

Carmen Racovitza

“I saw that when words were pulverized, they tended to arrange themselves in clusters of new, strong, unexpected meaning(s)...”

Carmen Racovitza discusses her work and its relationship to the history of Romanian literature with **Kane X. Faucher**.



Carmen Racovitza was born in Galati, Romania. Throughout the years she has had individual poems published in various yearbooks, newsletters and anthologies. She is the author of three books of poetry (*XeroX*, 2005; *Le Vent de Moldavie*, 2005; *The Outside from the Outside*, 2007) and a poem-essay : *Za-Ludica S.A.*, 2008. During 2006/2007 she published a samizdat lit mag, entitled *DOI* , with international contributions from Canada, USA , Spain, Great Britain, Italy and France. She has an extensive online activity on her lit blogs *caravanne*, *notgrog* and *DADA2.A History*, and her friends' blogs , too. She is currently a Coordinator for the Antares Poetry Festival and a chief-editor of the Antares lit mag in Galati. She is also a book reviewer and a contributor to several literary reviews. She likes to spend her vacations in Norway with her family: husband Cornelius and son Steven.



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Kane X. Faucher: I know this to be a horribly nationalist question, but I wondered if you could speak broadly on your impressions on the current situation in Romanian poetry, and how far it has or has not come from the days of Eminescu, Cioran, Caragiale and all those for whom statues have been erected, lines from which to memorize for recital in examinations, and money upon which their faces are printed. I know this is a rather loose and large question, but your opening reflections on this would give a portrait into the state of contemporary Romanian poetry beyond the stereotypes. As a secondary question, and if applicable, in what ways have “minor literatures” emerging from slowly burgeoning groups in Romania like the Romi et al influenced your own poetic trajectory?

Carmen Racovitza: Kane, your question has been killing me softly. Hm, you ask me to speak “broadly”...Broadly it is!! What you need is a panorama of Romanian letters in a bomb shell...Mine, as you will see, is a fuseless bomb...

I've always been looking at the components of all literatures in terms of writers, themes and works which re-group, complete and overlap each other, it is a play of constants and variables, correlative complementary realities in action, a spiraling staircase made of thresholds, of limens, of star personalities caught up and woodened up by the landings, i.e. longer periods of literary “well-being”.

Theorists must evaluate all the thresholds as well as the interstices, dusting them all of hesitation and vac-

illation. I am no theorist, Kane. I am no literary historian, either. That's why I simply choose my favorites among the larger group of Romanian writers as they operated great syntheses through either their work or their sheer personality. I see the history of Romanian literature as a family portrait devoid of its more shadowy corners, without its second-hand figures, but with all the silhouettes surprisingly lurking in the shadows.

Everything started plausibly with the anonymous, oral tradition of the Romanian folklore which was to be further included in the first works of 16th to 18th century non-homogeneous and polychrome written culture, obviously determined by a radical change of the Romanian society itself: westernization, change in literary expression by connection to European styles and by a process of cultural institutionalization.

There are six distinct syntheses in Romanian literature that operate like six staircase landings.

1. The merit of the first great synthesis belongs to Dimitrie Cantemir, the contemporary of the Encyclopedists, an encyclopedist himself, who evolved to a position of binder between Romanian tradition at home, classical European impulses and novel sciences of Eastern countries. Even Byron cited his *Historia Incrementorum*, as it had been translated into English, French and German. Here, let us include Nicolae Milescu, too, born 3 years before Racine, an erudite adventurer, a traveler to China and the first Romanian writer to have his book (in Latin) published in Paris.

2. Then, Kane, the first half of the 19th century proved to be another landing. A time of major projects for the creation of a national literature. So, after 1830, all literary genres were approached and creative writing became a profession. The whole of the 1848 Generation launched an appeal for the creation of a sound local creative literature and for capitalization on folklore, which was seen as a source of aesthetic regeneration. V. Alecsandri was a trail-blazer in poetry, prose-writing, drama and he was also a collector of folklore, while C. Negruzzi was not only the founder of the Romanian short-story, but also of a model still not matched in historical short-story writing. A genius for his time, I should call him, he re-invented sarcasm. Well, the second half of the 19th century is a completely different story. Great quality leaps oc-

