

Mircea Cărtărescu's *Levantul*. Foreground and Background Anthroponyms

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Abstract

The article focuses on the peculiarities of the anthroponyms in the poem *Levantul* by Mircea Cărtărescu in which the characters' names are double coded, by amalgamation of names and parts of names borrowed from various literary works in Romanian or world literature. Names are built by overlapping the real world with the fictional world and are set at the congruence of the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries. Characters' names act either as flesh-and-blood representations (which I will call the level of *foreground anthroponyms*) or as cultural references, in which various etymologies from Greek, Turkish, Latin, Italian or French intersect (level which I will call the level of *background anthroponyms*). Thus, built with a technique similar to a painting or to a bas relief, *Levantul*, which is by no means a Borgesian library, proposes a parodical recapitulation of the concept of literature.

Keywords: *background anthroponyms, foreground anthroponyms, double coded anthroponyms, cultural/ multiethnic /stylistic /literary synthesis*

Research in literary onomastics, from Garabet Ibrăileanu's early study on proper names in Caragiale's literary work (1926) to the more recent insights into names (Zăbavă, 2007), has opened a debate over the significance of the names assigned by writers to their fictional characters.

In contradistinction, the present paper highlights the special usage of anthroponyms in the poem *Levantul* by Mircea Cărtărescu (1998). In this poem, there are a lot of personal names that do not belong to characters, but function as intertextual elements and as cultural reference markers. By employing them, the author generates a peculiar atmosphere, describes characters and creates language games within the text. When a character such as Zoe quotes names such as Garibaldi, Lucrețiu Pătrășcanu, Candiano Popescu or Lulumba when engaging in a mere conversation, the consequences are twofold: on the one hand, the character outlines her left-wing ideological stance, on the other hand, the author ironically overlaps the temporal axes, since the development of the epic is set in the nineteenth century.

I have connected the two tendencies – that of assigning names to characters, and thus highlighting them and giving them prominence, and that of allowing other names to remain in the background as accompaniment elements – to a technique characteristic of visual arts. More precisely, I claim that Cărtărescu uses a technique similar to the bas-relief one. The technique that he uses may also make us think of the relationship established in a painting between the portrait in the foreground and the background against which it is set. Any beholder tends to give precedence to the portrait and to ignore the background. It is Mona Lisa's smile and look that fascinate us, not the landscape painted by Leonardo da Vinci in the background. Guided by this analogy

with visual arts, I herein advocate for the conceptual pair *foreground anthroponyms* – *background anthroponyms*, including the names of the main, secondary or episodic characters in the former category, and the names that constitute a parodic bibliography in the latter category.

As several authors of literary onomastics studies have already pointed out, the nature of the anthroponyms in current use necessarily differs from that of the anthroponyms used in fictional works, where proper names have additional significance and further engage creativity. According to Istrate (2000, 27), the attributes of literary anthroponyms are uniqueness and originality; Zăbavă puts forth the idea of the hierarchical ordering of the characters' names in a literary work:

In a literary work, not all proper names have the same degree of symbolization, because they behave as poetic, literary symbols, not as conventional signs; their main feature is uniqueness, a fact which renders them context-dependent (2007, 81, my translation).

Mircea Cărtărescu's modern epic brings further sophistication to the process of assigning names, since the action in the epic does not concern only the characters.

Foreground Antroponyms. Protagonists in *Levantul*

Not even a single protagonist's name from Cărtărescu's poem can be regarded as "innocent", quite on the contrary all names carry in themselves a whole history of literary connotations. One would tend to say that such an assertion is valid to each and every proper name as long as, for every name, onomastic dictionaries may reveal connections with mythological or historical characters who bore such names. Still, in this particular case, the writer's assigning of names is more sophisticated than it would initially seem. By means of an anthroponym, the postmodern author intentionally performs multiple syntheses of some fictional worlds. The names of the characters reach the point where they function as a Borgesian library, revising and compressing diverse literary idiolects.

