# THE PLAYFUL REVERIE

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*Abstract*

Poet Vintilă Ivănceanu cultivates an artificial, powerful typf of Onirism which is at the same time charming; he bears the inheritance of the Surrealism, but marked by the reverie of the gothic. His main quality is that of resuscitating a modern Middle Age, a place where the grotesque and the monstruous are diaphanous, as they do not exist in their pure state. Like Leonid Dimov and Emil Brumaru, Vintilă Ivănceanu loves to play and does it in a crazy and fantesist way. There is sensuality and also a mystical attempt which haunts his poems and the demythologization they are subjected to is an angelical one, since the tonality is carnal, the religious element is subdued to a pagan ritual of tempting the senses, in a playful manner.

**Keywords: reverie, grotesque, reality, unusual, belief.**

In his first volume, Vintilă Ivănceanu has the honour of being the subject of pamphlet for the retrograde spirits; a special honour which obliges us to pay our respects to him, from the very beginning. We wonder what could have irritated so much within the lines of the poet. It might have been the flap of wings belonging to the chosen talents, the depth of the problematic issues, an artistic language, surprisingly evolved and the premonition of an unusual spectacular evolution. Its iconoclastic features are generally uncomfortable for the protectors of the self-content, in the same way as it became comforting again and encouraging for the bearers of an evolved artistic ideal. Vintilă Ivănceanu's presence is seen as one of the most vivid in current poetry[2], an advanced position of the avant-garde's lyricism, in a natural disagreement with the circumstancial hypothesis of common sensibility.

Most of the opinions articulated about *Special Honour* have noticed the poet's virtuosity, his exceptional availability regarding the expressive means and the poetical techniques, insisting even on its parody-like tone, inviting to a very lucid evaluation of its domain's borders.[3] A poet, who proved to be in most of the cases a fine reader of verses, recommended even the passing over this stage, considering it sterilised, capable of creating a certain crisis of the trust. The volume seems to be articulated in a stern register, imbued with an exasperating dramatism. The abnormal intensity of the lyrical state changes the shape of the verb, making effects belonging to the grotesque, composing figures of fear which sometimes unfold into gatherings of a great purity. The lyrical fantasised scenery, populated with demons and graceful goddesses, a pathetic and restrained protest, a delicacy of a provincial minstrel are the constituting notes of this

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[2] Aurel Dragoş Munteanu, *The big loves* - Aurel Dragoş Munteanu's pages, www.marileiubiri.org.
[3] Ibidem.



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book. They are so well-structured and well welded in their own vision, that they are almost in each of the parts of the *Special Honour*, without making them monotonous.

The unity of the volume is so remarkable that we can easily quote any poem, the differences of value being unnoticeable. What seems to be totally remarkable is that these poems are indeed very beautiful, in the classical sense. They are not animated only by the soul of a true poet, but they are shaped with the thoroughness and the skill of a traditional school craftsman: respectful towards his public, although he is a little subject to the general taste.[4] A poem similar to the splendid *Classical romanta:* „My love! Your breast is the Moon / which gently climbs over the Pamir. I am alone, my darling, like / typewriters in a cemetery. // or *Bosch Figure* or *It will be***:** „Give me the mine. / There will be so much warmth around, / that a tram will melt down / and the travellers will die singing. / Give me your mouth. / A wave of heat will come / If we go around naked / through the city's ashes" are edifying. This last poem seems to be a love poem worthy of being written in the strictest anthology of the genre. The image of the people, melted in an anthem of glory like in an apotheosis of love or of an absolute loneliness from the first stanza, appears to be certifying this poet's exceptional calling.

The concentrating of the means conjugated with a remarkable associative power are other features which prove the fairness of the observations. Vintilă Ivănceanu is one of the poets with the most acute conscience of his mission; the poet seems to be a sword carrier, and his war will be a general one, both against the persuasive elements and against the tranquilisers, all of them suffocating for the spirit. The walls and the swamps are equally dangerous and against them, the poet brings redemption: „Sing you thieves, sing / the apotheosis of the horse with wings. / Do you like the cold? / You thieves, inside the catacombs they ski / Up North the snow falls like / the crazy and the intoxicated, / O Lord / Not even one tie / Suits me / There is no tie / For my murderer violinist body! / Our Father who are in fogs / In checks and in what-s, / My shoes are too tight, too strict / The atmosphere is filled with angels / Just like the lady, filled with perfume and lipstick. / I want to slap myself, I am thirsty / who / who / can give me a glass of water". (*Evil eyes*) This poem contains the elements of the lyrical protest from *Special Honour* and it represents a sample of the expressive technique used by the Romanian poet. The prayer tone embeds the solemnity note specific to all of his poems[5], while the overturn of normal rapports gives the provocative, fighting character to these lines. The poet will therefore address to „the Lord, little god" who is found „within fogs, in checks and in what-s". The perfect knowledge over the linguistic instrument allows such fencing schemes which are both graceful and dangerous.

What seems to be stirring the most Vintilă Ivănceanu's poetical revolt is the mechanisation, the uniformity of the existence through chance, through absolute determination. His appetite for the free expansion is always contradicted by the

[4] Mircea Cărtărescu, *The Romanian Postmodernism,* Humanitas Publishing House, Bucharest, 2010, pp. 329-331.
[5] Dinu Flâmând, *The text's intimacy*, Eminescu Publishing House, Bucharest, 1985, p. 162.