curred. A second synthesis was to be represented by a group of writers led by the Junimea cultural society critic and man of high letters, Titu Maiorescu. Here, of course, M. Eminescu's the first on the list, the prototype of the poet and poetry, conversant with both Western and Oriental philosophical speculation who gave maximum brilliance to late Romanian Romanticism. He is the man who did away with rhetoric and who made poetry advance with half a century. I.L. Caragiale is the second: a playwright who invented merciless, crazily humorous mirror plays of the Romanian society of the time (but they are so crazily contemporary, believe me!!), standing out by their biting criticism of political obsession and moral vacillation, ridiculing the contradiction between pettiness and pretense. Eugene Ionesco used to say about Caragiale that he is perhaps the greatest of the unknown playwrights...The third, I. Creanga, is a matchless story-teller, standing out by the oral style he used in his work, and, finally, I. Slavici, a Transylvanian author, the master of novella writing (Mara, 1894) whose stories have analogies with the *Dorfgeschichte* German sentimentalism where ethical principles are subtly incorporated in characters. In the meantime, another literary circle, the *Literatorul*, carried the first manifestoes of symbolism to fruition in Al. Macedonski's (1854-1920) poems. It's a breakthrough, really and this man heralds a new century of lyrical turmoil. Were the Dadaists and the Romanian avant-garde reviews a third synthesis, you may ask me? Though they remained a closed caste of supporters, very elite and controversial...They rather operated a shift in Romanian modern taste, they merely prepared the soil for other cross-pollinations and theoretical hybridizations of the future lyrical flowers and plants...

3. *Contimporanul* (1922-1932) was to open up the way to early avant-garde attitudes. Here T. Arghezi, I. Barbu, I. Vineanu, T. Tzara (the literary, the un-literary and the anti-literary put together) and B. Fundoianu manifest themselves as Dadaists, Cubists or Constructivists. Others from the *Contimporanul* will herald Surrealism. Much earlier, *Punct* (1924) and *75 H.P.* (1925) use "violent methods" (I. Voronca with his pictopoetry), and later, *Unu* (1928) and *Alge* (1930) will deal with automatic writings and dream interpretation where St. Roll, Geo Bogza, V. Brauner, M. Iancu, V. Gheorghiu will publish original and funny manifestoes under Sasa Pana's mentorship. Then *Integral* (1925-1927) places art in relationship to indus-

try and the great city, while Urmuz (1928) published by Geo Bogza initiates extravagant lyrical geometries. They were to be soon followed by the second generation of avant-garde poets whose works are made up of fantasy, experiment and schizoid protest (Gherasim Luca, Gellu Naum and Virgil Teodorescu). Well, if we think of them as the precursors of Letrism, noise poetry, panel poems, of concrete music or of the wild, primitive dance, again in fashion, of the total theatre, as well...then, of course, the Dadaists do represent a third great synthesis, even for us, Romanians.

4. You won't believe me if I tell you that the next synthesis, the fourth, was to come soon and sort of mingle with the third...It takes place in the same between-the-wars literature where the poetry of the epoch gravitates around several great models: T. Arghezi, poet of the materialization of the abstract and the ennoblement of the blunt expression; L. Blaga, who expressed metaphysical concerns in an expressionistic poetry; G. Bacovia, a symbolist, a poet of neurosis and despair; I. Barbu, a representative of hermetic poetry and considerable stylistic economy of expression and mathematical substance (he was a mathematician). In prose writing, the great name of the time is L. Rebreanu, whose novels *Ion* and *The Forest of the Hanged* are masterpieces, or, at least, are realistic pieces with naturalistic influences, stripped off the idyllic character that previously prevailed in Romanian prose-writing. Then, let us include M. Sadoveanu with his historical novels infused with metaphor and oriental wisdom or the younger novelist Camil Petrescu and Hortensia Papadat-Bengescu who distinguished themselves in analytical prose-writing. Unfortunately, in the field of drama innovating tendencies were less spectacular, as always, Camil Petrescu is interested in the theatre of ideas, while L. Blaga writes a drama of mythical dimension as opposed to M. Sebastian's "conversational" plays. Now it is literary criticism that gets the general acclaim in the person of G. Calinescu, who subjected the whole Romanian literature from its origins to his time (1940s) to an axiological judgment – see his monumental and very funny, clever, controversial *History of Romanian Literature*.

But this connection with European trends achieved by the interwar generation was abruptly cut short by the onset of communism. A new world evolved as from nowhere, a sudden political interest in proletariat and

worker life was given the generic name of proletcultism, which in the fifties left little room for authentic literature (M. Beniuc, V. Porumbacu, Dan Desliu or M. Banus). Even if criticized in the late 60s, literature enjoyed the necessary financial resources as it became subsidized by the state, and, in spite of the ideological restrictions, disruptions like those experienced during the Stalinist decade became no longer possible. Genuine, valuable literature came to the fore. Neo modernists and neotraditionalists appear one after the other. Prose writers like Marin Preda and Augustin Buzura, poets like Marin Sorescu, Cezar Baltag, Ana Blandiana were much appreciated by both prestigious critics (N. Manolescu, Eugen Simion) and readers.