The best example to illustrate this is the name of the character Leonida Ampotrofagul, also repeatedly called Chir Leonida Ampotrofagul. This synthetic proper name combines a generic form of address of neo-Greek origin, "chir", meaning sir/mister and alluding to the Phanariot stage in the Romanian culture, especially to Nicolae Filimon's novel *Ciocoii vechi și noi* (1862), with a given name whose etymology springs from old Greek and Greek mythology (thus underlying the nobility of the name), and a ridiculous nickname with the role of a surname, which the author borrows from Caragiale's literary sketches. The implications of this anthroponym are even more numerous. The first appearance of the character in the text gives rise to a description whose elements remind of Leonardo da Vinci (Leonida and Leonardo share the same etymon): he rises and descends from the sky with the help of three propellers and carrying wooden wings on his back, where he also carries, in order to propulsate him, a piston "cylinder". He is dressed in an "anteriu" (a long coat of oriental fashion, worn especially by the boyars in the Phanariot age) and in a pair of "iminei" (i.e. shoes of Turkish fashion also worn by boyars). He wears a large belt used by the policemen at the beginning of the nineteenth century to hang their guns on. Instead, he uses it to carry screwdrivers, rasps and reamers. His long beard (long up to his knees) is in contrast with the more modern glasses. In his hands, he has a weapon called *faust-patron*.

When dressing, the character mixes irreconcilable styles: “anteriu” and “iminei” from the Phanariot fashion with Western accessories – elements of the German technicism (rasps, screwdrivers, reamers), the climax being represented by the weapon. The double encoding creates a striking effect, increased by an obvious inadequacy, a source of kitsch and of humour. The representation mixes famous symbolic elements (the wooden wings from Leonardo’s drawings) with other hilarious elements, building the image of an Icarus wearing an “anteriu” (a long coat, weird before men adopted the European fashion) and carrying screwdrivers, or of a Phanariot Leonardo. The “faustpatron”, a weapon used by the German army in the Second World War to destroy the armor of the Russian tanks, is called forth. The syntagm can be associated with the Faustian nature of the character, being created by means of a pun. Leonida states his willingness to sign the pact with the devil, only in the name of knowledge and progress, which means that he acknowledges Faustus as his patron. Therefore, at the same time, Leonida as a name alludes to Leonardo da Vinci, Icarus and Faustus, becoming a parodic counterpoint to the prototype of the genius-inventor. Furthermore, it is also a reference to Caragiale’s character Conu Leonida, from which the author of the poem took over the suggestion of a conscience undertaking severe political options.

The second name, “Ampotrofagul”, is harder to decode. His nickname can derive from Leonida’s detached way of seeing the people around him. He scorns the individuals who lack culture and who are not interested in scientific progress, and the people completely absorbed in politics. When the revolutionaries demand his help against the tyrant, Leonidas launches a tirade with scatological accents. At this level, the character embodies the scientist living in the world of ideas, the passive individual in the public order, maybe even the parodic caricature of the “resistance through culture”. We may conclude that the nickname “antropofag” (i.e. man-eater) can be synonymous of “misanthrope”. The use of the metathesis can be explained by the reference to Caragiale. Beyond any shadow of doubt, the name was set by Leonida’s consort Zoe, the revolutionary. This character brings together traits of the feminine characters from Caragiale’s comedies. She is endowed with Mița Baston’s vehemence, the same worship for the “Republic from Ploiești”, she plays the role of an organiser of political games, just like Zoe Trahanache, and she has Eftimița’s linguistic habits.

Zoe becomes a generic name for a woman. As Christian Ionescu notices, “the first appearance of the name Zoe is the one in the Greek version of the Old Testament, the Septuagint, where the name Zoe is used in a passage of the Genesis instead of Eve, being a translation of the Hebrew name” (1975, 295). In the entire poem the writer proposes different variants of the woman. He praises the beauty of the European, African and Asian women; he also insists on the charm of the native woman, in the manner of the Văcărești poets and of the 1848 poets. Furthermore, he praises “the beloved reader”, the true “ideal reader” of his work, he brings forth chimeric images (the fairy Hyacin) or realistic images (the wife Cristinuș). Through Zoe, the poet presents an alternative vision of the woman, the one inherited from Caragiale. The woman in Caragiale’s works is aggressive, excessive, manipulative and uneducated. The woman is seen from a misogynous perspective; thus the converse perspective is natural (the man is seen as insensitive and terrible).