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inflexibility of the laws and of the universal norms. A wonderful halo is created by the recognition of this reality.[6]

The most significant poetry in the direction stirred above is *Mythological***,** exemplary otherwise under all the aspects: „I caught my woman / In adultery with a god, / And the child born from adultery / before teething / he would eat oat, flakes-flakes of snow // out of horse, / and it wore a white tailcoat / tailored by himself / from / the Moon, / and because of him a woman / committed herself in hospital, // And he would give cello lessons to the world's conservatory, / and kicked a paralytic, // And the paralytic kicked back / in a statue, / and the statue kicked the museum's guard, / and the museum's guard / put his foot into a hole, / and when they got him out / on his leg was tangled / a chest of Spaniards / buried by the cardinal of Ardeal / together with the heretics' bodies / and the bodies of the peasants // who didn't pay for their debt. // this child / saying good bye / from: / the hospitalised woman, / from the peasants' and the heretics' dead bodies □. The depth of the feeling of death offers grounds for the *Mythological* offering a supplementary dimension to the Special Honour, a poem of a ravishing beauty. It proves the fact that the *meta-physics* is not refused.

Vintilă Ivănceanu's volume ends with a profession of belief: „I am tired. Words are heavy / like elephants and they are quiet. / Their shadows die in lace, / Giving birth to baby werewolves. // other words from Hell! [...] // I need other words / pure and holly cows, / to hang them in a hook // to sacrifice and to whip them / just like a horse and to raise them / in an incubator, in the cold. This final sonnet confesses the poet's will to reconstruct intellectually the language, to regain his lost purity, a noble attempt from an artist. *Special honour***,** a book made up as a sonata built strictly from four cycles, opening and closing like a sonata, having at the end of each cycle also a sonata, it is a first probe towards the mysterious and unsolvable core of the Poetry.

Dumitru Micu considered Vintilă Ivănceanu's book as a manifestation of the unusual, of a certain taste in the Romanian literature.[7] If T.S. Eliot considered the traditionalism as an expression of some cultural permanence, as a presence in a work of art of the entire artistic thesaurus, then Vintilă Ivănceanu is a traditionalist in the best meaning of the word. If we do not restrain ourselves to the surface of things, to the phenomenon, but we look for the meaning, the concept, the specific determination under a theoretical rapport of the instruments which make up our knowledge apparatus, the impression of paradox of the assertion is erased.

Vintilă Ivănceanu is the bearer of a very well assimilated and continued poetic culture. The integration in tradition is made based on a remade unity, following the new phenomenon, as the English poet and essayist noticed. Unfortunately, the shallow observation does not take into consideration this new unity, keeping the old, untouchable, closed and ancient one. Nevertheless, the culture is a dialectical and

[6] Mircea Cărtărescu, *op. cit.,* p. 330.
[7] Dumitru Micu, *Modern languages in today's Romanian poetry,* Eminescu Publishing House, Bucharest, 1986, p. 280.



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objective phenomenon, always rebuilding itself based on the innovations which reinforce tradition. In Ivănceanu's poetry we can easily notice notes specific to George Bacovia, or to Breton, especially his 66 alluviums. These two roots can definitely ensure a further work of art, built on a strong poet's stem.[8]

In the 70s, Vintilă Ivănceanu used to be one of the terrible children of the literary movement of the time, in good company with Dumitru Ţepeneag or with Virgil Mazilescu, young nonconformists like he was: rebellious, full of gestures, without even trying to get back from showing off, when they could, on the contrary, he tried to challenge them. Like any other members of the oniric group, from which Vintilă Ivănceanu was a part of, he first enjoyed the support of M. R. Paraschivescu, the lucky discoverer of talents. Ivănceanu was published in the *Word's story*; the supplement of *The Branches*, his small volume appeared in 1967, in the popular creation for debuts „The Star", „a totally special talent", a personality „in full evolution".

If we were to make the statistics of the words from the area of the belief and of the cult from the volume *Verses*, from 1969, like: cardinal, Satan, Lucifer, Christmas, Parsifal, Bible, the Holy Ghost, archangels, etc., the reader can be left with the feeling that this poet is totally religious. Nevertheless, the poems balance between surrealism and oniric, the whole work standing out through its experimental character, through the diversity of the formal searches, the religiosity passing under the sign of the experiment.[9] Ivănceanu's surrealism, through the lines of the *Domain*, crosses the unitary feeling of the poetry, even if the images separate from each other as they succeed, and each of them tends to conquer the autonomy which contradicts the whole: „Kingdom of vertebra and / Black crystal, of a crazy swan / A sphinx screams in the Virgin's throat / like a nailed forehead." The poet can give up, if he wants to, the logics of the surrealists, leaving the metaphors, independently conceived, to unfold as natural as possible and according to the affect's own impulse: „Don't cry, Clotilda, don't cry, / For you I gather the kneecap of saints and thieves, / You will be the snow on which blood drips / From the bodies of Catholics and Hughenots." *Engraving IV*

There is a similar lyric along the lines where the surrealism caves in front of an unleashed oniric parnassianism, getting close to the oniric poet Leonid Dimov[10]: „Lapis lazuli! The helmets go around / through the golden, marble and bloody ponds / Howling, the wolves bow to the dogs. [...]/ The lofts turn themselves into humans, / Tears drop from green stars' eyes."

**Selected bibliography:** Aurel Dragoş Munteanu, *The big loves* - Aurel Dragoş Munteanu's pages, www.marileiubiri.org.; Mircea Cărtărescu, *The Romanian Postmodernism,* Humanitas Publishing House, Bucharest, 2010; Ruxandra Cesereanu, *Deliriums and deliria. An anthology*

[8] Dumitru Micu, *op. cit.,* p. 280.
[9] Ion Negoiţescu, *Contemporary writers,* Dacia Publishing House, Cluj, 1994, p. 229.
[10] Ion Negoiţescu, *op. cit.*, p. 230.



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