EMIL BRUMARU OR THE UNIVERSE OF INTIMACY

Emil Brumaru's volumes of poetry *Versuri* (1970), *Detectivul Arthur* (1970), *Julien Ospitalierul* (1974), *Cântece naive* (1976), *Adio, Robinson Crusoe* (1978), *Dulapul îndrăgostit* (1980), *Ruina unui samovar* (1983) or *Dintr-o scorbură de morcov* (1998) introduce us to a poet of guise of the things, a *bon viveur* who gobbles tastes, surfaces, softness, becoming ecstatic when facing shapes, colors and forms of humble, really small-spanned creatures. The fundamental attitude of the lyrical self is the empathic one, of identification with the world, in a perceptive enthusiasm that reaches to capture the entire edifice of the real, in its discountenanced aspects, but almost exclusively by means of the senses. Emil Brumaru has properly been referred to as a poet of lyrical "de-problematization", a poet who is not inclined towards solemn ideas, towards the great interrogations regarding destine, time, history, etc. but more likely towards the little universe, the world of "kernel and crumb", an apparently minor universe yet to develop, at a closer look, new and special significations. Thus, Ion Pop notices that "In the literary context of the 70's, starting with the volume *Versuri,* Emil Brumaru impressed by his deliberate de-problematization of the lyrical discourse. The dominant regime, that of restless interrogation, of Ideas with capital letter, was replaced by one of candid exclamation when facing a universe that appeared to be outdated and compromised, mostly minor and insignificant. The lyrical energy would be spent continuously throughout the work in a never-ending praise of the «small beings», of the long forgotten and obsolete objects, reintroduced, morally outworn as they were, only in the productive circuit of poetry. Instead of «dusting the old chronicles» (for instance), the poet would clear the old things just to rediscover the initial shine, sometimes would even leave it in thick layers to admire its softness, «loving it deeply»". One may state that Emil Brumaru is a poet who structures his visions under the spectrum of imagistic grace, of suavity and delicacy, in lent, somnolent, lyrical gestures, that are circumcised to a specific poetic frame, of sumptuous interior, one favoring lazy dreaming, contemplative spleen: „În edificii vechi de cărămidă/ Pe canapele moi, ca pe ciuperci/ De aur matlasat, mă lăfăi dulce./ Oh, pe plafoane sunt serafi cu vergi// Ce bat la tălpi bezmetice fecioare/ Şi uneori la sâni. Căci au greşit/ Cu ei, dezvirginându-i, iar pe urmă,/ Duioşi, le umplu rănile cu chit// Şi-nlăcrimaţi

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le iau din nou la pieptul/ Lor plin de pene şi-n aripi le strâng,/ În timp ce ele cu delicateţe/ Le trag pe frunte nimburile-adânc!".

By means of spleen, the poet recreates the contact to the intimacy of things, reaching immediate reality at a sensorial level, by an unexpected perceptive capacity that imprints the entire universe with a magic of forms, colors, various flavors. The critic Al. Cistelecan speaks about the setting of an ambiance imbued with paneroticism, where the most different things coexist in a total communion, in harmony with deep resonance in their intimacy. "The objects exult or faint, purple or fade, shiver or paralyze, according to the erotic fluid that runs through them and its resonance. A sensuous heart beats inside of them and they have an adolescent «psychology» and a sensitive love moral. Brumaru's world radiates from a amorous substratum and is led according to gynecocratic principles. Its fire core, the one that informs and conforms it, it is a fondle femininity, an elusive ghost, its entire movement being a mythology of matrimonial sensuousness. The world of the poem is singular, set not upon its physical proprieties, but upon the affective ones. Minerals, vegetals, animals, crave and exult all together, adoration being their state of grace and tenderness their nature. Emotion is the consciousness of this world, amorality its morals – pure morals of senses and instincts, lacking restrictive and ascetic registers." Thus, imagistic abundance does not translate but the material abundance of the world, and lust floats above that universe imposing its allusive logics, its refined and graceful tectonic. The lyrical self lives intensely disconcerted sensations, dominated not by intellect, rationale, but by affect and sensuous fascination. The love poems are impressive by fragile and suave images, by purity of lines and feeling of intimacy, closeness, delicate and profound communion. The poem *În dormitor* is, thus, illustrative, as it presents imponderable gestures, figures stand a certain hieratism, framing the love ritual in tender moves and echoes, hints of the candid feeling of love. „Nici un chip n-a căzut în paloare/ Ca al tău, adormit şi frumos./ Fulgera, luminându-te-arare,/ Câte-un vis sub al tâmplelor os.// Respirai cu atâta sfială/ Încât aerul ud se-nchega/ Lângă nările-adânci în petale./ Respirai, surâzând, catifea.// Fascinat de-al său geamăn, spre-oglindă/ Braţul tău prins în somn se-alungea/ Visător. Oh, să nu se desprindă!"