The nickname “Ampotrofagul” activates yet another series of connotations. This time the allusions refer to Caragiale’s sketch *Tempora...*(1997). At the end of the text, Coriolan Drăgănescu is called a brute/ a tyrant (Rom. “zbir”) and a cannibal/ an executioner (Rom. “călău ampotrofag”). The syntagms appeared as such in a newspaper

of the opposition and mark the character's dramatic metamorphosis from the type of revolutionary leading the students at the statue of Michael the Brave to the Chief Constable who orders the suppression of the students' rebellion.

The writer of *Levantul* continues to undergo the same spectacular change of perspective. After having rhetorically and cynically stated his undemocratic beliefs and his attachment to the world of ideas, Leonida bears a radical metamorphosis and becomes the supporter of leftist social solutions. When comparing the character's two speeches, set only one page apart (Cărtărescu, 1998, 74-75), one can notice the easily shifted metamorphosis of his convictions. In the former speech, the names Volta and Flammarion are mentioned in order to create distance between the speaker and the ignorant members of the audience, who are not familiar with the works of these scholars. In this particular case the character's elitism is underlined. In the latter speech, the character denies Diderot and D'Alambert, whom he calls useless, and at this stage, he implicitly denies arts and scientific research done for its own sake, claiming to be a supporter of utilitarianism, of simple objects and of propagandistic art. Leonidas' progress along the two pages epitomises its counterpart, I.L. Caragiale's sketch. This scriptural effect might be coined *condensation*. Gathering all the information we got from different cultural sources we may put forward the idea that the name of Leonidas Ampotrofagul is the result of a multiple cultural encoding and that it can be defined by relating it to the name of another character, Zoe.

As a matter of fact, this technique of defining names by means of onomastic couples spans the entire poem. For example, a relevant pair is the couple Manoil-Zenaida. The two are related (they are siblings), and they are the main characters of the poem. Etymologically, their names refer to two stages in the history of religious ideas. According to Christian Ionescu, the name Zenaida is derived from the accusative form of Zeus (1975, 294). This name of Greek inspiration entered the calendar after having been under the influence of the Christianity of Slavic expression. Manoil comes from Emanuel, being a teophoric name too, this time alluding to the Christian God. Furthermore, one may add the fact that Zenaida's linguistic family also includes Zenobia. As long as we keep in mind that Zenobia and Zenobius were two martyrs from Cicilia, sister and brother, killed during the reign of Diocletian (Ionescu, 1975, 295), we can associate them with the existence of the two related characters Manoil and Zenaida, both involved in a risky plot against the dynasty, which brings about the martyrdom of the doers.

Besides the portrayal of characters at an onomastic level, through pairs which imply relations of opposition (Zoe-Leonidas) or symmetry (Manoil-Zenaida), we discover another technique which makes anthroponyms different. There are characters whose names were taken, without being modified, from well known literary works (Manoil, Zoe, Nastratin Hogeia), other names which were slightly modified, being borrowed from various fictional world and created from parts of names (Leonidas Ampotrofagul). Finally, there are also names which appear in the text for the first time – Mircea Cărtărescu's pure inventions. This type is represented by names such as Brillant Languedoc and Iaurta Chiorul. In the Byzantine world of the poem, a world rendered in bright colours in order to suggest the picturesque Balkans, the onomastics focuses on elements linked to languages such as Greek, Turkish or the Slavic languages. This observation can be applied even in Iaurta's case, the exception being represented by the French name Languedoc. The family name is unusual for a French speaker. The writer takes into consideration the verisimilar sonority of the name and the false impression of