5. Nichita Stanescu represents the fifth great synthesis, in my opinion. An iconoclast and a contradictory figure, a craftsman of the imaginary...He tries to poetize the mathematical rationing of the universe. The theory of numbers, the power of ensembles, countable multitudes, discrete values, the continuum and the discontinuum of matter, other relativist analogies make up a world of "sad notions" where the flow of time becomes negative. He is a synthesis as he made a synthesis of Macedonski, Arghezi, Blaga and the surrealists himself, transposing philosophy, maths and physics into poetry. Soon after, M. Prelipceanu, M.Ursachi and Ileana Malancioiu will get a distinct voice of their own and a whole generation after them will be under the lyrical spell of a Leonid Dimov (Mircea Ivanescu, Dan Laurentiu, Emil Brumaru, Cezar Ivanescu and Tudor George). Another guru of the epoch is Geo Dumitrescu who gave a new meaning to Romanian poetic modernism. Then a group of neoexpressionists emerged out of the bigger root of the 70s: V. Mazilescu, Mircea Dinescu and Dorin Tudoran who see the world as a show where some people erect pyramids while others dream of princes and beggars.

6(?). If the Generation of the 80s doesn't exactly represent another synthesis, it actually is another landing of the staircase. This informal literary group was to alter Romania's literary landscape in the decades that followed. Practicing a self-styled "textualist engineering", blending inter-textual games with a zest for "live broadcasts" of unmediated reality and deliberately blurring the borderline between fiction and fact. They are the first to put into practice the principles of postmodernism. Uneasily placed on the threshold of

two regimes, the group was the last significant literary generation produced in Romania's 40 year period of communist dictatorship and the first to confront the unsettling ambiguities of the post-communist era. Under the impact of this dramatic change, most writers, such as Mircea Nedelciu, Gh. Craciun, Viorel Marineasa, Cristian Teodorescu, have gradually abandoned much of their textualist experimentation and self-referential games and have turned towards a more overt grasp of reality. But most of them have become radical in their artistic approach. Others became more reader-friendly. Here's the list: St. Agopian, Ovidiu Hurdzeu, Bedros Horasangian, Dan Gradinaru or Modest Morariu, G. Cusnarencu et alia.

All these expansions and focus shifts did but further complicate the already diverse landscape I was attempting to describe.

KXF: What about what we can call that mysterious and unwritten Cartesian 7th meditation, that alter-synthesis of contemporary Romanian letters?

CR: The years after 1990 presents us with a new scenario: all Staircases live in a Huntingtonian Grey Zone. The question that appears – Is there a Romanian postmodernism? – finds an affirmative answer in Mircea Cartarescu's Romanian Postmodernism, a defense equally great in scope and objective. A very talented poet and writer of fiction, Cartarescu offers an original overview of the Romanian literature in a postmodernist interpretation. Don't be shocked if I say that M. Cartarescu is the sixth and latest synthesis. But, let us speak about the main argument in Cartarescu's study. "Postmodernism is not only a stage in the evolution of art forms, or only a literary movement, but an interruption of that social order in which the evolution of literary forms and movements is possible, a 'convalescence' following the modernist illusion, made possible by a shift in the civilization, not only in the culture."

An inside observer of the 80s phenomenon, Cartarescu knows what an impact rock music, the hippie and Flower-power movements, blue-jeans, and television had on the artistic outlook of his generation. The most striking characteristic of the Romanian modernism and its Eastern-European manifestations is precisely the inversion of causalities. As a matter of fact, this is valid for all art movements in the history of Romanian literature, among which modernism in no

exception. Twenty years of relaxation of the system were enough for barely foreseen freedom to take root, especially in the artistic and academic environments. In fact, the signs of postmodernism must be sought in the student-run literary circles established in the main university centers, Bucharest, Cluj, Timișoara, and Iași. Cartarescu emphasizes their role in modeling the Romanian literary landscape, an emphasis equally underscored in the majority of studies and articles dedicated to the literature of the period. The Romanian Postmodernism can also be read as a manifesto of the 80s generation, a vehement and at times unfair pro domo defense – he resists the temptation to identify the 80s movement with postmodernism, convinced that "like the poets of the 80s, prose writers do not follow a single path either, but are distinct and versatile, 'filling out' the space of contemporary poetics from nearly 'traditionalist' prose to the most advanced avant-garde, dream-like, and postmodern experiences.

