

ANASTASIA GAVRILOVICI'S POETRY IN SERBIAN LANGUAGE: POETIC AND INTERTEXTUAL RELATIONS¹

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Anastasia Gavrilovici (born 1995) is a Romanian poet and translator from English, Spanish, and French. Her poetry collection *Industria liniștirii adulților*² received prestigious awards, including the “Mihai Eminescu” award and the “Young Poet of the Year 2019” award. The authenticity and relevance of her poetic voice are rooted in what critic Teodora Coman calls “the new mediality of simulated emotion”, describing Gavrilovici’s poetry as having a “cold post-sincerity” that balances “sensibility and cerebral qualities”, addressing themes like “fragile selfhood”, “symptoms of post-human existential excitement against a confusing backdrop of the will to survive”, and a sense of “personal inadequacy”.³

Although she is a young poet with a relatively small body of work, it is clear that she certainly deserves the attention of translators and critics in the Serbian literary community. Her book has already been discussed in significant academic studies, such as *Notes on Poetic and Phenomenological Sensitivity* (Alexandru Cosmescu) and on Deleuze’s rhizomatic concept, which deals with spatial form and its application to contemporary Romanian poetry (as analysed by Marius Conkan). Their scholarly findings could be important for bringing Anastasia Gavrilovici’s poetry closer to Serbian culture, particularly in light of her uniqueness within the context of Romanian and European contemporary poetry. The poet’s relationship to the body is delicate and meta-poetically defined. Her poetry reveals a dialogue between poetic speech and listening. As noted in Romanian criticism, her poetic voice, which initially distances itself from the body, eventually returns to it, allowing

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¹ The work presents an overview of the poetry of Anastasia Gavrilovici, which appeared in Serbian in the translation of Marija Nenadić (Anastasia Gavrilovici, *Industrija smirivanja odraslih*, translated from Romanian by Marija Nenadić, Akademska knjiga, Novi Sad 2023). Part of the work was published in the Serbian language as a review in the October 2024 issue of “Letopis Matice srpske” journal.

² For analysis of Gavrilovici’s poetry translation was used (Гавриловић, Анастасија. *Индустрија смиревања одраслих*. Академска књига, 2023), but for purpose of the paper we quoted her poetry written in Romanian language (Gavrilovici, Anastasia, *Industria liniștirii adulților*, Editura Max Blecher, 2021).

³ Available at: <https://omiedesemne.ro/sa-incepem-saptamana-poetic-trei-texte-de-anastasia-gavrilovici-din-industria-linistirii-adultilor/>.

the poet to re-inhabit her expression. These so-called “micro-events” become the texture of her experience, aligning her with the early 2000s Romanian movement known as *fracturism*, due to the isomorphism between poetic discourse and lived experience. It seems that the rhizomatic Deleuzian principle has been grafted onto the roots of fracturism, implying continuous interferences, disruptions, and constant reconfigurations of connections between forms and images. This approach aims to signal a new perception of reality, ultimately leading to the fragmentation of global meanings.⁴

Anastasia Gavrilovici's poetry integrates all the characteristic features of contemporary Romanian poetry. It includes social critique, post-humanist elements, simulacra, an engagement with the digital and technological discourse, affectivity and non-affect, as well as an ideological dimension in terms of blending registers that verbalize dramatic situations and social traumas. These antithetical aspects serve the function of an “aesthetic of synthesis”, combining rebellion with the subject's need to either distance itself or equate the organic with the digital. All of this aims to create a “third space” in poetry that merges real and imagined geographies, which may refer to places like Berlin and Istanbul as much as to the geography of the body. Finally, it is noted that Gavrilović's poetry collection is characterized by “polysensoriality” (sounds of eroticism, spatial and muscular memory) and “multifocalization”.⁵

This potentially leads to the impression of a fragmented lyrical subject, as it appears different in each poem, yet remains connected through the poet's personality and her real experiences, which occasionally surface, most often through more expressive images, tinted with the “fresh scent of paint”. The eponymous poem at the forefront of her poetry collection, *Industria liniștirii adulților*, demonstrates Gavrilovici's approach by combining techniques that highlight the distinction between sensory experiences and the perception of reality. These techniques range from the ring-like compositions of most poems, the playful use of leitmotifs, to the interweaving of poetic images so dense and rich that too often appear in the same verse. The syllabic structure of her poems is classically broad, so much so that it often breaks into the next line. Yet, this very juncture becomes an opportunity for the poem's body to become dynamic, both semantically and in terms of its graphic-stylistic elements.

