AN ECOCRITICAL APPROACH TO LUCIAN BLAGA'S THE WONDROUS SEED (MIRABILA SĂMÂNȚĂ) AND NOVEMBER SUMMER (VARĂ DE NOIEMBRIE)

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Abstract: This article analyses Lucian Blaga's volumes The Wondrous Seed (Mirabila sămânță, 1962) and November Summer (Vară de noiembrie,1962) through the ecocritical lens, It discovers in a large number of poems in the respective volumes Greg Garrard's ecocritical tropes, alongside with Jane Bennett's 'vital materialism' and animism, Serenella Iovino and Serpil Oppermann's 'material ecocriticism' and, beings' 'porosity' and Stacy Alaimo's 'transcorporeality' of nature. It also identifies ecocritical neo-religious terms of the 'reenchantment of David Ray Griffin's and the desacred' David Abram's 'more-than-human' and JeffreyCohen's 'inhuman'. It discovers a number of hyperobjects corresponding to Timothy Morton's work on the matter. It also finds out that Blaga uses the baroque oxymoron in quite a large number of poems. The translation of the quoted poems has been done by the author of this article.

Keywords: vital materialism, mythology, hyperobject, ecocritical trope, oxymoron

When reading Lucian Blaga's volumes *The Wondrous Seed* (*Mirabila sămânță*) and *November Summer* (*Vară de noiembrie*) through the ecocritical lens, one can easily identify in a lot of poems Greg Garrard's tropes specified in *Ecocriticism* (2004): "The Pastoral," "Wilderness," "The Animal," "The Earth.".

In addition, Lucian Blaga's ecocentrism is obvious throughout his volumes, and I will try to demonstrate this by means of analysing and quoting a number of poems, which I have translated into English.. To Blaga, the human is porous to Jane Bennett's 'vibrant matter' (Bennett, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things,* 2010) in instances of 'vital materialism' and animism, in Stacy Alaimo's transcorporeality (Alaimo, *Bodily Natures: Science, Environment and the Material Self*, 2010). In Serenella Iovino and Serpil Oppermann's 'material ecocriticism', nature is sentient, and agentive (Iovino, Oppermann, *Material Ecocriticism*, 2014), it is storied matter, nature being told as a story, and nature that tells stories..

In "May Night" ("Noapte de mai"), the whole universe, from microstructures to macrostructures, is engaged in an interwoven dialogue, in question and answer verbal exchanges, comparable to one another, and mirrored by and mirroring the other ones.

High up is the sign of the Twins.
All sing for their peers.
All answer each other by quiet….
Any voice listens to a voice.
(Sus e zodie de gemeni.
Toate cântă pentru semeni.
Toate își răspund prin liniști….
Orice glas ascultă glas) (Blaga p.22)

Nature is organised in a communication network, as a hyperobject it is animate and deploys similitudes in its connections, from insects (grasshoppers) to stellar zodiac signs.

In "The Heart of the Forest" ("Inima pădurii"), the title suggests that the woods are a creature endowed with life. Wilderness is a place of revelation, of knowledge. Incantatory repetition is used to achieve a mesmerizing quality of the poem.

Wonder, don't wonder,
The being's song
The place where everything grows
The heart of the woods.
(Mire-te, dezmire-te,
cântecul făpturii
locul unde toate cresc
inima pădurii) (Blaga p. 31)

In "Mountains and Clouds" ("Munți și nori"), the myth associates two antonymic notions: the mountains, lead-heavy and tending to reach the higher space, and the clouds, almost imponderable, floating on high and tending to shed all their lead-heavy burden on land, which is the explanation of the mountain formation. Geology is thus with Blaga a hyperobject involving all the land's relief and connecting to atmospheric forms.

The Mountains were made when the Clouds,
Wishing to be light,
Dropped under them, in the wind,
Their earth burden.
(Munții s-au făcut când Norii,
Dorind să fie călători și ușori,
Și-au lepădat subt ei, în vânt,
Povara de pământ) ((Blaga p. 30)

In "Sound in the Night" ("Răsunet în noapte"), the dark is another hyperobject, covering

mountains and fir forests, springs and speaking owls.
Only somewhere in the ravines
a spring still has whispers
and an owl still has words to speak
(Numai undeva-n prăpăstii
un izvor mai are șoapte
și o bufniță cuvânt) (Blaga p. 34)

This personifying quality of the dark extends from geological and zoological elements to universal features, iradiating through transcorporeality from the human heart to the whole Great Bear.