The writing experience initiated by representatives of the School of Tirgoviste – who composed postmodernist texts in the midst of socialist realism – constitutes, in my opinion, the first affirmation of an authentic postmodernist conscience for which the space of the World is mistaken for the space of the Library, for the world is "a book in which every sign sends you to another one," and "to read means to go as far as words lead."

As a matter of fact, as early as 1982, Gh. Craciun referred to the writers of the eighties' interest in the "mechanisms through which a narrative text comes into existence and operates," a concern that singled out the young writers of those years, placing them closer to the representatives of the French nouveau roman or to the American experimental prose of John Barth, Donald Barthelme and Kurt Vonnegut, Jr. (among others) than to their Romanian contemporaries, with Mircea Horia Simionescu, Radu Petrescu, Costache Olareanu or Tudor Topa as notable exceptions, along with the members of "the oniric group," which was, however, largely ignored by the literary press during the grace period of the 80s when the only continuously active oniric was the poet Leonid Dimov. Prose writer and theoretician, Craciun (like Nedelciu) proposed – in his 1982 essay *The '70-'80 Archipelago* and *The New Tide* – a highly synthesized, generational portrait which features several of the traits of postmodern prose that Ihab Hassan dis-

cussed around the same time in the 1982 edition of *The Dismemberment of Orpheus*, although the term postmodernism doesn't appear in Craciun's essay.

The elements of the new poetics gradually stand out among the young writers' remarks in the press: the negation of the novel as a genre and the resurrection of short fiction; the concreteness of imagination and the absorption of the real into the imaginary (Stelian Tanase); the use of nonspecialized narrators whose role is to give testimony; the rethinking of the relationship between author and text (Cristian Teodorescu); the unmasking and reconsideration of the conventions of the epic genre; the correlation between tragedy and irony; the cultural pseudo-demystification, *farcitura*, as defined by Paul Zumthor, and the use of the variety show, the specific sign of present civilization (Nicolae Iliescu); minimal, *tel-quel*, progressive, psychedelic prose or new-romance; new mannerism and kitsch (George Cusnarencu); "ease in stylistic exercise; experimentation – even though exclusivist, negativist, autarchic – with various narrative methods; implicit and sometimes explicit debates about the text, about the act of writing and creation by means of meta-texts that confess, if not the attitude of greatness, confidence in their own accomplishments – at the least an acute awareness of creation understood as irrevocable fact" (Daniel Vighi); literature and life; expression and content, like the sides of the Mobius strip; a visionary quality and indeterminacy; the poetic I as biographical reality (Ioan Buduca); the (bookish) tragedy/"tragism" of the human condition, bought about by the fact that "in today's world, where power is textual, man feels himself written and knows he is written" (Gheorghe Iova); paraphrase, re-creation, de-composition and re-launching of the quote; "ambiguity, gliding between text and reality;" and intertextuality (Simona Popescu). All in all: a self-portrait via abstraction of a group that captures the main aspects of innovative 80s fiction – without the benefit of label.

KXF: This is a dizzying and vertiginous history, replete with astonishing literary structures jutting out from the sea of prose. It seems very much like an integrationist method for invention, drawn from immediate circumstance and poetic schools from all over. And so, now, if I wanted to find the closest port in the storm, how do I get a handle on these variable tides of literary movements?

CR: If you are searching for information regarding Romanian poetry in the last 10 years, this page provides a few hints. It's based on Razvan Tupa's statements and Mugur Grosu's understatements...If before the fall of communism in 1989, literature was perceived as a powerful instrument later it became a strident harmony of noises...a chaotic movement of voices. The easiest way to organize the multitude of directions was to place them in a "decade" chronology...Every 10 years a new generation of Romanian writers was actually born. Writers such as Traian T. Cosovei, Ion Muresan, Florin Iaru, Mariana Marin, Alexandru Musina imposed gradually different ways of dealing with reality using textual marks of irony and fantasy.

Still a group of writers that marked a transition from literary postmodern avant-garde of the 80s to a market-oriented literature managed to emerge in the 90s. Cristian Popescu, Mihail Galatanu, Ioan Es Pop offered a clear shifting of themes and approaches from specific literary worlds towards a borderline realm. Gheorghe Iova, for instance, avoided the classification accepted by literary critics on the basis of generation. His writing, published officially just after the fall of communism was considered initially as belonging to the 90s generation although his manuscript writings were pretty influential for the theory and practice of writing in the 80s.

