

THE ART OF FUGUE

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Abstract: The Art of Fugue was proposed to be published to Eminescu Publishing House in 1971, a manuscript rejected by the communist censorship. This broken debut, as it was called by Dan Silviu Boerescu, was the cause of a great disappointment felt by the young Culianu, which might have caused him to seek refuge abroad. The volume reproduces a "large production of childhood and adolescence"¹, written on hundreds of pages on school notebooks and student paper sheets. The content of the posthumous volume *The Art of Fugue* was written between 1967-1972, representing the school writings of a "teenage child", collected in a "volume of prose before the exile"². According to the editor, the original manuscript could have been lost in the meantime, turned into ashes or preserved somewhere, waiting "to be rediscovered in its entirety"³. Nevertheless, the author keeps the idea of the fugue in future creations, an art of fugue written in the exile symbolizing the dynamism of the mind metamorphosed in novel *Hesperus*, the Art of Transformation being a metaphor of cognition.

Keywords: Culianu, transtextuality, the art of fugue, oneirism, chase

In his last interview, Culianu shows himself still affected by the Publishing House making decision not to publish his book, being criticized for some form of mysticism, according to Mrs. Graciov, the book editor⁴. The *Art of Fugue* was proposed to be published by the Eminescu Publishing House for the 1971 program; after rejection, Mircea Ciobanu tried to bring it to the attention of the Cartea Romanească Publishing House, without succeeding, being already politically compromised. Mircea Ciobanu can be discovered in the story *History III* as "my older friend M.C. (to whom this book will be sent)"⁵. Ever since, Culianu remained convinced that the censorship of his book was linked to the influence of the National Safety Officer based on his refusal to cooperate ("And not for other reasons, but because I had said a very firmly "no" to the national safety officer, who had requested my services"⁶).

In the *Art of Fugue*, in the story *Fugue II: „Do Not Lose This Paper by Any Chance...”*, the young writer critically outlines the communist bureaucracy in the character representing a Magician state clerk conveyed through the "dangerous jerk", Vasile Maidan, the party activist in the story *Death and the Girl*, described as a "wanderer, swindler, and bargain maker" endowed with "cunning foxy eyes" and a "mischievous and impertinent" smile. In his entourage, the author introduces a secretary of the Building Trust no. 1, Temistocle Brezoi, bald, with a "pig's neck", a fat and reddish Tănăsache, accountant, and a "gentleman with a naked bird's look, dressed in black". The traces of the magician character can be found in the

¹ Tereza Culianu-Petrescu, „Cuvânt lămuritor asupra ediției”, Ioan Petru Culianu, *The Art of Fugue. Stories, including five author's drawings, Preface by Dan C. Mihăilescu, Iași, Polirom, Ioan Petru Culianu's Library, 2002* (written between 1967 and 1972), p. 17.

² *Ibid.*, p. 18.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

⁴ „Nu știu, nu pot să-mi explic nicidecum de ce povestirile alea nu puteau fi publicate”, Gabriela Adameșteanu, *Ioan Petru Culianu. Omul și opera*, volum coordonat de Sorin Antohi, traduceri de Corina Popescu, Claudia Dumitriu, Ioana Ieronim, Cristina Ionică, Tereza Culianu-Petrescu, Polirom, Iași, 2003, p. 59.

⁵ Ioan Petru Culianu, *The Art of Fugue*, *op. cit.*, p. 172.

⁶ Gabriela Adameșteanu, *Ioan Petru Culianu. Omul și opera*, *op. cit.*, p. 59.

literature of exile, as well as in his political and cultural journalism, in the critical approach on the faulty cultural management and the communist bureaucracy.

Culianu admits that his volume of stories was rejected by the 1971 theses, causing him to leave ("Then it was a very clear and beautiful signal that I do not have much to look for in Romania, and fortunately I understood it, and fortunately the situation was understood and I managed to leave in '72"⁷). His opinion was that the year 1971 was a turning point for Romanian culture, and thus, consequently, "the jerks, the careerists or the fake naive of the moment, the docile officials or the "old guard"⁸ were advantaged, while others took the path of exile. Called cultural officials by Paul Goma, Culianu considered them "intellectual caterpillars", mostly "refused by the idea" and "fertilized by the party"⁹, while Corin Braga thinks that the theses of July 1971 triggered the appearance of the "80th-century sacrificed generation"¹⁰.