The eminently baroque, or more likely rococo aspect, as Ion Pop sees it, that fits poems signed by Emil Brumaru does not exclude the ludic

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instinct of this poet who prefers revelations of closeness, intimacy and empathic communion with creatures and things rather than far-away horizons, or distance. Most of the times, the poems stage a ludic, carnival-like ceremony, by means of which the empiric, grave existence of objects is suspended in favor of play and celebration, of freedom of movement and expression, in candid and exuberant visions, in a "rhetoric of sensual exultance". (Al. Cistelecan). The dominant affective state of these poems is that of bliss, of harmony with things, of somnolent experience among the humblest of the objects. Julien Ospitalierul, a sort of an alter-ego of the poet, a masque of his essential postures, stands as a representative lyrical character for Emil Brumaru's poems: „Mă numesc Julien Ospitalierul. Am treizeci de ani./ Duc o viaţă destul de retrasă, la ţară, şi iată, v-o jur,/ În patul meu moale nu au dormit decât struguri şi boi diafani/ Şi prieten nu-mi este decât detectivul Arthur.// ...// Vara cultiv levănţică şi-n vreme ce-aştept diligenţa poştală o dată la cinci săptămâni/ S-aducă scrisori, în mână c-o bilă de fildeş gălbuie,/ De sufletuzl meu mirosind a gard proaspăt atârnă-n extatice cuie/ Subţiri lenjerii de fântâni.// Apoi, când e toamnă şi-ascult împăcat cum în lungi dup-amiezi/ Iepuri de angora-mi ronţăie cărţile-n tufe-adânci de mărar/ Şi cum se surpă pe mese miresme-n prăpastia unui pahar,/ Cu toată fiinţa mea-n praf jubilez.// Şi-ngenunchind fericit lângă uşă,/ Furnicile portocalii eu le trec peste prag, în urechi, dintr-o cameră-n alta,/ Iar către amurg mă rog blând şi umil să plutească-n înalta/ Sufragerie a casei, mari găinuşe..."

Contemplative poet by definition, Emil Brumaru brings in the Romanian lyricism of today the universe of the "boudoir", of childhood and graceful eros, in a jubilant, carnival-like, refined writing style. Emil Brumaru's poetry was righteously defined from the perspective of a studied naivety, of a candor frame, of a play that takes itself seriously, all that doubled by a refined finesse of the lyrical drawing. In an afterword to the anthological volume *Dulapul îndrăgostit*, Alex Ştefănescu notes that „Emil Brumaru is modern in his own style. If, unlike the poets of the XXth century, he chooses not to adopt attitudes that express an extreme, hallucinant lucidity – sarcasm, feeling of the absurd, «sickness of words», etc.- this does not mean that he is not lucid, on his turn. The interjection „oh" from the above mentioned lines truly represents a naive exclamation, evoking something from last century sensitivity, when stronger emotions caused fainting, making salt-phials imperative. Yet, if we linger a little over

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it a little linger, we feel that something is not entirely right about it. The author recites his «oh» so gracefully, and more than that, so delightfully, that everything becomes parodical. Emil Brumaru is naive knowing that he is naive, wishing to be naive, enjoying to be naive." In other words, we find a prudent naivety, staged by a ambiance-loving poet, who considers the lyrical atmosphere as the primordial element of the poetic setup, the bond that favors the consistency of state of spirit and evoked feeling. Considered by Eugen Simion to belong in the category of fantasy and ironic poet, Emil Brumaru uses, in the volume *Cântece naive*, as well, a so-called minor tematics, with petty objects, common figures, without ethic or ontic greatness.