…the heart startles,
and responds in the Great Bear
(inima tresare
și răspunde-n Ursa Mare) (Blaga p.34)

In "Among the Mountain Lakes" ("Printre lacurile de munte"), lakes are compared to astronomical magnifying mirrors, acting as human eyes capable of seeing at half distance between celestial bodies, enabling us to see stars:

If we could see with the lakes,
stars would come closer,
welcoming us at half-way.
(Dac-am vedea cu lacurile,
stelele s-ar apropia,
întâmpinându-ne la drumul - jumătate) (Blaga p. 31)

Such a godly power belongs to certain magic animal deities, like "The Star-Pointed Stag," ("Cerbul cu stea în frunte"), which relativizes distance and size and connects orbs and spheres:

Sliding through the fog
He smells horizons,
not close ones,
but far ones.
Raising his ears,
he catches the ancient
twirlings, high of cloudy
fire and murmurs.
And he hears under the high ones
Some things and others:
the eras, the spheres.
(Prin ceață când lunecă
zări el adulmecă,
nu apropiatele
ci depărtatele.
Ciulindu-și urechile
prinde străvechile
rotiri, sus de tulbure
foc și de murmure.
Și-aude, subt-naltele
unele, altele:
erele, sferele.) (Blaga p.33)

This star-pointed stag is an animal and at the same time a supernatural power of the universe, sensitive to and connecting "eras and spheres," hearing celestial music and smiling distanced horizons.

In "Autumn Road" ("Drum de toamnă"), the rider passes "like an outlaw through the legend"("Ca un haiduc eu umblu prin legendă"), culture and human history are totally integrated in nature, David Ray Griffin's more-than-human of 'the reenchantment of the desacred'. (Griffin, *The Reenchantment of Science,* 1988) associates folklore songs to mythical characters of fairy tales and ancient religion, in Stacy Alaimo's transcorporeality and in, David Abram's 'more-than-human world' becoming animal in an earthly cosmology'. (Abram *The More-Than- Human World: An Earthly Cosmology,* 2010) or in Jeffrey Cohen's ' ecology of the inhuman'(Cohen, *Stone: An Ecology of the Inhuman,* 2015.)

It smells of hoof-smashed leaves,
I ride through the woods on my horse with white-spotted legs.
I hear mountain women playing the alpen horns
Cut in a dream from a unicorn's horn.
(Miroase-a foi strivite în copite..
Prin crânguri trec cu calul pintenog.
Aud muntărițe cântând din tulnic,
Tăiat, în vis, din corn de inorog) (Blaga p. 25)

In "With One More Joy…" (" Cu încă o bucurie…"), October comes
…to cut with a quarter of the horizon
The meridian of the day that I raise
(Să reteze cu un sfert de zare
Meridianul zilei ce-l înalț) (Blaga p. 29).

The human and the calendar are equal partners-demiurges setting astronomic points and measures of the world.

On the other hand, in “The Song of the Ears” (“Cântecul spicelor”), the wheat ears are very sad because they are not cut by a goddess – the moon, but by the iron tool of a mere human. These two poems stand in opposition to one another.

This is the great sadness of the ears,
Not being cut by the moon,
But being destined to set
Only by the cut of the iron of the earth
(Aceasta-i tristețea cea mare - a spicelor
Că nu sunt tăiate de lună,
Că numai de fierul pământului
Li s-a menit să apună) (Blaga. p. 29)

If “ With One More Joy…” is anthropocentric, “The Song of the Ears” is definitely ecocentric, non-anthropocentric.

In “September Day” (“Zi de septembre”), septembrie, the Indian summer, is apparently a time of rebirth and joy, while it actually is a time of cranes leaving for warmer lands, of renunciation and death under the splendid aspects of nature, an oxymoronic time of contradiction and incertitude.