In the *Art of Fugue*, the young writer captures the experience of writing as a form of meditation in front of a white sheet, that deeply penetrates the creator's thoughts ("Writing often breaks my thoughts by forcing me to dig further and deeper"¹¹), reminding us of the concept of the drill-mind theorized by Mark Turner. For the sensitive young man, the act of scrupulously recording feelings is an artificial, slightly forced, even vulgar gesture, preferring to have written about someone else ("I could have written this book suggesting that it is talking about somebody else altogether"¹²). Unhappy with what he writes ("Be it that the ordinary man that I am is not to get back terrified by these pages"), the creations seem dry, dull, without vibration. Sometimes, the writing functions as a scream ("For I am doing nothing else but shouting in front of others my inhuman misunderstanding and loneliness"¹³).

A series of stories signal the father's absence, starting with *Fugue I: The Numbers*, "I Would Like to Write About Fear", the tragic echo of his father's death is echoing in the story *Fugue X: the Gothic Man's Apotheoses or the Ten Days*, ("My last support (father died) had fallen down and I would be left alone, uselessly"). The shock of his father's death is also described in *Fugue XIV: Oreste, the King of Sounds* ("My father killed in the bathroom"). Another footprint of the father could be detected in *Fugue XVI: the Will Executor*, where the author has a dialogue with a person who has gone on the other world ("You have died long ago in the absolute, as you might not die now, then. And you are dead for me ever since"). In the *Fugue I: Numbers*, the author states that "meeting my father is the only true thing I want in the world", explaining the *Art of Fugue* as being inspired by his father:

"And if my father might ask me what I could make of his unfinished work, how will I take his battle with the numbers further away, what could I reply then; similarly, but without knowing him, I would try to build an *Art of Fugue* out of the world, an art of escaping into a kingdom of pure souls and triangles, outside time and above the mountains, constantly trying to find the endlessly estranged people of the immortals" (*Fugue I: The Numbers*).

The twenty-one years old writer is looking for love („At seventeen, I wished for a huge, unheard of, love, to turn my life around as a strong hand bends a thick steel bar", *Good Watch*). Mainly, the texts contain the meditation of a young man matured much earlier,

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ Ioan Petru Culianu, *Studii românești II. Soarele și Luna. Otrăvurile admirației, traduceri de Maria-Magdalena Anghelescu, Corina Popescu și Dan Petrescu, notă asupra ediției de Tereza Culianu-Petrescu, Iași, Polirom, „Biblioteca Ioan Petru Culianu”, 2009, pp. 220-223.*

⁹ Ioan Petru Culianu, *Păcatul împotriva spiritului, Scrieri politice, ediția a II a adăugită, traduceri de Corina Popescu, Claudia Dumitrescu, Tereza Culianu-Petrescu, Dan Petrescu, notă asupra ediției de Tereza Culianu-Petrescu, Iași, Polirom, „Biblioteca Ioan Petru Culianu”, 2005, pp. 200-208.*

¹⁰ Corin Braga, *10 studii de arhetipologie*, ediția a II a, Cluj-Napoca, Dacia, „Mundus imaginalis”, 2007, p. 212.

¹¹ Ioan Petru Culianu, *Arta fugii, op. cit.*, p. 190.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 193.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 88.

preoccupied with the meaning of life and death, with the sensation that „human life is a continuous suffering” (*Good Watch*), with the fear of being banished out of reality into the non-existence („The human being is under the horrible pressure of time, being mortal, banished out of life”, *Good Watch*), fear of death prompted by the young Diana. The *History III* is about “the sadist who wreaks havoc in Bucharest”, while the story *A Revenge* describes the victim's body (“Poor Miss Micaela disfigured (with her face burnt), pierced by a few clumsy knife strikes”).