familiarity that a Romanian speaker can have, due to the suffix “-oc”, productive when creating family names. N. A. Constantinescu mentions the suffixes “-oc(a)-ocea” as being of Latin origin and exemplifies their productiveness in names such as: Băcioc, Bărtoc, Bondoc (1963, LXIII). Thus, the writer makes use of a linguistic game turned into a trap for the naive reader. As for the formation of the word Languedoc, we must mention that it is the syntagm “langue d’oc”, with the variant “Languedoc”, which refers in the first variant to the Occitan language, and in the second variant to a French province where this language was spoken. The particle “-oc” in Occitan means “yes”, the Occitan language being almost completely replaced by the French language. In its long “fight” for supremacy, and therefore for survival, the Occitan language had a moment of greatness when, being spoken by the Albigensian Cathars, it became the language of the minstrels. Competing with French, the language remained present in art, especially in poetry. As a result, Mircea Cărtărescu’s character is described along the traits of the profile of the minstrel. The clothes, the tattoos, the sentimentality, the melodramatic gestures, his numberless love conquests, all provide this status to the character. When he is introduced into the poem – in a bizarre way, as a *deus ex machina*, possibly surprising even his creator – the Frenchman recites a long ballad recalling both Villon’s poems and Edgar Allan Poe’s more modern poetry. He will give up the professional conqueror’s bragging in favour of a stable, romantic and passionate love. The writer synthesizes, in the presence and the style of the character Languedoc, an entire theory about the way in which the European erotic poetry and the stereotypes connected to love were born from the poetry of the Cathar minstrels. The demonstration of these ideas can be found on several hundred pages in Denis de Rougement’s study¹ and remains in the present poem encoded on an allusive level.

The case of the other name devised *ad hoc* by Mircea Cărtărescu – Iaurta Chiorul – functions as a counterpoint to the example of Brilliant Languedoc’s name. All spiritual connotations that the name of the French character brings forth are replaced by the common, strictly gastronomic significance of the given name. Etymologically, the name Iaurta comes from the Turkish language and has no other semantic developments except for that of consumption dairy. Therefore, the character has an exclusively pragmatic dimension; he is a material man, interested in gaining at any costs. His basic occupation is that of a pirate, so the attributes of cruelty and greed, reinforced by the nickname, are added to the mild allusions of his name. The nickname, as several studies of onomastics point out, is a family name (many surnames come from nicknames) concentrating pertinent or evil observations which the members of the community have made about to the physical aspect and the personality of the one involved. *Chiorul* (the one without an eye), in this case, it does not imply the character’s physical impairment, but it rather points out his monstrousness and moral ugliness. There are several references to the Polyphemous Cyclops and Iaurta is repeatedly associated to the cyclopic monstrosity. The path provided for this character by the writer is not at all innocent: after a life of illdoings, the character seems to have the chance of moral rehabilitation through the contact with Manoil, a sincere, generous and enthusiastic nature. However, this is only another chance that he misses; Iaurta’s vicious and greedy nature proves stronger and the end follows the model used by Caragiale as the denouement for the political fights in *O scrisoare pierdută*: victory belongs to the meanest character. Iaurta takes over the

¹ I refer to Denis de Rougement’s study, *L’amour et l’Occident*, where he follows the thesis that the minstrel model established in the community of the Albigensian Cathars represents the basis of the literature and modern conception about the beauty/ the tragic aspect of unfulfilled love.

power in Wallachia, replacing the former tyranny with another dictatorship. Moreover, the political speech uttered when he is invested with the power parodies the political speech of the characters in Caragiale's comedy, performing – as in Zoe's case – a synthesis between the most striking features of the politicians of this world (Cațavencu, Farfuridi, Dandanache).