The poem *mirosul proaspăt de vopsea* depicts the existence of modern humanity, fragmented into numerous aspects that reflect the complexity in which it is difficult for a person to find clarity. Yet, it seems necessary to “press Ctrl+S” and save the

⁴ See: Alexandru Cosmescu, *The Flesh Made Speech: Notes on Poetic and Phenomenological Sensitivity*, “Koinē. The Almanac of Philosophical Essays”, 7/2022, pp. 92–107.

⁵ See: Marius Concan, *The Rhizomatic: a Spatial Form in Contemporary Romanian Poetry*, “Metacritic Journal for Comparative Studies and Theory”, 8.1/ 2022, pp. 166–187.

poem-document of such realization. In this poem, Eliade's concept of the "sacred and the profane" is in constant interplay rather than opposition, arising implicitly within similar, not contrasting, categories. For example, the image of a Chinese boy crying before Saint Antipas, although representing something sacred, is shaded by his mother scolding him and the potential for further tourist encounters, which would relativize and profane this unique meeting between the Chinese boy and the Christian saint. Although it initially appears that the poem rests on a gradation that shifts the higher into a lower register of existence, there seems to be a reversal in the verse "acum trei zile la Universitate un bărbat și-a tăiat venele pe fântâna arteziană cu"⁶, after which the rest of the poem represents a return to a sacred principle from the beginning. The man's wrists are cut – "precizia unui sportiv care exersează zilnic la aceeași oră în același loc"⁷ – resembling ironically regular religious rituals that, instead of leading to salvation, lead to suicide — a contest in which the person has lost themselves. It gives the impression that the precision of ritual leads to meaninglessness and indifference, while a sudden disruption of routine is necessary:

 așa se întâmplă când nu e nimic să te înduioșeze nimeni să-ți
 plesnească mâinile să-ți dea o minge antistres un yoyo
 la momentul potrivit sau să i se facă milă de tine și
 să dea Ctrl+s.⁸

Human existence is equated with a document being written, one that needs to be saved, thus transferring it into the realm of digital existence. In this scenario, the one responsible for saving the document takes on the role of God, who either preserves or deletes it. The meta-poetic is intertwined with the digital, yet the poet remains in the role of God. The phrase "momentul potrivit" is reminiscent of Hölderlin; if the times and heavens are indeed meager, then the digital sky is brimming with poets. Emotions and senses are given the power to disrupt any routine and offer life a chance and meaning:

 merg mai departe mirosul proaspăt de vopsea al
 fântâni de la Universitate mă înviorează și
 îmi face poftă de cireșe.⁹

⁶ Gavrilovici, Anastasia, „mirosul proaspăt de vopsea”, *Industria liniștirii adulților*, Editura Max Blecher, 2021, p. 5.

⁷ *Ibidem*.

⁸ *Ibidem*.

⁹ Idem, p. 6.

Thus, motifs of blood from slit wrists, fresh paint, and cherries are all analogically aligned, all linked by their expressive red colour, serving as a common denominator. This colour triggers visual, olfactory, and gustatory sensations, leading to a blend of despair, empathy, sadness, memory, and even joy. Preserving both pleasant and unpleasant feelings within a single verse or poem enables the acceptance of the world and humanity as they are, because ultimately, any precision that imposes uniformity detracts from the very legitimacy of life itself. Perhaps even the title of the book *Industria liniștirii adulților* should be interpreted in this way, as the process of creation is seemingly ironically equated with industry, but the goal is of a humanistic nature – to calm adults, that is, to offer them the opportunity to be sad and hurt, but to be alive. Considering that the word *Industria* comes from the Latin word *industrius*, which denotes diligence or hard-work, then the poetess potentially sees the role of poetry in the modern world as a fundamentally diligent endeavour that stands on the line of defending humanity and bare life. *Industria* also implies the processing of raw materials, as well as the division of labour, but in this context, processing refers to the centrifugal twists of reality and literary tradition, as well as the division of labour between poets and critics.

In the poem *Obsessive Confessive Disorder* everything is mixed in the drum of year 2019, when the lyrical subject experiences the most wonderful, but also the most depressing things:

M-am căsătorit. Am absolvit. Am făcut un copil.
 Am tradus, am scris o disertație, am învățat câteva
 lucruri esențiale despre frică, am râs mult și am făcut ceea ce
 / ... /
 Ce nu m-a omorât abia așteaptă să o facă.
 Am avut grijă cu cine îmi fac intertextele, am privit
 la microscop cum o depresie mică încerca să-și facă
 loc lângă una mare.¹⁰