In 2000, the term Generation 2000 emerged. Editors (Nicolae Tzone, Marin Mincu) launched the term regarding books like "The Coffee Baby" by Ion Zvera and "Anarchist Manifesto" by Marius Ianus. Marin Mincu, the critic that systematically anthologized and promoted the directions of Romanian poetry in the 20th century, strongly affirmed the appearance of a new poetry in Romania. Marius Ianus, already mentioned above, is credited, together with Dumitru Crudu, as the founder of fracturism, indisputably the most influential movement in Romanian poetry between 1997 and 2005. Eventually, the discussions regarding the characteristics of the "generation" turned ineffective as the initial intentions of the new movements were abandoned and the discussions became more and more literary oriented.

a) Fracturism was not so much a literary movement as it was a state of challenging esthetical, political or ethical authority. Fracturism proved to be not only a fertile starting point, but also an opportunity of af-

firming the new search for rigorous literary discourse and sharp literary criticism. Marius Ianus formulated a poetic discourse that shocked and touched the audience of literature. His best known poem, "Romania" is dedicated to Allen Ginsberg, the poet assuming explicit connections to the well-known poem "America" of the Beat poet. Subsequently, Ianus launched so-called "elementary lyrics" as a possibility of renouncing the extreme and sometimes superficial interpretations that the critique preferred for fracturism. Other influences: Gregory Corso, Lawrence Ferlinghetti, Romanian and Russian Avant-garde movements (V. Maiakovski, Tristan Tzara, Gellu Naum).

b) Books as "Fetish" (Razvan Tupa, 2001), "Pages" (Elena Vladareanu, 2002), "And Bianca Sat on Alex" (Alexandru Potcoava, 2002)...literary conventions enter everyday language and everyday speech is being used in creating literary conventions..... In 2005, "Romanian Bodies" challenged the limits as well as the necessities of clichés in communication and poetry. Influenced by Pier Paolo Passolini, by Romanian poets like Mircea Ivanescu, Gellu Naum, the above-mentioned books were a breakthrough.

c) Adrian Urmanov ("Canonical Flashes" 2001, "Utilitarian Poems" 2003) and Andrei Peniuc ("A Small Animal" 2002, "Abridged Manual of Terrorism" 2002) launched a "utilitarian poetics" that affirmed the need for a poetry written for the public which uses the language of music videos to draw attention to a poetic message.

d) Dumitru Crudu is connected with the new authors of Moldavia. He imposed an entire series of authors that came up with something entirely original for Romanian literature. Over the years, the literature written in Moldavia (the ex Soviet Union country where the official language is Romanian) was considered at its best as equal with the literature written in Romania. After Dumitru Crudu emerged as a respected and remarkable new writer in Romania it was clear that authors such as Mihail Vakulovski, Alexandru Vakulovski and Mitos Micleusanu launch new tendencies in Romanian poetry: a sudden lyrical "violence" coming from Russian underground poetry: Viktor and Venedikt Erofeev, Sorokin or Mamleev became recurrent.

A group of young writers in Constanta (South-Eastern Romania) made their voice heard clearly. It gathered,

among others, Mugur Grosu, George Vasilievici and Mircea Tuglea, who, in 1996 wrote an important book: Proesy. They had their Cenaclul de Marti (The Tuesday Meeting).

e) A direction that shaped a very distinct part of contemporary poetry in Romania challenged the expressionist tradition. Claudiu Komartin ("The Puppeteer and other Insomnias" 2003), Dan Coman ("The Year of the Yellow Mole" 2003), Cosmin Perta ("Zorovavel" 2002) and Teodor Duna ("The February 31st Train" 2002): shifting themes and atmosphere effects inspired from Paul Celan, Georg Trakl or the tragic scenarios of Sylvia Plath's later developments.

f) In Iasi (North-Eastern Romania) the most active literary group in Romania was Club 8 that brought together writers that were not strictly people born in the 70s and 80s. Writers such as Constantin Acosmei, Radu Andriescu, Michael Astner, Mariana Codrut, Gabriel H. Decuble, Dan Lungu, O. Nimigean and Dan Sociu shaped a "new realism", a poetic variant of maximalism.

Romanian literature was aiming at a wider audience ...And quickly enough the headquarters of new Romanian poetry moved for a while on www. Internet sites as www.poezie.ro, or www.clublitarar.com and <http://hyperliteratura.reea.net/>, or www.traffic.ro, or noesis, or www.liternet.ro concentrated very fast on new poetry.