Foreground Antroponyms: Secondary or Episodic Characters

In this epic there are numerous remarkable episodic characters, whose names perform the role of emphasising the picturesque. The mixture between the often ignoble picturesque and a noble melancholy is the defining feature of the style in which the poem is written, being at the same time a characteristic of the environment implied by it. The mixed etymologies which the names of the characters mentioned in different contexts have, some derived from old Greek, others from the Slavic languages or from Turkish, can create the image of a union of peoples, such as that in the Balkan peninsula. The pirates surrounding Iaurta are called Spiros, Mavros, Nicodimos, Iorgos, and are depicted as instinctual beings, associated with different animal representations (they are compared with pigs, they laugh and they bark), having brutal, uncontrolled reactions. On the same ship there are also the cook Idolon, the Arab (Rom. *harapul*) and several gypsies, among which there are Ghiorgi Știrbul (a folk singer and a tarrot-guesser), Lambru, Calistrat and Sulea. The name of the latter has pejorative connotations in Romanian and it is associated with the character's position as commander-in-chief (Rom. *spătar*). The gypsies are labelled as *paceaura* or *egiptianul* (the Egyptian). The latter refers to the theory launched by the writers in the eighteenth and the nineteenth century, which one can also identify in Deleanu's *Țiganiada*, according to which the origin of the gypsies is in Egypt, and this is why Cărtărescu often employs the nickname of *faraoni* (pharaohs). On the other hand, the text abounds in Greek names, especially of those who had titles or ranks in the Phanariot Wallachia. The "official"/ court poet is called Tripanosoma Todorakis, the owner of the printing press Leonida Firmanis, the immoral prince is called Calimachi (with the ironic diminutive Calimica), while the dictator's right hand (in Romanian *țeti-logofăt*), is baptised with a name whose cacophonous, even obscene sonorities in Romanian express the writer's mockery: Șerban Cacodimitropulos.

There are numerous feminine names – either the names of the lovers deceived by the prince or of the lovers of the Frenchman Languedoc – that enrich the stylistic exoticism. We offer a short list of such names: Penelopi, Eufrosa, Filofteia, Elenuța, Caliopi, Hosna, Hermina, Aișe, the playful Lilit, Lale, *sweet as the tulip*, Hyacint, Fatma. The poet uses the *ricoché*, the play upon words which changes the significance of the name. Lilit, in fact Lilith, a demon in the Hebrew mythology who appears in the Talmud, is called *șăgalnic* (playful). Another interesting name is Hyacint, a name which will be highlighted by being attributed to a deity which allegorically expresses imagination, the poetic muse and the initiation in the mystery of creation.

Intriguing is the manner in which the universe of these exotic names interacts with the domestic and common universe, the real one, inhabited by the poem's writer. In the last part (the last song), when the planes overlap, the name of Cărtărescu's wife, Cristina, is mentioned. Some correspondences can be established between the roles played in the epic by the fairy Hyacint and by Cristina, both being sources of inspiration and of love. The writer uses the diminutives for the name of his wife (Cristinuș, Cri),

underlying the familiar sphere and the distance away from the fabulous universe. As all the poets of his generation, Cărtărescu investigates the possibilities of expressing ordinary reality. Even if he takes refuge in the imaginary and records not only once the precariousness, the misery of the daily existence, this does not mean the refusal to devise a poetics of the ordinary. Moreover, the writer defines his condition as being “lost in clear dreams, in opaque realities” (204, my translation), reversing thus the real and the imaginary aspects.

Together with his wife's name, another onomastic element which gains depth is the typing machine. For the writer, this is not only a simple object, but a partner. The typing machine haunts his dreams, becoming a strange mechanism (it may be a hint at the mechanism in Kafka's *In the Penal Colony*), the one writing the sentence on the prisoner's body while killing him. It is present in the description of his apartment in a communist block of flats, an occasion used by Cărtărescu to call it “deșălată a mea Erikă” (204) (my over exhausted, over-ridden Erika). The participial adjective points out that the typing machine is the equivalent of the faithful animal in fairy tales or of Don Quixote's Rosinanta. She carries the writer in his adventure through different imaginary worlds. The brand of the product became the name of a life partner; it was anthropomorphised. That is why we can consider Erika as an anthroponym. As Rodica Zafiu explains in an article from *România literară* about the names of toys:

The Onomastics - in the large significance of study of proper names – is entitled to deal with everything which comes in the sphere of the human habit of providing names to individual entities: to children, animals, houses, trains, companies, stars [...]. If people's names are easier to study, through their abundancy and accessibility in the social sphere, diverse proper names from the area of personal experiences are less communicated and thus less researched (2003, 15, my translation).

