# ION PILLAT: RETRIEVING TRADITION

Ion Pillat's poetry reveals, in its essence, the image of a chthonic poet that has the nostalgia of water, a poet torn between the sleepiness and fixity of the telluric and the multiform reverie of the aquatic; if one follows the evolutionary thread of this lyrical work, poetic concepts and doctrines of the imaginary, illustrated by the stages of development of pillatian lyricism, are revealed to us. In his study called *Celălalt Pillat*, Al. Cistelecan states that "the productive, effective paradox, of pillatian poetry is the use of 'mirific perspective' in a nostalgic solution of vision. An imagining perspective that has the voluptuousness and expansive vocation of the 'discovery' of the world plays with him a regressive project. All lines of this poetry are involved in the pathology of original mirage. It was a matter of course that, sooner or later, this nostalgia will strike form too. All along its itinerary pillatian imaginary tried to exorcise its substantial condition and place its enthusiasm in a formal condition. Formalization was, however, at the limit of *hubris* of the aquatic fantasy. The only thing left to be done was the redemption of this failure by inverse action: the absorption of form by the imaginary. For if there is someone who does not know how to lose, then that's the imaginary." The equation proposed by the critic as a paradigm of antinomies that feed pillatian lyricism is, simply speaking, that of the contrast between form - imaginary, present under many forms in this poetry that always seeks for itself, wanting to adjust the model and the image, the aesthetic canon and the vision. The first volumes of poems of Ion Pillat (*Visări păgâne*, *Eternităţi de-o clipă*, *Amăgiri* and even *Grădina între ziduri*) put us in front of a hungry spirit marked by a true hunger for space; an uneasy conscience is evident here, a "wanderer's soul" obsessed by the mirage of the distant, marked by a fascination with the Orient. One can speak here about a wandering in both time and space, transcribed in pompous and fantastic colors, of ample decorative-symbolic poignancy. Attracted by the world of the South, of intense solarity, Pillat is no less fascinated by boreal space in a poem such as *Ocean polar*: "Noapte albă. Stalagmite nepătate de ninsoare/ Vin gheţarii cete-cete pribegind din Polul Nord./ Nu-i fior prin valuri clare şi în zare nu-i fiord,/ Doar pe ape, limpezite cataracte selenare.// Şi pe unde, unde stele de argint mărite-apar,/ Firmamentul în oglindă îşi restrânge-n cerc ovalul./ Calea Robilor lactee ninge cu lumină valul,/ Legănată de legende, promoroacă de cleştar.// Noapte albă. Gheaţă naltă iconită ca o friză/ De zăpadă împietrită cu



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sclipire de oţel/ Îşi arată amăgirea unor aripi fără ţel,/ Fulgerare boreală, enigmatica Banchiză". Obviously, such a propensity towards exotic, distant lands, is part of the symbolist paraphernalia cultivated in our country by authors like Ion Minulescu. The image of the sea, for instance, seen as matrix, archetypal space, is frequented assiduously by the poet, in plastic verse, of an obvious brilliance of images and with an inner architecture based on a technique of the suggestive symbol. On the other hand, one can recognize in Pillat's lyricism belonging to this first creative phase a certain discrepancy between sensitivity and rationality, between sympathetic impulse and the control of lucidity. The poet's spirit can best be found in the opposites that form it and give it the dominant emotional tone. Anxiety and balance, frenzy and impassiveness, contemplative recollection and vitalistic expansion - are constitutive antinomies of the deep inner being of the poet, protean dimensions of the same consciousness, caught as such in a poem: "Sunt zile când mi-e dorul flămând ca un barbar,/ Războinicii călări i-aş năpusti ca vântul./ Şi aş cânta cu dânşii prin stepe; iar pământul/ Învins ca de cutremur s-ar prăbuşi. Cuvântul/ Ce mântuie-n biserici s-ar cere în zadar.// Sunt zile când mie dorul aşa de bun, s-ar duce/ Să dea întregu-mi suflet cum alţii dau un ban/ Şi inima-mi deschisă la toţi, s-ar face han/ La care năvăli-va norodu-n lung chervan./ Sunt clipe când în spate aş vrea să port o cruce.// În alte zile dorul mă face rău şi rece/ Trăind de piatră parcă, nepăsător idol…/ Şi miezul vieţii însuşi îmi pare că e gol/ Că omul e o mască şi mila e un rol/ Şi, orb, privesc durerea ce lângă mine trece".

A privileged topos of pillatian poetry is that of memory. Memory plays a fundamental role in the work of Ion Pillat. It restores the lost landmarks of being, it recovers the latter's roots in an anamnestic approach that suggests the nostalgia of the original and the beatitude of a mythical time. Memory is the one that brings a spiritualized space out of the temporal indifferentiation of the past; hat space is configured as an emotional projection rather than as mimetic representation. One deals here with a recovery of past ages, especially that of childhood, for which Pillat always harbored an enduring fascination. In one of his interventions, the poet asserts precisely the role of this age of childhood in shaping artistic vision, creative personality: "I strongly believe and I am deeply convinced of this truth: that in the life of the artist, in terms of the importance of their echoes in the completed work, childhood years matter not twice or three times more than adult years but a hundred times more (…). Especially as



