just a few years later, in 1972, Gilles Deleuze’s and Felix Guattari’s post-Freudian study is published, *L’Anti-Œdipe – Capitalisme et schizophrénie* (*Anti-Oedipus – Capitalism and Schizophrenia*), that tends to cross over the boundaries of psychoanalysis, by its *desiring-machines* recalling of „cube-maniacs”, mechanisms and „non-oedipal movements” of Ghérasim Luca – an author that kept correspondence with Deleuze that he lately considered to be „the greatest living poet of French language”. Another interesting fact is the emphasis that Deleuze sets in his *L’Anti-Œdipe*, on the „oedipal imperialism” and the celebration of „pre-oedipal stage considered by some to be the pattern of neurotic adaptation in the „schizophrenic” context of late capitalism.

In conclusion, it is my opinion that the works of both poets contain in their profound structures, the attempt to attain this pre-oedipal stage, even if this is done in different manners that appear to share means of expression between them. Paul Celan, by the impossible attempt of „denying the denial” that is specific to surrealists, „emasculates the emasculator” depriving him of the strong attributes of totalitarian discourse, while Ghérasim Luca, „inventor of love” (according to his title from 1945), embraces *passionnément* the entire oedipal mechanism, *sortir sans sortir*, transforming it, by the

ambiguous presence of the subject in itself, in a desirable mechanism (*desiring-machine*). Consequently, both poets settle fluctuant constructions (or, as Deleuze would have put it, constructions characteristic of libidinal flow) specific to pre-oedipal positioning and, maybe, specific to our present setting within the world.

I shall endeavor to develop the above-mentioned by transversal readings of the entire works of Paul Celan and Ghérasim Luca that I am familiar with to their every detail – and that will be accompanied, most likely, by an extensive translation work of myself. By this transversal sectioning I wish to identify more pre-oedipal settings of a nature meant to strengthen my hypothesis in this respect. The means shall be those of psychoanalytical literary criticism, with a focus on the works of Jacques Lacan or others of post-structural psychoanalysis. At the same time, I shall trace the echoes that these possible psychoanalytical readings had in the applied criticism of this kind. And I think that all of the above will eventually demonstrate not just the value of two great poets, Paul Celan and Ghérasim Luca – acknowledged widely already –, but that they are great poets especially because they knew how to express by their specific means, the most profound and anxious obsessions of ourselves.

### **ЗАКЛЮЧЕНИЕ**

This project of research materialized following discussions, in 2012, with professor Giovanni Rotiroti, himself being a psychoanalyst in Florence and professor in Naples, and with Mario Ajazzi Mancini, psychoanalyst as well and author of a book about Paul Celan (*A nord del futuro. Scritture intorno a Paul Celan*, 2009). This project aims at applying some literary psychoanalysis methods, especially of Lacanian character and/or post-structural character on the literary works of Paul Celan and Ghérasim Luca – an endeavour that has not been attempted so far. Celan's suicide in 1970 has been psychoanalyzed tangentially during some international psychoanalysis seminars. The relationship between the two poets, as we know, is documented in a single volume of studies collected by CCP (*Cahier critique de poésie – Dossier Paul Celan-Ghérasim Luca*, March, 2009), published by the International Centre for Poetry in Marseille. In this context, the innovative interdisciplinary feature of my study proposal is obvious in itself. The current state of my endeavour, after my publishing of two books referring to Paul Celan (in 2007 and 2013), is that of forming of a corpus of texts to allow transversal reading. Considering the origins of Paul Celan's texts are very well (but incompletely) documented, including the available criticism editions (the historical-critical one of Beda Allemann in 1990 and the one from Tübingen), existing documents of Ghérasim Luca lack good compilation so far. The texts he wrote during his presence in Romania are vaguely familiar and less explored, excepting those he translated in French himself. I have the pleasure to possess with the help of the Romanian publisher of Ghérasim Luca, which is the ICARE (Institute for Research of Romanian and European Avant-garde) that was forwarded the poet's works from his French publisher, José Corti, the full entire writings of Ghérasim Luca, including some texts of complete novelty such as the Romanian version of the volume *Le vampire passif* (1945). Consequently, my project cannot only provide psychoanalytical interpretations, but also documentary clarifications, meant to cast a new light on the works of the two poets, widely known as most important German and French speaking poets of the late twentieth century.

### **За контакти:**

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### **Докладът е рецензиран.**