Mircea Cărtărescu - A Character among the Characters of the Poem

In the poem *Levantul*, worlds of different ontological consistency overlap. Abolishing the distinction between the fictional space and the real one, between the inside and the outside of the text, on the basis of a postmodern technique overused in the arts of the twentieth century, Mircea Cărtărescu mixes the real names (his own and his wife's) and their biographical data with fictional characters. The description of the visit of the characters from the nineteenth century epic in the Bucharest of the following century, and especially the visit to the writer's apartment, is both delightful and confusing. The episode reminds one of Woody Allen's films, *The Purple Rose of Cairo*, and the confusion of the plans generates as much humor as possible. The reader can move from one level to the other in two ways: the real author enters the fictional world, then the characters come out of the story frame where they live and enter the real author's world. In the first case, the most spectacular moment is when the pirates and the sailors (the inhabitants of the text) see an enormous eye on the sky, they have a moment of worship as they think it's God's eye. Only after that moment the narrator warns the readers that it was his eye looking at the strange insects through the microscope. Beginning from this undertaking of the divine, we could also comment on the onomastic relationship between the characters of the poem and the writer. The name Mircea Cărtărescu itself seems a linguistic trick at first sight (*carte* in Romanian means book, therefore Cărtărescu would imply the educated, the one who spends his life reading/writing books). One could expect it to be a pseudonym so justly predestined is

the fate in this name. What is striking is the association of the family name with the insistence on the carrier of the name to reunite multiple literary references in his works. The artificial character (sometimes too striking) of the text can be the most severe allegation which one can bring when judging Cărtărescu's works, especially *Levantul*. It can lead to sterile virtuosity and once the wonder of surprise fades away, it can exhaust a reader who would stubbornly reread his books on the same paths. So, Cărtărescu is the name of a character by Mircea Cărtărescu defined by his literary charm/bookish interest. The given name Mircea implies through its etymology several series of meanings, according to the word we agree that it was devised from: *mir/mer*. "The origin and the significance of *mir* are quite controversial, some proposing the closeness to *mir* "peace", *mir* "world" or to the older *mer* «big, famous»" (Ionescu, 1975, 212, my translation). No matter we may relate its significance to fame, or to world, the symbolism of the name springs from itself. It is obvious that the carrier of this name was destined for fame and it is not less profitable for our analysis to observe that the being of the one who carries this name encompasses different worlds, among which the colourful and the picturesque world of *Levantul*. The first name Mircea is, therefore, an inclusive and generic name.

We can establish the relationship between the name of the creator and the name of the alter ego character – Manoil. In the onomastic family of the latter there is also Manole, the name which the Romanians archetypically associate with the creator/ the artist. At the same time, the divine connotations, the fact that the first meaning of the name Emanuel is "God with us", only after it became another name for Messiah, lead to the conclusion that, through Manoil, the writer presents his own face as Creator/deity of the fictional world. Besides the episode in which God's eye appears, one can add the scene in which the writer described his dream-revelation. This time the character Cărtărescu lives inside the typewriter as a miniature, the *Auctor* (as he most frequently defines himself in the poem) finds himself crucified among the keys. It is the proof of the supreme authorial narcissism.

The name used by the writer for himself in his epic (the *Auctore*) is the result of a very interesting technique, largely used in his entire work. We are talking about a "double encoding", term imposed by Charles Jenks in the architecture to define a feature of the postmodern architectural speech. By this syntagm, Charles Jenks takes into account the transposition of different elements, belonging to other past styles, on a modern "trunk" (1987). In this case, the synthesis is performed between a form with archaic aspect and a term used in the literary theory, especially the structuralist one, to define a type of speech, the one produced by the omniscient narrator.

Background anthroponyms

Far from pertaining a simple decorative role, the background anthroponyms create a world of great complexity. They refer to various cultural domains: literature, arts, music, philosophy, physics, biology, mythology, history. Anthroponyms are used as references, they compose a web of information. From their simple analysis conclusions can be reached about the episteme of the world in which Mircea Cărtărescu lives, about the vastness of the mind effort that the creation of the poem demanded. Cărtărescu's ambitious project – a concentrated history of the Romanian literature, alluding to Joyce's own similar gesture of concentrating the history of English literature in *Oxen of the Sun*, a synthesis of the postmodern beliefs, enterprise which exhausts the horizons of the object - this poem offers impressive resources of erudition. It is the task of the

receiver to judge if the presentation becomes pompous, ostentatious or if it produces that impression of *meraviglia*. Although the postmodern creators no longer give credit to the idea of the masterpiece, which becomes perimated, Cărtărescu's ultimate target in *Levantul* is to produce a masterpiece. As any postmodern enterprise, this text contains a paradox: the parodic pattern and the repeated ludic references to the act of perishing and vulnerability of the own achievement coexist with the idea of perfection and of the unique creation. The analysis of the anthroponyms used as literary references can constitute, in conclusion, a first instrument of assessing the complexity of the text.