Making a sort of genealogy to the "naïve songs", N. Manolescu notes that "*Cântece naive* still remain the most graceful ones, as the poet willingly behaves as a child, evoking a domestic universe, a paradise of the «summer kitchens», of pepper, of dill, of parsley, of waybread, of cinnamon, of tomato juice, of celery or lovage, valuable cooking aids, gastronomic refinement." This poem has a tradition in the Romanian literature. Ilarie Voronca also sang the market goods (in *Ulise*), with dusking eggplants and tomatoes as red as the cheeks of Transylvanian women. More of an aristocrat, Ion Pillat prefers the magic and secret universe of the fruit storeroom. And G. Călinescu tasted the vegetable or fruit out of a poetic «gourmandise». Besides the theme of the objects, dealt with in a sort of mannerist style, most of the "*Cântece naive"* have a erotic thematic, presenting the state of jubilation of the lovers, the charming imponderable feeling and tender hallucination that embraces the lyrical self wrapped by love. Dominated by a heavy sensuousness, by an overwhelming magic of senses, the "naïve songs" play their lyrical effects between candor and sensual frenzy. A poem of the crops, of the objects and of the domestic liquors blended with a lyricism of a refined and delicate eros. („Când o să vin prin înserarea clară/ Voi flutura în vânt ştergarul pur/ Cu patru crini purtaţi de o fecioară/ În mână peste-o pajişte de-azur.// Scoate-mi atunci, iubito, din cămară/ Vechi vişinate, brave saramure/ Ce cerul gurii dulce-mi alintară/ Departe de cetăţile sperjure,// Pune pe flăcări plitele de aur/ Şi-n străchini opăreşte cimbrişor,/ Şi-mpurpurată ceartă-mă sonor/ Căci mi-am riscat iar viaţa c-un balaur").

Another "naïve song" carries, in its fragile scheme, an interior lyricism, echoing from Eminescu's *Sonnets*. There is symmetry between the

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resonance of the feeling and the exterior. The retreat from the element uptightness, the throwback towards a safe, protective interior is joined by a rediscovery of intimacy of the beings, of voluptuous communion. („Afară plouă laic şi-aş vrea să fii aici,/ Să tac, să taci, tăcerea la fleacuri să nembie,/ Să lâncezim pe paturi ca două mari pisici/ După ce-au lins smântâna (slup-slup!) din farfurie"). The second stanza stresses the atmosphere of languor, of sensory abulia that marks lyrical heroes. Words, gestures and movements have an extreme slowness, dynamism is at its minimum, and the resonance of affects is also inscribed in such a poetics of the halftone, of infinitesimal affective nuance („Ţi-aş spune-ncet: «Dă-mi mâna...» şi poate că mi-ai da-o/ Cu sufletu-n ruină ca-n vechi foiletoane/ În care-n moi fotolii leşină dulci cocoane/ Vărsând pe sâni ceşcuţa de lapte cu cacao"). The ending of the poem seems to mark static domestic setting, gestures becoming more direct, while the last line brings about the image of a lavish exteriority that sends the reader to spleen and slow motion.

„Ţi-aş da deoparte părul cu gura de pe gât,/ Cu gura ţi-aş desface nasturii mici de bluză/ Şi ţi-aş şopti-n urechea ta fleaţă şi confuză:/ «Afară plouă laic şi-s trist şi mi-i urât...»„. Poet of little feelings and domestic space, fantasist and ironic in balanced doses, Emil Brumaru managed to transfer in his "naïve song" the elegiac shiver and the frenzy of senses, in a suggestive and musical style of writing, in clear lines framed by harmoniously built architecture. Emil Brumaru's poetry was rightfully situated in the typology of intimate lyrics, of little universe, of interior spaces, with clear inflexions of the rococo sensitivity and desires for surfaces of things. The visual is the main quality of the poet, his faculty, his way of absorbing the real, with its multiple appearances and metamorphosis. On the other hand, at a closer look, Emil Brumaru's poems are nothing else but fragments of a "lover's discourse", fed with sensorial fervor and the present moment's sensuousness that is quite often in conjunction to the passed moment, to the imponderable and sheer universe of memory. The space dynamics framed by the author is, thus, one of sensorial abundance, of world contemplation under its earthly forms, in a deliberate ecstatic carnival-like movement, without lacking melancholy or a parody touch.

