THE SENSUAL PORTRET IN FEMININE EXILE LITERATURE: GABRIELA MELINESCU

Cosmina Nicoară
PhD Student, UMFST „G. E. Palade" of Târgu Mureş

Abstract: The present article is a brief assay of the evolution of the literary work that Gabriela Melinescu, one of the most read and valuable poets during the communism regime, created, building up through it the sensual figure of the intelectual Romanian women, as an idol of the other poets in this cathegory. She treated love as a science, a guide-feeling for her life and profession, moreover being able to capsule her passion for this feeling in a pill in order to generate supranatural approach of the mechanism that totalitarism overused in her generation. We pass over her creations, most of all over her poetry, proving its superiority perspective through criticism and scientific interpretations.

Keywords: Melinescu, exile, poetry, feminine, literature

Gabriela Melinescu, the sensual figure of Romanian exile literature

The literary evolution of Gabriela Melinescu during the years is appreciated by one the greatest critics, Aurel Martin, as an ascending slope of an organized and balanced mind, inwards a professional poetry, taking great advantage of a continuous process of enrichment with sentimental and emotional experience, achieved step by step along her career, in a complex harmony.

From *Winter ceremony,* her beginning poems volume, which turns out to be written professing „a teenage lyrical poetry, honest, spontaneous, delivered by a fresh age, but overall by an erotic challenge" (Martin 1971, 231), Gabriela Melinescu reaches the absolute sensuality of feminine poetry, with strong rational skills almost considered to be specific to masculine writers: „She does not manifest, in consequence, a nostalgy as regards the lost time, but rather live at an intense level the mistery of unquiet years that open a way to new knowledge and experiences, peaking in the feminine revelation, but a feminity extracted out of the common regime of euphemism and discretion" (Ibidem, 231).

Gabriela Melinescu restores the balance of feminity in Romanian literature during the totalitarism domination. She brings a spirit not less strong considering her status in a world of men intelectuality, but concentrated on healing throughout art, that art provided by an internal fight in which the main target is not transforming the society, but surviving while perpetuating emotions.

Gabriela Melinescu is a lesson of a different type of independence, being far from the revolutionary ways of reflecting it in her crations. She chooses, in a bright inteligent way, most elegant literary manners to compress her emotions considered to be superior to the masculine ones and, at the same time, aware of the reality that if human mind and body cannot succeed in discrowning a system as the communism used to be, the soul influenced by divine forces becomes able to get anywhere and that the infinite is the defined space of human existance created by God, mantained by God, Who is reveled to be the only one able to change or annihilate the entire existance in one second. She is a believer and so she consigns herself in God s hands.

A strong difference between other women writers in communism ages and Gabriela Melinescu is, above all, that although considered naive, she seems more realistic in the way

she treats this political regime, she doesn't expect making miracles out of her words, she raises the human misery at an overwhelming aesthetic concern.

The same human drama that other poets tried hard to solve, becomes an universal drama in the poetry of now studied poet; her poems build up a superiour drama, of a rebele soul situated between the terrestrial life and the eternal one, reached by death, death being considered a step from the illusionary living to a real one, with no ending.

Aurel Martin analizes her creations in their deepest origins and brings arguments for these origins being the living condition itself: „The poems have obvious ethical implications, advocatind the drama of any human being between life and death, between dream and indefensibility, between beauty and ugly, sublime and ludicrous, between understandance and opacity, between laughing and crying" (*Ibidem*, 234).

The poetess has got an out of order talent, even though she treats the whole complex life with serenity, purity, modesty and honesty, all these raising her to a human that possesses the benefits of a rare validation from outside, being able to transmit the reader her entire globe of imperfeccions and having no fear of dissapointing the reader, neither the will to being overclassified by the reader. Another choice she makes is not to hide her vulnerabilities, but give them an aesthetic value which transform them in art, but a perfect literary scientific art.

The evolution of her poetry is natural, from simple to difficult, she writes both prose and poems from her own perspective, at the same time sometimes hard enough to be understood by any reader, method not very appreciated by some of the literary reviewers who described it as a nonsense complication of mentality.

The same reviewer translates the poetess' condition as a combination of contradictions, fed by the fluctuation between obsession and lucidity: „The sensations get, somehow, in a purifying era, external world is perceived on wavelands situated in the neighbourhood of limit-frequencies, feelings theirselves entering into a cerebralized state of mind, while the orphic song begins to multiply its symbolic valences. The poetess seems to be visualizing the elements she uses, sound, colour, water, fire, aer, earth, objects, settling throughout a game of metaphores and suggestions, a remarcable (not only once) dialectics of the relation between touchable and untouchable, between seen and unseen, between things and people" (*Ibidem*).

She loves making confessions which are extremely rational and highly raised to a level of science: "Each poem and each subject becomes a reason for a love confession" (Martin 1967, 259).