Since 2002, different clubs in Bucharest and in other cities have been hosting regular events of performing and reading poetry. Club A in Bucharest organized the Fracturi evenings in 2002 and since 2005 it is a host for Poetics of quotidian, a series of meetings that present writers and new books. In Arad, (Western Romania) a group of writers (Catalin Lazurca, Vasile Leac, Florin Maduta, T.S. Khasis) managed to impose a relaxed way to argue tragic situations. New writers such as Andrei Ruse or Sorin Dinco (post-mortemist/porn) are introducing projects of visual poetry using the Internet as a medium of expression as well as an alternative to printed poetry.

KXF: This is a rather comprehensive and erudite backstory for what is going on in Romanian letters today. Could you furnish us an "A-list" of Romanian authors we should be paying more attention to?

CR: V. Romanian Bodies. Table of Elements

Let us list a few of the most important Romanian poets that have emerged in the last 7 years.

- a) The Exuberance of Poetry: Mihail Vakulovski, George Vasilievici, Vasile Leac, Catalin Lazurca, Mugur Grosu(zappist)
- b) The Game of Masks : Serban Axinte, Dumitru Badita, Livia Rosca, Robert Mandroiu
- c) Neo-expressionistic mannerism: Dan Coman, Andra Rotaru, Teodor Duna, Claudiu Komartin, Cosmin Perta, Tudor Cretu
- d) The “New Authenticism”: Marius Ianus (fracturist), Dan Sociu, Dumitru Crudu, Bogdan Perdivara, Eugen Suman
- e) Trans-textual poetics: Adrian Urmanov (utilitarist), Andrei Peniuc, Razvan Tupa
- f) The challenge of the profound: Stefan Manasia, Linda Maria Baros, Adela Greceanu, Ioana Nicolaie, Constantin, Virgil Banescu
- g) The Traumatized Voice: Miruna Vlada, Ruxandra Novac, Olga Stefan, T.S. Khasis, Domnica Drumea, Diana Geacar, Oana Catalina Ninu, A. Soitu (spammist) etc etc etc...

KXF: I ought to reiterate my question on your position on minor literatures.

CR: Well, I don't think I am much influenced by “minor literatures”, Kane... I use allusions, yes, they are a-plenty, but they are mostly...bookish. Romi folklore or language, the “maneles” etc, do not influence us “seriously”, but ironically...Ethnic groups have equal rights with the rest of the population, but they are not vocal enough, I think...And, generally, one comes to the fore only if one is really good and has something to say...Otherwise one does not exist.

Here you do not have any advantages if you belong to a sect, ethnic group or sexual orientation...Which is ultimately good...No false values under false pretense...

I'm afraid it is a mere question of...“survival”...We do not discriminate against other groups, but we do not pay much attention to them either. It's up to them

to prove they are valuable, or interesting or worth following.

We are an elitist/snobbish society in as far literature or literary sources are concerned . Which is good. We are very attentive...We are mountains of concentration...and well-focused...

KXF: Apart from the “decad(el)ism” which we are shielded from, and the synthetic confusion of maneles in its sporty pseudo-Italiano, let's bring this back into focus on your work since it seems to both derive from and break with the literary historical precedent you have delineated. A table of elements = a table of contaminants, and it would appear that our respective practices conjure up some very interesting affinities; namely, the linguistic wanderlust of not being satisfied in sticking to one language. We are all non-monolingualists now, but what I find interesting is the faucet effect in your poetics – the way it will be like a Jackson Pollock drip painting in applying minimal phonemes, and at other times long streaks and pouring of cross-linguistic portmanteaus and cobbled-together puns. The most horrifying question would be your selection process, and if you find that anchoring yourself to merely one language is limiting - or, conversely, if you are so overwhelmed by this torrent of inundating languages in your mind that this would be the only way to carry forward in expression. And, as another question, what would you define as non- or pseudo-poems? I somehow doubt that this would be a thing of modesty, but more on the order that possibly you have traced particular limitations in contemporary poetics.

CR: You won't believe me, of course, but my poetry isn't necessarily mine...At first, when I developed a latent interest in computers, I came across a list with all the poetic blogs in action at the time...I chose a name at random. It was...notfrog , i.e., Kris Rzepka...Good choice, I might say. He accepted to show me the way but he didn't know anything about what he was doing. It turned out to be a Golemic relationship. He taught me how to become more confident in my almost nonexistent poetic gifts. I needed language support. I felt I couldn't make up a credible poetic story out of my feeble English. I asked him for permission to use his poems, to put his words to work again, to re-invent his poem to the point of making it unrecognizable. The result was incredible.