In his attempt to settle poetic particularities, Laurentiu Ulici observed that: "The lexical and parody refinement of Emil Brumaru's poems, shocking at the beginning and more or less mannerist preserved in all of his

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books, joins an incursion in an, again, shocking universe of the traditional habitat, with all its implications, from the «fruits of the earth» served raw or in a culinary metamorphosis to the objects that populate the triad of the place we live in: kitchen, salon and bedroom, an incursion that often appears to be like an exploration guided by two compasses: a psychological one, inducing erotic magnetism an oriental sensuousness and a aesthetic one, revealing a parody sense activated by a elegiac attitude. Polestar, mannerist bow lies above. Withdrawn from the everyday noisy core of the century, the poet imagines extraordinary adventures in the early storerooms, big dramas closed in a lily, tragedies in the jam jar, storms in the heart of an orange, vegetables orchestra, porcelain choreographies, vegetable oils explosions, kitchen alchemies, all these in a patriarchal Sunday-loving perspective suggesting sensuousness of a pent lover strangely mingled with joy and melancholy."

The poem *Elegie* opens Emil Brumaru's debut volume *Versuri* (1970). This poem gathers all the data and characteristics of an epicurean lyricism, where the sensorial desire and the languorous dynamics of images invite to candid and pure remembering. Appealing to sensations (visual, gustatory, olfactory, tactile) leads to the material desire of the lyrical self. Yet, it is not about the everyday materiality but about a sensuously represented one, by means of jubilatory images with ontic and gnoseological relevance. This rococo lyric style, underlined also by Gheorghe Grigurcu, lies between perceptive frenzy and equilibrium of vision, between imagistic abundance and rigueur of the stanza. "Emil Brumaru's personality mark is to be discovered in his attempt towards preciousness. The rococo beat, still, allows him a compromise between frenzy and confinement, between liberty and discipline. Being an effective moral analgesic, expressive luxury permits him to find himself in a purified, artificial state, a vital disposition of the supremacy of the self, reflected in textual virtuosity. In the fascinating game of metamorphoses, in the cult for unusual detail, for hues, for miniature, in the aphrodisiac exaltation of nature will this word maniac be able to establish a secret agreement to the existential Muse, official excluded from his mannerist empire." Dreaming of his passed childhood, he detaches by the suavity of ambiance and abundance of details but also by subtle techniques of secret and harmonious correspondences among sensations that trigger, in a Proustian manner, the mechanisms of involuntary memory. („O, vechi şi dragi bucătării de vară,/ Simt iar în gură

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gust suav de-amiază/ Şi în tristeţea care mă-nconjoară/ Din nou copilăria mea visează").

The childhood universe contains robust and refined savors, in a gastronomical ceremony, in an orgy of flavors, colors and lusty shapes in a true sensuousness. The irresistible lyric effect is visible out of the suggestive association between material robust elements and epithets belonging to a different lexical sphere, epithets indicating the unreal and dematerialization. There is an entire carnival of dilated senses in these lines that are dilated so as to comprise a vital plenitude inaugurated by a lyric memory that aims to reestablish the paradisiacal childhood. The gastronomic elements, surfaces and objects seem to be made erotic; an insinuated flux of sensuousness floats among the objects, conferring tender hues and also a sleepy beatitude: „Ienibahar, piper prăjit pe plită,/ Pești groşi ce-au adormit în sos cu lapte,/ Curcani păstraţi în zeama lor o noapte/ Spre o delicateţe infinită,/ Ciuperci cât canapeaua, în dantele,/ Icre cu bob bălos ce ochiu-şi cască,/ Aluaturi tapisate, crescând grele/ Într-o dobitocie îngerească,/ Moi miezuri de ficaţi în butoioaşe/ De ou de melc, înlăcrămate dulce,/ Mujdeiuri ireale, şunci gingaşe/ Când sufletu-n muştar vrea să se culce,/ Şi-n ceainice vădindu-şi eminenţa/ Prin fast de irizări şi toarte fine/ Ceaiuri scăzute până la esenţa/ Trandafirie-a lucrului în sine". There is a subtle equilibrium between implication in the tectonic of the universe of intimacy, of refined gallantry and crops and the parody distance. The gallantry of gestures, the ceremony of affective remembering and the vague elegiac attitude together with the contemplation of the moon under the spectrum of late scenery produce an abulic movement of the lyrical self, otherwise a tempered and interiorized one. A dominant of Brumaru's poetry is the rococo artifice and conventionalism, of gallantry that expresses the will to transcend the real fragileness, to offer an idyllic and ideal outline to the surrounding things, to the two humble and common dimensions. The fascination of the minor object images blends with the temptation of erotic of the existence, imposing a supra-dimensioned image of a poet that paints the existential side of the universe, as Gheorghe Grigurcu also notices. "The poet wishes to «embellish» the real at (almost) any cost, showing an intent of prodigious virtue that lasts all throughout the volume(s), leans towards minor things, unused words, edgy, «little», «compromising» states, as if gathered from a poetry car cemetery, in order to be rehabilitated. His role might be really compared to that of a decorator