Sensuality is the main feature that characterizes Gabriela Melinescu, both her personality and her profession, that dominates her thoughts, her career, her decisions. She falls many times in such deep emotions that almost seems vulnerable, but all her actions reveled in poems are controlled and premeditated, every relation she binds with other people is described in artistic combinations of words and symbolic expressions, which Gabriel Dimisianu describes as a "lyricism of selfexposed feminity, a lyricism of effusion, direct, explosive, honest, sweet-sensual in its exposure which indicates, in the end, a decompressing of the biologic" (Dimisianu 90, 5).

Gabriela Melinescu writes down on paper her verses with no aggravation or inhibition, like a real european poetess and her poems can easily be translated anytime. In Sweden, her writing becomes more solemn and concentrated then before, investigating the syntax with a high responsability. For example, she begins to express herself "in a shrewd lingvistic cromatism, alive to harsh, cold, cerebral, extoling somehow the thracian paganish, proposing a lyrical ceremony and a new religion" (Martin).

Over the years, literary critics felt forced to enlarge the spectrum of classificacion as regards our poetess Gabriela Melinescu, since her lyrical discourse creates complicated cultural connexions, being presented as a triple poet: expressionist, hermenetic and childish.

She is a lingvist so she dominates the word in its deepest senses, being able to play when creating as she escapes from the cryptic to her poems, each of them being a sanctuary where the poetess herself is free to descover her insides and most real dimensions of the soul.

We have to present here a poet that opens her soul just as a penitent frees his or her soul in front of the priest and God, in order to get forgiveness and hence to reach the absolute freedom.

Beyound her reputation of pretending a connection to the universal laws, the literary critic Iulian Boldea highlightens the crisis of identity that determines the poetess to be overwhelmed: ”Gabriela Melinescu is a poetess of innocence and existential reflection, of affective flaring and a writer who rationalize her state of consciousness throughout a process half dolorous, half visionary” (Boldea 2002, 604). This is, on one hand, how we can explain the so called „poetic bipolarity” which is nothing but a superiority of a person having great expectations from the Universe, greater then she could ever receive, and so appears her conection to something more powerful, almost impossible to be perceived by ordinary humans. An eloquent argument here cand be the poem intitled *Rain*, part of an entire volume dominated of pure feelings, contemplation, double consciousness and irreducible principles: *”It’s raining, I’m willing for rain./ World’s spot of sight is water in the ground./ Here begins the area of my resting/ from crying eyes of the young saint./ Rare tears fall down/ over wet wood and it becomes/ my grief wider then/ the body fallen in peace./”* (Gabriela Melinescu - *Rain*)

Mistery and perfection are requisite terms in the comprehension of her pages, which are also connected since her tendance for perfection brings her in a sfera of something misterious, beyound the normal and usual, the optimism is leveled up to the life after ordinary death, being the only space where one can feel happiness, so any word cand be her best friend, because she is so efficient in using the words to create the ideal world, or, on the contrary, to humble the real tough one. Gabriela Melinescu has abilities that she uses to detrone the borders of theoretical literature between men and women, if talking about gender clasification.

The feeling of love is something stronger then any concept of living, Gabriela Melinescu being a specific mix of sensuality and reverence, within inflexions of nostalgy, whole grace, sophisticacion rarely seen in a poem during and about communism, both generating masculine rationality and feminine intuition. There is no common love or common man to get to her heart, love must also have a superiority for the woman now Gabriela Melinescu. She is aware of her high expectations ant treats men in consequence: *„I couldn’t see them, I heard them laugh./ The boys were whispering beautifully on the street./ I was washing the laundry in the yard, under a tree,/ and fear is what I felt not to see me./ I felt how they thrilled the road,/ I loved even the rocks they steped./ On fences bented as over the shoulders/ almost flourished the roses were burning./ Wet I felt my eyes, just as in wilderness…/ ON the wire, the wind was embracing in a dance/ the tight waistline of a dress”.* (Gabriela Melinescu – *Cenușăreasa*).

The artist treats love as a scientist, but defines the feeling in all the sciences inside her, her personality gets to be a group of different lovers trying to communicate to each other. In one of her memoirs she confesses: ”Our bodies love each other, the heart and the brain are in an intercommunication, but the mouth within the river of words comes and brings chaos in everything” (Melinescu 2000, 9).