In the youth fiction, Culianu captures the heterotopia of the teenage crisis, his contact with the world, the adaptation crisis and the growing up process. The teenager is aware of the fact that he “uses the fiction to fly over time” and in order “to create a time not rosier, but more condensed”¹⁴, an instrument used to build imaginary universes to seek refuge out of an unbearable reality.

As a narrative technique, in the youth prose he uses the technique of internal focalization, while when mature he makes use of the technique of external focalization, focusing the narrative discourse on a historical character and his actions, according to the strategy of turning a fiction in a factual narration, named by Genette a “historical character treated as being fictive”¹⁵. Abroad, young Culianu intervenes on his youth stories in order to transform them, as reported in the letter 23 on the 23rd of November 1976, being convinced that the stories written in the country “sometimes contain excellent ideas”¹⁶. It is not known whether, after four years of exile, he reread the stories and made changes to them, the letter in question being discovered by Liviu Bordas in the Mircea Eliade Papers Fund of the Chicago Regenstein Library, together with two other letters published for the first time in 2012.

Between 1967 and 1969, Culianu published a series of stories in the Romanian cultural journals *Cronica* and *Luceafărul*, the first one being the text *And I Foolishly Laughed, but Not by My Own Will*. From the perspective of the heterotopia of the adolescence crisis, the themes tackled in his youth stories are the boredom, the eroticism and the fear of the real macabre that the teenager begins to discover. Being in the process of self-seeking, the young man is confused about what he wants (“he was convinced he did not know what he was looking for, beauty-force-love”, *Instead of a Beginning: Always Beginning*).

The state of boredom is hard to bear, the young man feeling caught in a rush of boredom (“the boredom suddenly started calling him to the unseen, maybe no longer there, horizons that fled to infinity in front of him”, *Instead of a Beginning: Always Beginning*). Failed teenage love stories, the date with a “fat and washed-out” girl (*Evening, by the Wall*), couple walks, and Borgesian separations at the corner of the street are also found in the *Selena River* story written in Rome in 1973. The street and dating with a girl, besides the theme of transient adolescent relationships, activates the symbolism of the street as a heterotopic space. The prose of the young Culianu captures the stages of the transition from childhood to adolescence (“this tender and inconsistent dough, still in the shaping process”, *Evening, by the Wall*) and from adolescence to maturity. Uncertainty, hypersensitivity, shyness, misunderstood desire are projected into Borgesian thresholds spaces, the opposite side of the pavement, also encountered at Țepeneag *On the Curb of the Sidewalk* and later on the other side of the *Selena River*.

¹⁴ Ioan Petru Culianu, *Arta fugii, op. cit.*, p. 40.

¹⁵ Gerard Genette, *Introducere în arhitext. Ficțiune și dicțiune*, traducere și prefață de Ion Pop, București, Univers, 1994, p. 143.

¹⁶ „Voi relua numai și voi transforma povestirile mele „din tinerețe”, care conțin uneori idei excelente”, Ioan Petru Culianu, *Dialoguri întrerupte, Corespondență Mircea Eliade – Ioan Petru Culianu, ediția a doua revăzută și adăugită, prefață de Matei Călinescu, ediție îngrijită de Tereza Culianu-Petrescu și Dan Petrescu, Iași, Polirom, „Biblioteca Ioan Petru Culianu”, 2013, „23”, p. 90.*

Investigating the literary creation of youth involves the interrogation of the social and political reality the author lived in, the social context conveyed by Derrida through the concept of “real-history-of-the-world”¹⁷ which includes history and social reality, found at Culianu as “history driven mad by reality”, *Imagine the Army in Gulf*). The reverberations of the communist political regime in the young writer’s mind and their impact, important in the decision-making process that determined the exile abroad, are also sought. The youth stories are liminal, on the one hand, through the theme of the adolescence crisis, on the other, due to the fear of the concentration inferno. By adopting the oneirical logic, these writings are Menippean, as well as by the dimension of alienation and interiorization, Kristeva emphasizing the function of Menippean narrative speech to signal the human being’s alienation from the world through the process of interiorization.