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or of a dance master. The texts glide upon the crusty surface with a yearning hue of the early albums. It all leads towards the effect of gallant protocol, of entirely civilized impulse. the artifice is above them all. Judging by mentality, by vocabulary and by gestures, the author lives in a different century, his hearing filled with gavottes and allemandes, identifying himself with Watteau's paintings."

Balada crinilor care şi-au scris frumos from the volume *Cântece naïve* (1976) is a poem that serves this description. In this poem, the poet is attracted by erotic allegory, written in a refined, delicate, vaporous style, with transpositions of vegetal elements in delicate parables of aspiration and discontent, of attraction towards the other and of remote hallucination. Love is figured here as the result of distance, born out of a vivid hunger for the unreal. Moreover, the immediate real is almost entirely overtaken by the imaginary, carefully webbed by the author in pastel hues of delicacy and candor. The love affair in the vegetal world contains, one might say, hints of the unknown; it is transposed in allegory and symbol, with different connotations of the vague and the mirage of the far-away. The poem is structured in two parts, similar in form but significantly distinctive. The first part is written in a euphoric regime, transposing the sentimental flush of the enamored lilies that carry a gallant correspondence aided by some "ablaze mail-deliverers": „Trăia într-un oraş din miazăzi/ Un crin înzăpezit în datorii// Care primea, scrise pe pluş cu lapte,/ Scrisori de la alt crin, din miazănoapte;// Oh, pentru cruda lor corespondenţă/ Aveau cea mai naivă diligenţă!// Ei îşi tăiau cu zimţii de la timbre/ Miresmele-ntre dânşii să le schimbe,// Poştaşi înflăcăraţi puneau ştampile,/ Cântând din corn, pe sacii cu pistile,// Plicuri adânci pudra, sculat din zori,/ Însuşi directorul caleştilor!" One may immediately notice the sensuousness air breathed by these lines that have the delicacy of miniature and the fragileness Japanese stamps. Time seems to be suspended, the vegetal lives in beatitude of liminal reactions, gestures and movements are earthly slow, living under the sign of the imponderable, of redeeming fiction and oneiric. Love is painted in refined tones and leads towards a gallant ceremony in which ludic instinct and figures of ritual grace are mingled. In the second part of the poem, gravity intensifies, the lyric diction becomes more tonic, the serious side more acute: "Dar crinul ce trăia în miazăzi,/ Fiind înzăpezit în datorii,// Îi răspundea din ce în ce mai rar/ Celuilalt crin ce bea pe-ascuns mărar.// Apoi tăcu de tot. O rouă grea/ Strivi parfumul amândurora.// Şi

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astfel cei doi crini nu şi-au mai scris,/ Poştaşii au murit, poşta s-a-nchis,// Doar uneori mai trece monoton/ Prin bulion un vechi poştalion". The ending of the poem brings along a diffused melancholy, distance is no longer benefic, but destructive, and the initial moment of ecstasy created by the erotic impulse is followed by the insertion of the elegiac hue. This oscillation between jubilation and gravity, ludic and serious, was also noticed by Ion Pop: "Changing what needs to be changed in a well-known formula, *the poem sees itself dye out of over-poetry*. The moment of maximum ecstasy, of lust offered by the endless availability and freedom of the game receives the maximum elegiac load. The consciousness of outdatedness and desuetude of the game place and the ludic way of being used to be permanent in this imaginary universe – itself the source of a certain type of conceit and of melancholy that appeared in the middle of jubilation." This poetry is characterized by fluency and expressive refinement, by imagistic dynamism and delicacy of metaphors, all these methods figuring ritualistic scenery of blossom, then failed love, of ecstasy and ontic discontent. Communion with the things, primordial to the lyricism of Emil Brumaru, poet of vitality and perceptive ecstasy, is doubled by his ludic instinct that frame pictures of naïve characters in an extremely natural, candor and serene style.

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