In manners of the most exquisite ones, the poetess finds the feeling of love in everyting around her, in all the forms, and has the capacity to discompound that certain feeling in elegant peculiar drops that sit at the origins of it. Therefore, she presents love under all its significations, from the simple one, natural, childish love, which is more like an atachment to vital things, to the real love that shows up as the most precious inheritance from God, divided equaly to all human beings. Love becomes a science and the poetess treats it in both her theological approaches:

Agapi is that pure feeling, passionless, dignified to imitate the feeling of God when He created the world, able to overcross anything and to forgive limitless, which is also for Gabriela Melinescu the most powerful type of love: ”Loving God can give humans compassion to others and only through compassion one can distroy the harmful self binding us to hell” (Melinescu 2000, 9). Many of her poems descover the strong relation between body and soul, the second one being in a position of superiority whhile the first one is more present and activ. Reading her poems we assist to a fabulous show inside a holy frame where the protagonist is the eternity of the soul over the ephemerism of the body which is only a host: ”our bodies which were once again” (*Doctor Faust*), ”the body fallen from peace” (*Rain*), ”the falling meat” (*State of spirit*), ”And I am throwing objects in the water/ To descover my soul” (*River*). These verses have the meaning of passing through a time empty of importance, a time that ”does not exist” (*Melancoly*), waiting for the implacable death which belongs to all humans. For Gabriela Melinescu the only way that the soul continues to exist after the death of the body is sharing AGAPI love during this life on Earth.

Fascinated by the phenomenon of holiness of the soul, she uses the concrete origin from the Bible, the meat is actually the ground. So she creates the poem *Water desire*, that emphasizes the road from meaningless to fulfillment, the poem ending up like this: *”I’ve decided that we should live on waters,/ Lay down our bones on floating furs,/ And the water does not stand as the Earth,/ On naked body, so many wounds”* (Gabriela Melinescu – *Water desire*). Eugen Barbu imputes her a special metaphysical vision that generates a confortable lecture when we descover the idea of premeditation of death, the ability of human to feel the eternity born in the moment of his death still before dying.

”This poetess’ presence full of artlessness is confortable. What does she exceeds through? There’s an amaizing freshness in the way she sees the world” (Eugen Barbu 1975, 430). The entire nature with its complexity of phenomena feed her poetic tendencies, influencing her state of creation over her rationality. She confesses herself, at the age of 39, that she had always felt a strong divine force working inside her.

Eros is the other cathegory of love that reaches the highest peeks of feelings, this is the classical love between a man and a woman, the spring of passionate, sexual desire, or from another perspective the passion and the desire can generate eros love. In a certain way, this is the love that writes a large part of our poetess’ career and implicitly future. Known as *femme fatale* in all the groups of friends and literary circles, shining in beauty and inteligence, a symbol of feminity and elegance, Gabriela Melinescu never lost her rational temper and ferm attitude. Another literary referent, Al. Piru, sugests in an analize over her creation that the ”desease of divine origin” – the title of a sugestive poem – is nothing else but love, a love which raises her over the superficiality of terrestrial existance: ”throughout it, the poetess has got a sensation of flying and spiritualizing untill identification with a number” (Al. Piru 1975, 396), statement confirmed by another referent, Ilie Constantin. While Al. Piru insists over the radical change of style and attitude in the poetry of Gabriela Melinescu after 1966, Ilie Constantin reliefs big part of the elements she uses in her entire creation, he argues that the lyrical directions the poetess had at her begining chased her until maturity and later on, elements such as suave meditation, rejection of tough issues, placing objects and persons

in space, everything in an non-ending interpenetration, compared to the obsession of the concentric circles.

The enormous space she used to talk about is interpreted also as a too generous inteligence of the poetess, which cannot establish its limits to the normal world, our earthly existance being much too narrow for her immagination. Ideal images are created even for the past scars making it a mirror of beauties. The verbs she uses in Present Tenses creates states of pain, desease, grieve, regrets, or simply memories from youth. On the other hand, the conjunctives and imperatives define clear endings, new beginings, ferm decisions and strond desires: ”I must die”, ”you must wake up”, ”let the air die”, ”let’s start”, ”let’s dominate”, strong verbs she always uses to create a secure emotional impact over the reader.

Poetess of infinite time in Romania and Sweden

Running through ages appears to be a special theme for our writer, when the eros shows up hunted by monstruous metamorphosis created by the passing of time, being sometimes situated on antithetical scales, suprising the Swedish literature which critics say she managed to enrich and complete with a poetry they hadn’t had before, even though her heart never left her country and the people she loved, victims of the same power war that ejected her. The *conqueror of North Literature*, Gabriela Melinescu, declared that despite of the fact that many of her works did not get to be published, all of them have the same importance to her career, she didn’t taste the essence of a work within the vast reception of it, but within the vast feelings she transmited throughout it. We use the term *lyrical obsession* to highlighten up her work not in its derogatory sense, but more to define the engine of the conditions she has been through describing love episodes or erotic ones, combined in harmony with a soft childish attitude as a regret for the lost time if childhood or moreover a constant elogioum to that age transfrormed into the idilic space of dreams, still waiting for them to come true. Maturity as a new condition, initiated in steps, unconsciously and unwittingly, is building up a refugee from the failures, desilussions, disapointments, sadness, on the foundation of the same childhood, a perfect space and time where everything was possible and the thoughts could fly over all sciences of the Universe, perfecting every element.