The inner feelings, reveries and night dreams are exploited by the oneirist writers who found a fertile ground in what Laura Pavel calls the “ambiguity specific to literature”¹⁸. With the short stories published in *Luceafărul* magazine, Culianu would join the oneirical group founded by Dumitru Țepeneag and Leonid Dimov, aesthetic oneirism being a “current of late modernity”¹⁹ appeared as a “subversive gesture to the official cultural policy and the pseudo-aesthetic direction of the socialist realism”²⁰. The same tendency is visible in the foreign cultural and political articles, criticizing communist cultural management. Laura Pavel analyses the aesthetic oneirism practiced by the group formed around the magazine *Luceafărul* by Țepeneag and Dimov, the oneirism being characterized by a substantial dose of subversiveness. This draws the attention of the censorship institutions, whose intransigence would be felt by Culianu in the case of the volume *Art of Fugue*.

The oneirical group establishes the literary cénacle and the magazine *Luceafărul*, where the programmatic texts *In Search of a Definition* are published. The texts point to the dilemma the writers had in the communist period, pressed to choose between expressing the truth and confronting censorship or conforming to the realistic socialist trend (“you either say the truth and risk being censored and badly targeted, or you make socialist realism, which means conformist, gilded literature”)²¹. According to Nicolae Bârna, the oneirism is a form of literary dissidence which structures a fictional oneirical universe through its visuality, using painting techniques and by putting into practice an oneiric legislative guide called “dream legislation”²² by Marian Victor Buciu. This kind of dream is described as an alternative, daily, rational dream, the dreamer being “a legislator who does DIY”²³, and his dream becomes an instrument for interpreting the reality perceived as complementary to or “analogous to dream”. In Ioan Petru Culianu’s case, the oneiric narrative discourse is dialogic through its oneirical traits since in Kristeva’s view, the dream logic “transgresses the rules of linguistic code and social morality”²⁴.

The oneirical marks are visible in his adolescence short stories in reflecting a liquefied, dematerialized reality “the street ground turned into an ocean of peaceful waters” (*Imagine the Army in Gulf*), while in Țepeneag’s stories the liquefaction process is more complex, human beings are swimming, drowned into a liquid which can suddenly become viscous

¹⁷ Jacques Derrida, *Limited Inc.*, translated by Samuel Weber, Evanston, Illinois, Northwestern University Press, 1988, p. 136.

¹⁸ Laura Pavel, *Dumitru Țepeneag și canonul literaturii alternative*, Cluj-Napoca, Casa Cărții de Știință, 2007, p. 17.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

²¹ Nicolae Bârna, *Țepeneag. Introducere într-o lume de hârtie*, București, Albatros, 1998, p. 32.

²² Marian Victor Buciu, *Țepeneag între onirism, textualism, postmodernism*, Aius, Craiova, 1998.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 24.

²⁴ Julia Kristeva, *The Julia Kristeva Reader* edited by Toril Moi, translated by Leon S. Roudiez by Columbia University Press and Sean Hand by Basil Blackwell Ltd., New York, Columbia University Press, 1986, p. 41.

again. The matter is liquefied, it drains, disintegrating, and finally decomposes, the matter's fluidization being a Borgesian theme, too ("a river of vehicles and people were flowing", *Delia Elena San Marco*). In the youth short stories, the character is sunken into a suffocating reality built from patchworks of people "dripping" on the streets and urban chunks that are "empty and cold" (*Instead of a Beginning: Always a Beginning*). The cities are fully engaged in the urbanization process, the rhythm of life being given by the "factories noises" (*Objects in Movement*).