Intertextuality plays a significant role in the quotation of the anthroponyms. The text contains references alluding to the literary models of the author (Borges, which Cărtărescu also calls the Angel; "the obvious climate Edgar Allan Poe" (110, my translation); Homer, Milton, Tasso and Budai Deleanu-their native counterpart; Eminescu) to the literary/artistic theorists en vogue in Romania in the eighties (Bahtin, Barthes, Baltrušaitis). A new way of manifesting the intertextuality is the use of a name as a background for a comparison. Every narrated event, every element of the description finds its correspondent in another literary idiolect. The pastoral genre is illustrated by Keats: "the poor shepherds of Chiț" (102, my translation), the moon is multiplied: "The Moons have long-blue eyelashes like in Nerval" (*ibidem*, my translation), the waters are sensuous: "The Hips of slow waters are voluptuous like in Novalis" (103, my translation), the earth becomes transparent: "Underneath the earth made of glass there are petals like in Tieck" (*ibidem*, my translation). The list of comparisons is very long and functions as a literary manifesto through which the author conveys the idea of repeating, so frequent among the postmodern creators. The comparison in itself, as a stylistic device becomes old fashioned through excessive usage. Cărtărescu uses this device exactly to suggest the exhaustion of a tradition/of every tradition. Furthermore the multitude of anthroponyms referring to the history of literature, the history of ideas, of the exact sciences or of art prove that the postmodern text is suffocated by the implicit or explicit references.

Secondly, the anthroponyms are meant to create the idea of abolishment of all hierarchies in the text, the idea of the establishment of axiological relativity. For this purpose names almost impossible to associate are brought in the same context. The Auctor associates at the beginning of the third song the motif of *vanitas vanitatum* with the uniformization of the literary values "The same are for me Lionardo, Tassu, Șecspir and Mușină" (33, my translation). The way the author joints four names (Leonardo, Tasso, Shakespeare, Mușina), two of them being well reputed in the history of culture, the third familiar to philologists, and the last one significant for a community belonging to a specific moment in contemporary history. Taking into account the fact that Alexandru Mușina is the writer who launched the groups of poets who were going to be famous several decades later; he is also one of the critics who supported and imposed the *optzecism* phenomenon², the invocation of his name in such a remarkable context does not connote only irony, but it can also be interpreted as a strategy of legitimacy, knowing the fact that inside a group which was considered a kind of *idola fori* revised in a postmodern world, mutual quotations were practised.

Last but not least, the great number of anthroponyms coming from various areas makes the temporal and spatial distinctions irrelevant. The writer's favourite intellectual

² The *optzecism* refers to the generation of writers who changed the paradigm of Romanian literature from neo-modernism to postmodernism.

game is anachronism. The characters of the poem live in the nineteenth century and frequently refer to famous names from the following/next century. Zoe talks about heroes of the socialist ideology: Lumumba, prime minister in Congo, assassinated in 1961, Lucrețiu Pătrășcanu and Gramsci. Iancu Aricescu, involved in the plot of the *carvonari*, writes to Zenaida claiming that he reads the Che Guevara's notes and addresses with the formula: "Leave him, forget him, Enigel", taken from one of Ion Barbu's famous poems.

A technique of great effect used extensively by Cărtărescu is the change of the proper names. Sometimes the metathesis functions as a signal to indicate the borrowing of the name from another writer's works, especially from Caragiale. In most of the cases, the purpose of the modification is the suggestion of the archaicity. There are also numerous situations in which the expected effect is the comic one, obtained especially by the writing of the names as they are pronounced in Romanian.