Awakening to adult reality, which shows that sometimes, instead of the good dreams, the most terifying nightmares can come true, meanwhile those of ardent desires would not be lived ever, not in this terrestrial existance or in the eternity after death, unleashes a condition of anxiety, able to dissolve slowly as time passing by first thanks to the fusion between love and childish games, later throughout the new expectations as regards eternal life which begins when dyeing. *Ceremony of winter* is the volume that many of the literary reviewers appreciate as the perfect such combination, emphasizing inteligent games of seduccion between characters boys and girls; seducction here is the game that makes any relation perfect, but the connections are kept in the same frame of amphibology characterizing the author – not only in the beginning ages, but also in the late ones.

Florin Manolescu admits the obvious childish sounds in her verses, just as he accepts their rising up to love among the ripen process. He analizes that ”the extreme charm in *Winter ceremony* is inside this stylish amphibology, the confusion created deliberately and eventually the honest uncertaincy in confessing the feelings” (Manolescu 71, 6). But he continues to explain that the poetess of love as a science, perceived and felt, ”is the love itself ambiguous one and what is actually seductive is precisely her rare capacity to introduce the reader in a design of a child (boy or girl) about a feeling that belongs to great people” (*Ibidem*).

Gabriela Melinescu has a tendency to perfection which all critics see in her entire work, but she chooses a variety of motives, themes, words, expressions, elements, supranatural forms to create that wanted perfeccion, having the certitude that perfection does not exist in real life, she plays its existance in lyrics, and so she generates illusory satisfaction to her heart, and optimism to her soul, while her mind stays rational and lives the imperfections.

But she does not stop here. In one of her *Journals*, she confesses with her usual serenity, that she once truly lived a joy like a child when she saw a poems book she published in one swedish bookshop, she being the same person who, a few raws forwards, was telling us that neither succes or failure could change her condition, so we conclude that childish joy, considered the most intense and pure, can also be the shortest, a momentary joy, unable to spring happiness for a lifetime.

Not only once, the poetess admits her fluctuations during lifetime and admits certain guilt in having taken decisions under love influence or slower conditions of attachment to different men in her life. So it was the moment when Rene, her husband for life, asked her to stay with him for the rest of their lives: ”Why hadn’t I listened to my heart? All creative impulses had died for me at that moment, in the country where lies had become truths. If only I knew that Rene was not going to live long!” (Melinescu).

Gabriela Melinescu is defined within an inversion of the characters: if the majority of the writers in exile used literature and writing to express their beliefs and thoughts and to get involved in the war against the communism regime, Gabriela Melinescu uses communism as her muse to create literature inspired by cruel reality she and her compatriots lived those decades.

Challenged by Elena Vlădăreanu, she confesses that no matter how confortable she might feel in Sweden, she will never stop being a stranger, which she still is, a stranger that has to learn being a Swedish, behave like a Swedish, believe like a Swedish, feel like a Swedish and write like a Swedish. But most of all, the constant fer that she had as a writer was dieing whithout knowing what she was: a Romanian writer or a Swedish one.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Barbu, E. (1975), *A polemical land antological history of Romanian literature from its origins up to present. Contemporary Romanian poetry.* Eminescu, București, 1975;

Boldea, I. (2002), *Contemporary Romanian writers,* Ardealul, 2002;

Cistelecan, A. (1987), *Poetry and erudite,* Cartea Românească, București, 1987.

Constantin, I. (1971), *About poets*, Cartea românească, București, 1971;

Dimisianu, G. (1990), *House of smoke*, in „Literary Romania” magazine nr. 36, (20 sept 1990);

Manolescu, F. (2010), *The encyclopedia of Romanian literary exile 1945-1989. Writers, magazines, institutions, organizations.* The 2nd reviewd edition Compania, București, 2010 (496).

Manolescu, F. (1971), *Gabriela Melinescu. Desease of divine origin, in* „Argeș” magazine (nr. 6, iun. 1971);

Martin, A. (1971), *Contemporary poets II*, Eminescu, București, 1971;

Martin, M., *Gabriela Melinescu. Abstract beings,* in „Amfiteatru” magazine nr. 16 (apr. 1967).

Melinescu, G. (1997), *Poems*, Vitruviu București, 1997;

Melinescu, G. (2005), *The power of dead over the alive*, Polirom, București, 2005;

Melinescu, G. (1993), *Vow of poverty, castity and obedience,* Litera, București, 1993;

Melinescu, G. (2000), *Swedish Journal I* (1976-1983), Univers, București, 2000;

Piru, Al., *Contemporary Romanian poetry, II (1950-1975), Middle generation. Youth Generation,* Eminescu, București, 1975;