The dominant colour is the grey tinge infused in the nature, buildings, humans and in the textiles: "grey sky", "grey buildings", "grey clothes", "grey sets", "grey dirt stripes", the grey head", chromatics that absorbs people who "cross each other dissolved in a desert of colour". The texts are based on a monochromatic palette that denounces a depressing monotony of the urban reality, both in Culianu's and Tepeneag's writings the asphalt, the sidewalks and the streets being depicted grey. In the *Light* story, the sky is reversed and the human being is thrown into the sky, "the man projecting himself high and obscure over the unidentified background" of the night, the same as in Tepeneag's *On the Curb of the Sidewalk*, where "the sky is grey", sometimes reversing and turning upside down ("only the sky, another lake overturned, grey, sometimes appearing like greenish glass"). In the *Rabid Cat*, we discover "a grey sky through the cafeteria's window", a heterotopic space, in the same story the grey cats being red striped, their heads being grey.

In the *Red Shirt* "the pavement is soft" and in *The Art of Fugue* "the sidewalk's crack" threatens to swallow the person inside, causing unbalance while walking. On the sidewalks, especially on the curb of the sidewalks, people walk only with bowed heads "with bowed head out of fear or shame", having three occurrences in Tepeneag's *On the Curb of the Sidewalk*. In Culianu's prose, the crowd of "bowed heads" is being caught into a constant run (*Rabid Cat*). Obviously, in both writer's stories, the glass and the light seem to be greenish, In Tepeneag's writings, the sky is turning green sometimes, as if made of "green glass", the light being "glassy green" in *Failure*, dripping "scarcely, pale and greenish" out of a small window at the end of the corridor (*Fragment*). The light is filtered through the "greenish granular glass windows" and through a "green translucent sphere" in the story *Imagine the Army in Gulf*. Seldom, the monochromatic fades away, making it possible for the horizon to gradually colour in red ("the sky will continue to colour itself: from incarnadine to red, in a more brighter and intense red, a purple red", *Traces*), the "sunset red light" in the same story relating to "the red sky" in Tepeneag's *Waiting*.

The motif of the white, dirty and bloody shirt is common to both writers, accompanied by the mouldy walls and corridors, by the wooden plank, rags, gasps, cold cement, the cold and the bars. In Culianu's case, the *Red Shirt* is initially white, the character mirrors himself wearing it in a window glass flooded by aggressive sunlight, blackened, the shirt gradually turning yellow, orange, reaching a rusty red in the end. Tepeneag mentions "the dirty collar, that blood stain, the shirt opened to the chest" in the *Accident*, the blood presence being conditioned by the existence of the corridor leading to the "bloody warehouses" packed with chunks of flesh (*Corridor*), Culianu describing "the whimsical slaughterhouses of the courts" in the *Glass Lock*.

The motif of the end of the corridor is connected in both cases to the concentration camps, in *Traces* "his friend's father appears at the end of the corridor". Tepeneag's character desperately tries to reach "the end of the corridor, from where the green light flows" through a "barred small window", from where one can see many other mouldy walls, one after another (*Corridor*). In *Light*, Culianu positions his character near the "cold rubble of the wall", where he is knelt, smoking tobacco through the cell's bars". In *Traces*, the narrow, "grained cement of the corridor" is described, people being built alive there as in a "macabre charade".

The teenager feels the burdensome presence of death “in a society of pensioners exclusively concerned about serious aspects of reality” (*Evening, by the Wall*), where he feels captive, “robbed of his freedom”. Among older relatives regularly visited, the young man feels anguished by the fear of physical decomposition that comes after the end of existence. The old people maintain the funereal presence of death, mentioning the last deaths during the conversation with young S.C. in the story *Evening, by the Wall*, giving him the feeling that “everything is grotesque, disgusting, gloomy, hallucinating”, in a space with “heavy decoration, heavy furniture, despaired, massive, gloomy”. The heavy furniture can be found in Țepeneag’s *Corridor*, where the furniture pieces are “wooden monsters, hideous, cruel”, and the seat backrests are barred, whilst in Culianu’s *And I Foolishly Laughed, but Not by My Own Will...*, the chairs have the seat backs ornamented with heart shaped stones. In this reality, the time is fractured, broken into a “new time” and a “common time” (*Evening, by the Wall*), and the young man feels overwhelmed by “helplessness and vexation”.