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regards my poetry and my spiritual structure, the role of memories, experiences and influences of my childhood and even of my adolescence seem capital." "The house of memory" is the one that favors a constant connection between past and present, restoring the balance of being by restoring bridges between past and present experience. Things, objects and beings recover their privileged condition, restore an idealizing and mythicizing contour: "În casa amintirii nu-i *astăzi* şi nu-i *ieri*,/ Căci orologiul vremii a încetat să bată/ Şi clipa netrăită a îngheţat pe el./ Dar prin iatac adesea te-apucă şi te fură/ Miresmele cosite cu florile de fân/ Păstrate sub răcoarea pânzetului de in./ Şi, seara, pe divane în liniştite-odăi/ Tot mai pogoară cîntec şi zumzănit de strună/ Ca de pe alăuta plăpândelor visări,/ Când, în apus de soare şi răsărit de lună,/ Simţim zădărnicia întâilor uitări./ Rămân aceleaşi toate, şi somnul fără zbucium/ Îl dorm sub coperişul aceluiaşi trecut./ Stafie, trece gândul prin casa mea străveche/ Sub raza călăuză a visului tăcut".

The poem *Aci sosi pe vremuri* belongs to the volume *Pe Argeş în sus* of 1923, the volume of Ion Pillat's lyrical consecration. It's a poem of *time* evoked with intense suggestiveness, a poem of memory and birthplace space, circumscribed by the data of the purest essence of the bucolic. The approach of the facets of time and space is done under the sign of indeterminacy. The adverb "aci" (here) and the adverbial phrase "pe vremuri" (formerly) have no role in specifying a precisely determined space and a time recorded in its rigorous data. The poem's semantic axis is given, as has been noted by commentators, precisely by this adverb, "aci," which structures the temporal levels of the past and present, in a nostalgic lyrical tone. As noted by V. Fanache, "preserving its steadfastness and functionality, *aci* often plays the role of witness of human time, never the same, it is the mirror space of recurring initiations into the mystery of marriage and death. And yet, ultimately *aci* is itself placed in the flow of becoming and, even if its duration is incomparably greater than that of the human being, *aci* represents a perishable "shelter", depending on the pace of the 'arrivals' and 'departures' of man". Two thematic instances preside over the poem: first "the house of memory," a sign of stability and steadfastness, of the recovery of an irrevocable past, and *time*, with its devastating force, which disfigures things, giving them a patina of age and a dull brightness ("La casa amintirii cu-obloane şi pridvor,/ Păianjeni zăbreliră şi poartă, şi zăvor.// Iar hornul nu mai trage alene din ciubuc/ De



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când luptară-n codru şi poteri şi haiduc./ În drumul lor spre zare îmbătrâniră plopii./ Aici sosi pe vremuri bunica-mi Calyopi"). Becoming, with its two aspects, irreversible time and time recovered by memory, is encoded by the image of the tower and of the bell that marks a double foreboding: a nuptial and a funeral one. The chime of the bell announces, in an inaccurate way, the song of becoming, instauring a sort of melancholy of metaphysical origin of the being immersed in irreversible time: "Şi cum şedeau… departe, un clopot a sunat,/ De nuntă sau de moarte, în turnul vechi din sat.// Dar ei, în clipa asta, simţeau c-o să rămână…/ De mult e mort bunicul, bunica e bătrână…// Ce straniu lucru: vremea! Deodată pe perete/ Te vezi aievea numai în ştersele portrete.// Te recunoşti în ele, dar nu şi-n faţa ta,/ Căci trupul tău te uită, dar tu nu-l poţi uita…/ Ca ieri sosi bunica… şi vii acuma tu:/ Pe urmele berlinei trăsura ta stătu". The ritual identity of "then" and "now" comes from the repeatability of gestures and ceremonies of existence. "The house of memory" restores its structure with each generation that inhabits it, that enlivens its so fragile and yet thorough architecture. The past / present temporal parallelism is further evidenced by the reiteration of the bell image at the end of the poem, the image that closes in a circle, the generic framework of the universe imagined by the poet, a universe seized by a nostalgic thrill, in which the tragedy of passage dissolves in bookish melancholy and serene detachment from things: "M-ai ascultat pe gânduri, cu ochi de ametist,/ Şi ţi-am părut romantic şi poate simbolist./ Şi cum şedeam… departe, un clopot a sunat/ - Acelaşi clopot poate – în turnul vechi din sat…// De nuntă sau de moarte, în turnul vechi din sat". *Aci sosi pe vremuri* is, as noted by G. Călinescu, "graceful, moving and indivisible parallel between two centuries, setup that delights the eyes and at the same time symbolizes uniformity in the making." Moreover, Cristian Livescu believes that the poem is "an interesting poem, it conceives a way of approaching poetry in terms of refreshment (retelling, 'restaging') of the myth recorded on 'on the waves of the soul.' "The house of memory," the "tower," the "bell" - are thematic elements related to the topos of time, elements that render its flow rhythmical, make it visible, while giving coherence to a universe whose becoming occurs smoothly, like a twilight that quietly descends over the world, with a melancholy slowness. Past and present are facing each other in this poem in which the ceremony of remembrance brings to the reader past fragments, fragments of memory, figures and gestures from a ritual of nostalgic evocation. In



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Pillat’s work, between "landscape" and "feeling" an obvious communion is established. To an inner state corresponds an appropriate landscape while places receive emotional notes, become emotionally colored. In this way, especially in his pastels that transpose projections of landscape rather than landscapes themselves, Pillat established himself in Romania as one of the most important representatives of traditionalism.



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