I discovered that each poem had endless variants for me, it hid away several worlds one behind/beneath the other, it had several layers that had to be revealed to the public. I had to use valuable English patterns in my freshly-born pieces of poetry...to get these ready-made words operate a shift of meaning. And, when I least expected a guest, Burroughs came on the stage...I knew the cut-up method was what I needed...

I saw that when words were pulverized, they tended to arrange themselves in clusters of new, strong, unexpected meaning(s)...By cutting them up, you understand words are organized fractal-like...Yes, it is a strange, independent, interconnected world of bunches and braids and wreaths of new significance...

The selection process is therefore natural...The new pattern lying in front of my eyes gives me ideas...allusions stick together, the new arrangement of words proves to be shocking and unexpected and the metaphors which are rarely born are rare...if not unique. And you have all the freedom in the world to use as many languages as possible, multilingualism comes naturally, Kane...For instance, at times, you feel the need to use the harsh German type of sarcasm which is stronger than, mm, its milder Romanian variant, and you simply use it...By reading such a multilingual poem aloud, you better feel its multiple, sonorous beauty and, why not? It's humorous or ironical multi-tone layers...

Non-poems or pseudo-poems are mere intermediaries. Most of my poems are like that. I still have to work on them. They wistfully look into the future... They are lazy entities turned inside out, devoid of ascendancy...corpuscles in a phial...which I feel the contemporary poetics need. They are plastic skeletons of future bony skeletons, made in a lab.

KXF: To render and decompose in order to recompose – this process or function is one that a few of us unerringly cast on the “experimental” side seem to do. It sounds, at first blush, very dada, although we can imagine that in our practices as guided by our communication media that we are gifted with a few more open possibilities than someone like Tzara. You mentioned earlier about a “golemic” relationship with Rzepka...It would be of some interest to discern who was inscribing upon whom in that exchange, for al-

though you report that it was his words that gave some initial life to your own productions, the process of inscription doubles when it is re-applied back upon Rzepka's work with a purpose to render unrecognizable. Stripped here of an impossible repetition of cognizing a poem (do we seriously ever have “proper” cognition of a poem even just once?), you seem free to explore the ruptures and cracks that emerge almost seismically along the fault lines of words. In rushes other words and phonetic fragments to fill the cracks and fissures that make a new poetic landscape, a la terre inconnu. But I must ask the rather personal question: when it comes to applying the cuts to a work, do those cracks already seem present before you begin cutting and so thus guiding the poet's blade, or are you guided by an intuition to see if applying cuts at certain strategic locations will produce the new? I know you stated that the selection process is natural, but, as Heraclitus says, “nature likes to hide”, and naturalness resonates differently pending perspective. Are you, following a line from Deleuze and Guattari, attempting to construct a poetic desiring machine where such machines only work when they break down? When you speak of cuts and skeletons, labs, pulverization, etc., it almost sounds like you are running a kind of poetry delicatessen! It is the butcher who can look at the wholeness of the cow and see in it all the individual cuts that are hidden in its flesh, something which needs to be brought to the surface, with a flash of Stoic logic, for public consumption. So, setting aside any negative connotation on this word of butcher (macelar instead of masacra), do you feel your practice may in fact be (among several things – we don't wish to pigeonhole here) a successful transposition of the craft of the butcher to contemporary poetics?

CR: All the texts get into the cut-up machine (see: language is a virus). A randomizing act decides the future pattern of the new poem. I read the cut-up and if I don't like what I see in the randomite, if there are no striking shapes in view, I cut it up again. And again. Until I see poetic potential in at least 2-3 word combinations which ultimately trigger off the tone and “subject” of the new product. In all nostalgia, I plus to emphasize allusions from sudden reminiscences.

As for the holy cow I am butchering, god, no. I don't think I can clearly see what I “butcher.” I “dissect” flying animal poems: an elephant poem may whiz by

ditch,

and I catch him by his trunk and what I get is a slice of his wrinkled...ear...or if I see a mongoose text swiveling about I snatch its flying furry nozzle and change it into a pig's snout kind of word. So, I don't even know if my flying cows have udders. It may as well be an ostrich's udder...or a whale's...And, on second thoughts, I don't need a lab, either. My flying cows may dung. They do, you know...It seems they preserved their physiology untouched...Hmm... Anyway, I am no butcher of cow poems. Butchers are perfectly focused on what they do. I am not. I sort of fly together with the prize segments snatched from rather inattentive, careless animal poems.

And, Kane, of course I am the Golem in this relationship, what do you think??