The mirrors theme is to be found in the story titled *The Art of Fugue* which seems to be intertextually connected to Țepeneag’s *Useless is the Art of Fugue*, the story of young Culianu being established on the obsessive theme of the reflective glass window, image of the inner nothingness within which the character reflects himself, “contracting himself onto his own emptiness”. The reader discovers Foucault’s heterotopic mirror and the Borgesian “cosmic pantomime of the mirrors” which make the character feel horrified by the spectral multiplication of the reality (*Covered Mirrors*). In the *Red Shirt*, F.G. is caught into a constant run, “mirroring himself into a glass case, the sun hiding behind his head”, where from the sun pushes him violently away, blinding him.

In the same story, the mirrors open “the negative void opened onto itself”, while in *Icar* by Țepeneag, “the image in the mirror was rather ridiculous”, and *Through the Keyhole* one can see, in terror, “the emptiness growing to the left and to the right”. The window case in the *Art of Fugue* is greenish, containing a light bulb, a set of keys and an ad written in red ink, composed by mobile letters whose movement is perceptible, being oriented aside (“the letters were leaning to the left”). The letters mobility is present in Țepeneag’s writings, too, Laura Pavel considering that “the orthographic signs, the shape, the position and the body of the letters would have almost *material weightiness*”²⁵.

The story *Evening, by the Wall* is created based on the themes of the binary decisional process and the fractal life, the character S.C. plays the game of remembering possibilities, the decision maker’s choices being spatially symbolised by a bifurcated road “subjected to time”. On the Borgesian bifurcated road, the character “can go only either to the right, or to the left”, being impossible for the decision maker to find out “what would have happened if taking the other way”. The bidimensionality motif is present in the same text, the image of a girl on the cover of the magazine being perceived by the watcher as a succession of “simple bidimensional stains” which creates the “illusion of the bidimensionality, of the lack of depth”. The story *Evening, by the Wall* approached the motif of the immateriality of life, space and time in the metaphor “he started his movement into the time of others, almost spirit, almost immaterial” suggesting the relativity of the world, the blurring of time, space and subjectivation of the individual perception.

The cvadrimensionality theme is prefigured in the story *Traces* in the process of reversing the room walls, the upside down ceiling, following the intervention of the “charlatan” waiter. According to Mark Turner, the waiter carrying the tray is a symbol of balance, explaining in the study *The Way We Think* that keeping balance while carrying the tray is accomplished by the waiter exerting a force on the tray’s weight. In this regard, the charlatan waiter could signal, besides losing balance, the disappearance of gravitational force,

²⁵ Laura Pavel, *op. cit.*, pp. 21-23.

thus the world turning upside down. In the text *Imagine the Army in the Gulf*, the theme of the history generated by the interaction of the systems of thought prefigures in the metaphor of “the historical scenery growing in front of you out of a thought’s hollow”²⁶.

We discover bestialized human beings, “the hairy snake head” (*Evening, by the Wall*) found at Borges in the form of “low foreheads, yellowed fangs, the sparse beard of a pale mongrel and beastlike jaws” (*Ragnarok*). All this circus house is engaged in rivalries, crimes and offences, rapes and murders, the text *Imagine the Army in Gulf – Almost a Detective Sketch* reproducing a crime committed by the assassin character following an order emitted by somebody unknown. The murder is put into practice, the assassin gets away because of insufficient evidence and the case is filed as robbery. The story *Traces* talks about a severed male head, about amputated hands and legs, and a new-born thrown into boiling water by his mother. In the same pages, the character inhabiting number 68 is a perverted pensioner, libidinous, whose hair smells like “unsatisfied desire and food”.