The Czech classicist Ivan Blatný, for instance, tries to understand various states of the inner “self” through the ornamentalization of linguistic and poetic identity, while Anastasia Gavrilovici achieves this through the diffusion of personal experience and poetic identity, thus her poetry are significantly more sensitive and empathetic, as well as less hermetic compared to Blatný. In the poem *un măr roșu*, a subtle line of intertextual connection can be observed with the poetics of the Polish Nobel laureate Wisława Szymborska in regard to turning to the microscopically visible world: “două ființe / devenind o punte citoplasmatică o

¹⁰ Idem, “Obsessive Confessive Disorder”, p. 56.

zi obișnuită o întâmplare ca orice alta”.¹¹ The details from the natural world and microscopic optics aim to problematize the co-creative act of the human and non-human world, which in the poetry of the Romanian poetess is framed by a double metaphor of the apple that brings both knowledge and fall, but also opens a posthumanist horizon that relativizes human responsibility in acts such as killing:

mutațiile afective care au avut loc în familiile noastre de-a lungul generațiilor ne fac vulnerabili în fața schimbărilor sau poate numărul greșit de proteine și lipide e cel care ne împiedică să omorâm.¹²

The meticulous “work” or “industry” of the intertext, both implicit and explicit (for example, a quote from Rodica Dragincescu’s poem) calms even professional readers, because the poetic world offered by this book can still be recognized as one’s own and organized, and this restores faith in life of the literature itself.

The poetess does not belittle or moralize over digital worlds and the era of technology and industry, but rather utilizes their resources to restore faith in life, literature and, consequently, humanistic values. She excludes nothing from the raw materials that constitute contemporary existence, but she is exceptionally selective when it comes to choosing the tradition to which she will graft her individual talent in the Eliotian sense. When it comes to Serbian poetess of her generation, it can be noted that she might be contextualized alongside Milica Špadijer’s (b. 1989) *Novo groblje*, Irena Plaović’s (b. 1992) *Ivičenje*, Milica Drndarević’s (b. 1992) *Primisli gospođe Jastog*, and Katarine Pantović’s (b. 1994) *Rituali pred spavanje*, in terms of the penetrating poetic images, the non-banality of the confessional tone, the problematization of rituals, metaphors related to the body, but also the penetration toward emotions, which is strongly expressed by the phrase “inima unui crevete”¹³ in Anastasia Gavrilović’s poem *Dragă E.*

If one were to compare *Novo groblje* with the *Industria liniștirii adulților*, it could be noted that one could potentially speak about the industrialization of death or the calming of adults by numbing their senses, bodily sensors and emotions. In this context, *Novo groblje* (*New cemetery*) as a metaphor could represent a place where not only dead bodies are buried but also everything that has died through so-called calming. Along this line, *Rituali pred spavanje* (*Rituals before sleep*) come into play, as one cannot reach sleep without an entire industry of calming that is ironically repeated through rituals. The process of “ivičenje” (edging) acts, on one hand, as an organizing principle, and on the other, as a moulding process, which, through a comparative lens, would highlight the ambivalence of the calming

¹¹ *Idem*, “un măr roșu”, p. 29.

¹² *Ibidem*, p. 29.

¹³ *Idem*, “Dragă E”, p. 62.

industry, as it is neither fully positive nor negative. Lastly, when we confront *Primisli gospođe Jastog* by Milica Drndarević and the “crevete” of Anastasija Gavrilovici, we can observe the difference between “primisli” (premises) and “inima” (heart), as thoughts and reason are greater, stronger, and more dangerous than the softer, more emotional, and fragile shrimps, which nonetheless possess a heart. Serbian and Romanian poets illuminate each other’s poetics, but there is, finally, one key point of emphasis in these relations. These are all examples of poetry from the same generation, which recognizes a different yet closely confronted engagement between humans and the lyrical subject with the new chimeras of the current spirit of the age. The poetesses do not reject; they are not radical; they attempt to continue nurturing humanistic ideas and art in the world, regardless of the trends of posthumanism.

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Abstract: The paper on the poetry of Romanian poet Anastasia Gavrilovici, translated into Serbian by Marija Nenadić, discusses her poetic positioning in relation to Serbian literature and the broader European context. It begins by outlining the fundamental principles of her poetics, based on relevant literature on her poetry in Romanian and English. Then, Anastasia Gavrilovici’s poetry is compared to that of Czech classic Ivan Blatný and Polish Nobel laureate Wisława Szymborska. Finally, the paper concludes that her poetry can also be compared to that of the Serbian poets of her generation (Milica Špadijer, Irena Plaović, Milica Drndarević, Katarina Pantović). The goal of the paper is to offer interpretative possibilities for Gavrilović’s poetry in Serbian and within the frameworks of Serbian literary studies through comparative analysis.

Keywords: *Anastasia Gavrilovici, Romanian poetry, Serbian poetry, European poetry, posthumanism, intertextuality.*