A partial inventory of the names of historical and cultural personalities which the reader comes across while reading *Levantul* contains names from religions such as: Moses, Jesus, Buddha, Muhammad, from literature such as Homer, Sappho, Dante Alighieri, Petrarca, Milton, Shakespeare, Villon, Byron, Keats, Victor Hugo, Flaubert, Voltaire, Diderot, Ienăchiță Văcărescu, Budai, Tasso, Gongora, Casares, Borges, Novalis, Nerval, Tieck, Poe, Istrati, Coșovei, Mușină (writers) and Oreste, Amlet (Hamlet), Monte Cristo, Robinson Crusoe, Enigel (characters) and Bahtin, Barthes Baltrušaitis (critics and theorists), from philosophy: Aristotle, Epicurus, Vico, Nietzsche, Fulcanelli (expert in the esoteric subjects) Gramsci (neomarxist), from history: Lixandru Machedon, Arthur, Apolodor, Decebal, Traian, Mihai Bravu, Mircea-Vodă, Brâncoveniu, Țepeluș (Vlad Țepeș), Bălcescu, Pazvante Chiorul (kings), Lumumba, Che Guevara, Pătrășcanu – (political figures), from mythology: Adonis, Leandros, Hero, the Cyclops, Hercules, Orpheus, Morpheus, from arts: Leonardo, Daguerre, Rembrandt, from sciences: Volta, Flammarion, René Thom, Heisenberg, from music: John Lennon, Paul Simon (rock or pop stars).

The author astonishingly brings together names from totally different cultural ages and cultural spaces, and the effect is a colourful linguistic universe. The names from the Greek (both old and neo-Greek) ones to Italian ones, from French ones to Turkish ones, mixed with names of Gypsy or African origins generate a *mixtum compositum* of races and cultures, that can be attributed to the *Levantine* profile of the world described.

Multiple *literary influences* are confluent in making up a name. An expert reader is challenged to find names he/she has encountered in other literary works. Manoil, for instance, is a name from Bolintineanu's novels, Zoe is familiar from I.L. Caragiale's comedies, Nastratin Hogeia is a Turkish name present in Anton Pann's work. Language games form names such as Leonidas Ampotrofulagol or Brillant Languedoc. The whole poem is, in fact, a nostalgic and playful review of the concept of Literature itself. The text is full of allusions to premodern and modern Romanian literature, to the epic songs of Greek Antiquity, to the troubadours' lyric, to great European Romantic poetry and to that from Mircea Cărtărescu's contemporaneity. Abolishing the distinction between the fictional space and the real one, the author dissolves the conventions the traditional concept of Literature was based on. *Levantul* may be considered one of the most daring and sophisticated literary games ever created in Romanian literature, a challenge both for its author and for its readers.

The architecture of *Levantul* may be interpreted as a *second degree* of anthroponymy, as a "palimpsestic" double encoded pattern of proper names (see

Genette, 1982), achieved, resorting to elements of intertextuality and paratextuality in creating of names.

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Antroponimele în *Levantul* lui Mircea Cărtărescu

Rezumat

Demersul analitic urmărește particularitățile antroponimelor în poemul *Levantul* de Mircea Cărtărescu. Numele personajelor sunt create de autor pe baza dublei codificări, amalgamând nume și fragmente de nume împrumutate din diverse opere literare din literatura română sau din cea universală. Poemul conține o suprapunere de planuri (de la cel real la cel ficțional, de la opere aparținând secolului al XIX-lea la cele aparținând secolului al XX-lea), vizibilă și la nivelul onomasticii. Numele personajelor (pentru care am folosit sintagma *antroponime de prim plan*) sunt dublate de un număr foarte mare de nume de persoană ce funcționează ca trimiteri culturale, constituind un fundal pentru acțiunea în care evoluează personajele. Varietatea numelor creează în acest text impresia unui spațiu cultural exotic, care este spațiul levantin, aspectul compozit fiind susținut prin etimologiile din numeroase limbi (greacă, turcă, latină, italiană, franceză). Studiul antroponimelor din acest text a condus la concluzia că *Levantul*, o adevărată bibliotecă borgesiană, realizează o recapitulare parodică a ideii de literatură.