Young Culianu takes from Borges and Țepeneag the significance of the dream as a form a reading and the Borgesian strategy of the dialogue with dead people, process hiding an inner monologue, clearly the dead being a series of writers: Leopoldo Lugones (*To Leopoldo Lugones*), Macedonio Fernandez (*Dialogue about Another Dialogue*), Rosas, Quiroga (*Dialogue of the Dead*). Țepeneag underlines the process in the first paragraph of *The Cry*, self-confident in the beginning, gradually diluted (“I have read somewhere – or maybe I have heard, I have dreamed or somebody else has dreamed and told me about the dream”), suggesting a partly ambiguous overlapping between the reading, the dream and the story. The concept of the “dialogue with the self”²⁷ is being understood by Kristeva as a psychological characteristic of the writing, a dialogue with the text which enables this process, the writing and the Borgesian reading growing into a conversation projected into death, expressed through the metaphor of the “lucid sleep” (*To Leopoldo Lugones*). Culianu seems to make use of this strategy in the story *Fugue XVI: The Will Executor*, where he is addressing to a deceased person (“For a long time now, you have died in the absolute, so that you shouldn’t die now. And for me you are dead ever since”). Later, in the story *Selena River* written in the first part of his exile, in Rome, in the year 1973 the author acknowledged that (“I felt that a part of me died already, and another one was still striving to cross the river, got stuck in the wet sand and was looking for a ford, a boat, to get on the other side”²⁸).

In the same story, Culianu highlights a marginal situation, desperate, of the exiled, “monitoring my own thoughts in four languages and without a country”, going through a Kierkegaardian crisis. Even if his symbolical death, signalled in the oneirical scenario by the act of transporting his own dead body in a sack can surely carry a metaphorical meaning, the difficulties endured by the young writer were real though, causing him complex and unbearable feelings. *Selena River* informs about the liminal situation experienced in the Italian exile, being built on the metaphors of the death and of the wall. Culianu describes the exile nuisances being permanently in a hurry, continuously searching for a house to live in and a job, attending the interviews with the immigration commission to obtain the residence papers necessary in the new country. The young exiled feels he has a burden on his shoulder, symbolized by the oneirical sack within which he is carrying his own dead body, aware of the fact that he passed through a “small death”, afterwards being seen burying his own body on the river banks.

The oneirical death, a psychological one, is replicated in the real context by the anonymous victim’s suicide who set himself on fire, the unknown burnt body mirroring, in

²⁶ Ioan Petru Culianu, *Arta fugii*, op. cit., p. 45.

²⁷ Julia Kristeva, op. cit., p. 44.

²⁸ Răul Selenei, Tereza Culianu-Petrescu, „20 de ani de la asasinat – in memoriam Ioan Petru Culianu. Două povestiri inedite și o scrisoare către Virgil Ierunca”, *Suplimentul de cultură*, Iași, nr. 318, 11 iunie 2011.

the material reality, the author's death. Because the suicide is committed in the central square, the combustion may relate to the burning at stake, the religious sacrifice ritual being suggested by the place of worship. The death metaphor is amplified by the cathedral, perceived as a "body, inevitably dirty and lost", a "venerable relic". Another connexion between the oneirical body and the real one is made through the metaphor of the Egyptian vault, the youngster feeling "embalmed alive", while sleeping in the dark kitchen, for the celebration of the dead people day, with candles burning at his head. In his periplus, the young exiled encounters all kind of liars, drug addicts, thieves and plagiarists he gets scared of. The threat of the diseases appears, complicating an already difficult situation, disarming him, challenging him to admit he is overwhelmed ("I didn't know how to face these occurrences, I was disarmed, the only solution I could see in front of my eyes being death").

The young man's transformation is reflected in the image of the pagan brother, the enigmatic being sleeping inside of him, who is in the course of waking up, a Dionysian entity marking his presence on the last Saint Peter's terrace. The ambiguous spatial limits suggest the proximity of the passage on the other side, the threshold situation between the two worlds. The labyrinth metaphor, at the end of which there is a river he had to cross amplifies the complexity of the situation, besides the labour camp, the fight for the passport and the constant sensation of running. The young exiled revolts against the unfair verdict according to which "the destiny of the free, creative people should be suicide, mad house or prison (but why the last one, too?)". Clues of the conceptual integration process can be found discovered in the oneirical scenario where the spatial and temporal limits, the biographical and historical dates blend in the character's mind ("I dreamed about houses and bridges, railways, fight for the passport, Jawa and India, always India, objects that kept appearing then disappearing, flights and fugues through space, chimerical fights"²⁹).