Between the falling leaf
And the bare branch,
Death circumscribes itself
With a gesture of extatic disease.
A game humming with wooden limbs,
The late, crazy, warm September sounds.
(Între frunza ce cade
Și ramura goală,
Moartea se circumscrie
c-un gest de extatică boală.
Un joc îngânând cu lemnoasele membre,
Sună târziul, nebunul, caldul septembre.) (Blaga p. 27)

In *November Summer* (“Vară de noiembrie”), the very title of the volume and of the initial poem contains a concetto, an oxymoron. Such figures of style abound in the respective poem and in the volume: “the flame and the freezing” (“văpaia și înghețul”):

Oh, the world, if it is not an illusion,
It is to us a serene clothing.
If you may be earth, or you may be a word,
You never get undressed of it.
(O, lumea dacă nu-i o amăgire
Ne este un senin veșmânt.
Că ești pământ, că ești cuvânt,
Nu te dezbraci de ea nicicând) (Blaga p. 37)

The surrounding world is at the same time illusionary and real, material (earth) and spiritual (word), but only a dress to our essence, which we are never able to take off, thus uniting contrary features. Ultimately, the surrounding reality becomes an elusive hyperobject.

In “Tusculum”, the poet mentions oxymoronic “hot snow” (“fierbinte nea”) and “heat snowstorm” (“viscol de căldură”)

You white pure snow,
Who gave you the heart
To be my heat snowstorm,
You white hot snow?
(Albă tu ,zăpadă pură,

Cine ți-a dat inima
Să-mi fii viscol de căldură
Albă tu, fierbinte nea?) (Blaga p. 42)

The Milky Way obsesses him, as an omnipresent hyperobject to be found in a few poems, such as "Town in the Night" ("Oraș în noapte").

The Milky Way is in the valley
closer than yesterday
when it was above us
everywhere, nowhere.
(Calea Laptelui e-n vale
mai aproape decât ieri
când era deasupra noastră
pretutindeni, nicăieri.) (Blaga p. 40)

Being everywhere, nowhere, the Milky Way becomes an omnipresent hyperobject.

In "Archeology" ("Arheologie"), ancient history seems to have disappeared, but it has only turned into nature and it hides in the ground, to be preserved, to be undug to light, recalling old stories and roads. It has become Iovino's "storied matter", nature telling stories and nature whose story is told.

Peoples passed and fields were overturned.
The ash turned to stone on the barren ovens.
And roads died under the grass layers.
The past is long. One end is turning up here.
(Noroade-au trecut și glii s-au răsturnat,
Cenușa a-mpietrit pe vetrele pustii.
Și drumuri au murit subt iarbă, pe subt strat.
Trecutu-i lung. C-un capăt se ivește-aci.) (Blaga p. 44)

The stone and the water preserve history in basreliefs, which help us to guess the road to hell, as the gods' melancholy. Thus nature is united to religion by mythology and art.

A pool of rain, clear weater, has remained
To gather the sky on such a reason.
Feeling through basreliefs, we guess
A road to hell, some gods' melancholy.
(Un ochi de ploaie, apă clară, a rămas
Să strângă cerul pe-un asemenea temei.
Prin basoreliefuri dibuind, ghicim
Un drum spre iad, melancolia unor zei.) (Blaga p. 44)
And it is painful to catch fire, dreaming
In the great passing. But you burn harder in exchange.
(Și-i dureros în marea trecere să te
aprinzi, visând. Mai tare însă arzi în schimb) (Blaga p. 44)

The great passing is the road from life to eternity, from common existence to universal integration,, but such roads involve ains and passion, burning hard.

In "The Song of the Hoars, of the Footprints" (" Cântecul brumelor, urmelor") Ariadne's thread is the love story used as a road marker to help the unhappy lovers to get their way back when they are going to be thrown out of the white paradise into nothingness, into the Apocalypse.

With Ariadne's thread
We marked the road
For the time when we would leave
The white paradise

(Cu al Ariadnei fir
însemnam întinsul
pentru când ne-om părăsi
albul, paradisul) (Blaga p. 50)

Blaga's poetry is a mingling of mythology, pagan religion, culture identification with nature, unbreakable connection of both collective history and individual storied matter, with geology, flora and fauna, and it often takes the shape of incantation, or spell, eco-religious songs of the more-than-human.. Despite their small size, most of the poems of these two volumes, observe all the tropes and ecocritical concepts and patterns mentioned in this article and they acquire a standing charm and depth of feeling and thought. Certain poems, are definitely ecocentrical, thus showing the poet's deep love for nature, to the point of identification between humans and nature.

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