I do live with a piece of parchment stuck in my mouth, that's why I am so clumsy and slow, I do serve people under controlled conditions, that's why I am a little hostile to them, I admit...I am unable to speak, taking the instructions literally, all in all, I am a character in an expressionist silent movie. E.K. Rzepka can play Rabbi Loew's part credibly, I think...But imagine the backward movement. To met (death, interdiction, stagnation, lack of progress) inscribed on my forehead, he attached letter e, and emet (truth, action, movement) switched on the primitive creature I am, activating my stagnant impulse to reformulate, re-construct, mimic everything I lay my hands on. Yes, maybe with a degree of freedom given by the quality of my untrained, automaton-like, simulacrum-type of brain.

KXF: It sounds less like a lab and more like the Island of Dr. Moreau, our dark precursor to genetic recombinants. To bring ourselves to a premature close, effacing the "E" on the gestural EMET of our entretien, could you a) give us some insight into what you are working now in lurid detail, and b) tell us about this Antares journal in the deep and far reaches of winsome Galati?

CR: Hm, not much...I look around and I see dead ends all over the place, in all corners...Perhaps I go through a period of accumulations...I don't know if I accumulate anything when I stay relaxed and motionless and dumb-looking and dissonant and pachydermic, but perhaps I do...

Anyway, I learn from what I do these days: I translate several interviews for the Antares literary journal...I learn from other people's mistakes & blunders, I feel so cleverly mistaken when I touch their words...

My projects?? It is as simple as this: I shall soon write

1. A book with translations of interviews of foreign writers side by side with critical pieces about contemporary Romanian writers.

2. A book of STATEMENT-ANSWER poems: me and Aaron Held, if s/he still exists.

3. A book about my online adventure...with dialogues, comments, notes exchanged with my friends over the last 3-4 years together with the lit pieces I wrote for various lit blogs and for mine, too.

As for the Antares Journal, I am a chief-editor now and I am free to make it look fresh and up-to-date, so to say...I am freshening it up a little, that's all...luridly speaking..

It is a lit journal which appears in Galati, but it is financially supported by the Romanian Writers' Union. Its director is poet Corneliu Antoniu who makes efforts to keep it afloat, financially and not only.

Thank you, Kane, for choosing me, too... I don't think I am representative in any way. And I warn you...you will soon lose me, I tell you...I might turn into an artist, formatting matter with my both hands and forgetting how to talk about it...no longer talking about it...

KXF: Then I suppose we here can consider ourselves fortunate as the window of opportunity is still slightly ajar to entice you to continue speaking of your work – although we do fully understand the exasperation that is attached to those who talk and those who do. So, without much further ado, let me pose this one last dark question before we all retreat to your shadowy laboratories of the word and tenebrous workshops of nefarious poetic experimentation. Should contemporary poetics move ever more toward the deterioration (not etiolation) of the word in order to produce ever-new "affects"? How much of the word's meanings should be kept in reserve, or does the word itself always present a character of being both too much

ditch,

(profit) and never enough (loss)? In the temple of the word where we are the moneychangers, what is the rate of exchange on our word-meaning economics?

CR: Hmm...It's a long story and I am the last to answer your question, Kane..

Anyway, in my eye, deterioration of the word is a process and an objective one at that. Like growing and dying in people. Words lead open, heavy, promiscuous, plain or exceptional lives and then die. Some die more, because they are old and worn out. Others die less, out of sheer neglect, misuse or overuse.

Our poetic brains still function according to a finite set of language truisms. I like people like you whose (critical) language sets free, gaining, in the process, a...baroque complexity (brightness, wit, metaphors) which the "synthetic" English lacks.

All in all, words attain a certain level of functioning and after this they start losing it gradually. What shall we do then? Obviously, Poetry needs a period of higher-order reasoning and deeper abstract thinking in which it has less to do with the ego's multiple physiologies or humours and more with their relationship with our-universe-in-expansion.

Problem is we can't perceive the process of expansion properly or clearly. We simply can't.

Immediate remedial efforts are required: improved cognitive + creative scores and redevelopment of deteriorated, aggravated, abraded, collapsed, decayed, degenerated, disintegrated, eroded, relapsed poetic areas through hybridization as to get the "new affects" you told me about. Put the words into awkward situations if you want to see them changed for the better and "renewed"...

Yes, we are the money changers in the world of word economics. But we are so different and we do manage the word as plain word-accountants, rough word-lenders, drowsy word-spinners or eloquent agents, punctual brokers or shrewd coiners in a word market ruled by an ever-changing and fluctuating word-order, so I can't answer your question. The perspectives are so shifty and so very personal.

I stick to Adam Field's words: I am Mr. Paper/ I cut / am cut / will cut / am cutting...

Yep, this is it...