Culianu's fugues resemble Țepeneag's fugue, understood as chase, where the distance between the chaser and the chased one remains constant. In Culianu's *Rabid Cat*, a constant distance is kept from the followed one, a similar chase being found in Țepeneag's *On the Curb of the Sidewalk*, where the distance between the two characters remains always the same". In *Light*, the reader discovers a "hopeless" escape, ending in falls and rolls. Further details about the fugue are provided in the text titled *The Present Volume Mimics*, the author specifying that "Often the fugitive seeks liberation, but ends up in a sumptuous cell, where, on the walls, the severe and outdated condemnation of some names is engraved"³⁰.

The illusory escape as an impossibility of escape is depicted in the *Cardboard Horse's Mane*, a static, apparent, origami fleeing, an optical illusion, a metaphor of the limited individual perception ("Running together with her cardboard owner, the papers stretch their heads away from each other"). In the story *Divine Domestication*, a man and a horse carry a cart full of papers to the outskirts of the city, where he sets it on fire. While burning, "the paper is suffering more than an animal", leaving behind a skeleton, outlining "deformed shadows" in the onlooker's mind. Culianu's fugitives undergo changes over time, in the Italian exile being present in the story *Selena River* in the form of "space flights", in the last stage of creation approaching the Borgesian fugues expressing life as a chase ("my life, therefore, it's nothing but a chase", *Borges and I*). This is found in the prose of maturity in the form of "the chase for the music box", with boomerang effect, "when he finds himself hunt by it" (*Language of Creation*). We also discover the escape as a metaphor for the dynamism of the mind used to express the cognitive process in the *Diaphanous Parchment* cycle.

The reality confiscated by the invasive political authority is suggested in *The Evening, by the Wall* through the presence of a "master who dictates reduced and large movements,

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ Ioan Petru Culianu, *Arta fugii, op. cit.*, p. 59.

dictates feelings, even passions". *The Serene Atmosphere* is a literary protest that accuses false happiness, regardless of the frustrations felt by the population ("Passers-by were bathed in dreamy lights and whoever was walking on this street at the end of the autumn was immediately enchanted by the serene, enchanting, wonderful atmosphere that surrounded everyone and everything"). Some adults seem to be affected by the disease of credulity, manifested by the "tempting tendency to believe without evidence", the frustrations being diverted in the direction of the youngsters accused of rudeness. In the *Evening, by the Wall*, one of the characters calls the youth "a social plague" and states that he slapped a shaggy young man in the tram because he dared to push him by the elbow.

The motif of the cat from the *Rabid Cat*, recurring in the maturity prose, is centred on the fear and anguish the character feels, while followed by the "red-striped grey" cats. The felines are "unleashed", "upset", they follow him at two meters constant distance, driving him crazy and causing him to be continuously on the run, which is why the character always flees in "the wilderness", with the "red-grey lightning after him". Cats moan and whimper hidden in the bushes, while the Medicine University students hit the asphalt with the high heels, the victory of the rabid cats against the pursued one meaning the possibility of contamination.

The rabid cat motif reappears in the story *The Intervention of the Zorabs in Jormanania*, in the strange occurrence of the Zorab cats, a type of zoo weapon. Baha, the Zorab cat, is a normal-looking killer cat, which managed to turn President Gologan's body into a "bloody wound" and then to cut off his wife's jugular, Mrs. Mortu. Using the conceptual integration, we could overlap the first source mental space, the Jorman Zorab with the poem *El Zorab* by George Coşbuc, obtaining an emergent structure consisting of a feline-equine mutant killer. Another motif is that of the fly, addressed in *Fugue I: The Numbers in the Art of Escape*, the fly being admired for its "unwavering determination to eat", connecting the youth stories with the study *Eros and Magic in the Renaissance* through the pages dedicated to the wingless fly.

Extras din volumul *Transtextualitate și liminalitate în proza lui Ioan Petru Culianu*, capitolul III, *Liminalitate în adolescență și în exil*, Arta fugii.

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