MODERNITY OF TRADITION IN THE POETRY OF ION PILLAT[1]

Abstract: *The present paper presents the traditional stage of creation of Ion Pillat and the modern influences that represent the innovation and also the originality of his creation. The background of this stage of creation is represented by the lost childhood, a happy past time .The poet highlights the fact that only pure poetry is able to render the purity of feelings and poetic beauty and force as they are.*

Key words: *modernity of tradition, pure poetry, lost childhood.*

After the trauma caused by the First World War drama, the young generation of Ion Pillat was detached from symbolism in two ways.

Some highlighted the direction of aggressive avant-garde, of the ”decadent” seeking to implant, on the ruins of an unstructured society, a disorder which stated itself as the ideal.

From an artistic point of view, the formula ”art for art” became ”anti-art for anti-art” as absolute nonconformity, pseudo-motivated by the proclamation of a revolutionary, innovative visionarism.

Without taking into account Benjamin Fundoianu’s warning, according to which ”not those that are more in the line with the times, come to represent the times later on”(Pop.I., 1990: 111), the latter preceded to violation of the language codes, at every level.

Nowadays more magazines are published: *75HP* (1924, a single edition), *Punct* (1924-1925); *Contimporanul* (1922-1932); *Integral* (1925-1928)

The programs of several poets as Ion Vinea, Ilarie Voronca, Ştefan Roll, Saşa Pană, Tristan Tzara, Geo Bogza launch multiple concepts as *Futurism, Dadaism, Constructivism, Integralism*..., subordinated later on to *Surrealism*. From a theoretical point of view and, often, practically, lyricism is banished from poets concerns, by exacerbated violence of poetic principles.

Technical accessibility of avant-garde poetry, placing talent on a second place, made Romanian avant-garde quite vigorous, lasting up to the Second World War, having significant representatives (Gellu Naum, Virgil Teodorescu). The history of poetry, however, did not note avant-garde masterpieces, most of creations remaining as language and information experiments that made a historical record of the phenomenon.

The other, oriented towards indigenous realities, supported by tradition continuity, used, along with Ion Pillat, a great number of creators, both in poetry and in prose.

Some continue their previous activity (Nichifor Crainic, 1920, the volume of poetry *Darurile pământului*; Liviu Rebreanu, 1920, the novel *Ion*, then *Răscoala*; Cezar Petrescu, 1922, short stories volume *Scrisorile unui răzeş*, Ioan Slavici, *Cel din urmă armaş*; Mihail Sadoveanu, with all his creations in this period; Ionel Teodoreanu, 1923, *Uliţa copilăriei*, then *La Medeleni*).

As a background observation, the comparison between values generated by post-symbolist and traditional avant-garde, is much in favor of the latter, significantly enriching the heritage of Romanian literature masterpiece.

Ion Pillat is part of those that separated from the above mentioned literary currents, denying the Parnasian-Symbolist poetry: ”I only want you to remember that starting with 1910, until 1918, my poetry was diverted from its natural womb, by sudden

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transplant and foreign intake"; "My lyrics from adolescence have not been the ripe fruit of the soul and indigenous land, but the forced fruit of the brain and foreign libraries" (Pillat, I., 2003: 76).

It showed that the traditional reorientation of Ion Pillat was not a singular gesture. Neither was it spontaneous.

In 1912, when writing the lyrics of *Dor*, the wonderful landscape did not have the power to engage the remembrance: *Căzută-i bruma sus la vie; / Pustiu e drumul spre izvor; / Căci, vezi, trecutul nu învie; / Doruri ce-au fost de-a pururi mor* (Pillat, I., I, 1983: 298, *Cântec de dor*).

However, the experience of war decisively changed the existentialist orientation of the poet. The inner time re-established the hierarchy of their own life experiences in face of war brutalities. In front of decisive questions, steady things can be found, things that could support its sensitivity shaken by war trauma.

Horia Furtună, sharing many of his Parisian experiences with his friend Ion Pillat, notes the time of such decision: "In July 1918, after demobilization, Pillat took me with me at Miorcani [...]. Here we would rest after the long turmoil of war and would write poetry. Miorcani was for us a place of decisive orientation. War, as I mentioned to Pillat, showed me the great reality of the country and the Romanian language. He shared my belief. We decided to finish poems started under the old literary signs and to listen to our new soul's command." (Papadima O., 1974: 77).

This is a comeback, since in the first volume of poetry, *Casa amintirii*, besides the temptation of modern experiments, the poet confronted the mysteries of his own experiences (*Casa amintirii, Întoarcere, A doua moarte...*). Later on, in *Grădina între ziduri*, he wrote *Aci sosi pe vremuri*, which, according to Cornelia Pillat, the poet included further on in *Pe Argeş în sus:* "... the poem *Aci sosi pe vremuri*, written in 1918 and published in *Grădina între ziduri* – therefore, a few years before creating the volume *Pe Argeş în sus* – in 1923, the philosophical sense of the whole volume was removed from the initial gearing and placed among the last poems of the volume..., being given, not only an incredibly adequate frame, but the purpose of naturally expression" (Pillat, C., 1985: IX).

The detachment of *Aci sosi pe vremuri* drew the attention of critics, who did not hesitate to acknowledge the uncontested masterpiece of Pillat poetry.

However, the poet did not recover similar poems form his first volume, for instance, the poem *Întoarcere*, being at least at the same value level as *Aci sosi pe vremuri*. It is still a poem of objects that awaken reliving in an interior time, with the existential thrill fairly obviously marked: *Şi zilele pierdute revin. Simt că mă cheamă*/*Privirea mea uitată din poza prinsă-n ramă* (Pillat, I., I, 1983: 23, *Întoarcere*).

This poem was rewritten for the last volume, under the title *Înapoiere,* having the same masterpiece regime.

If in *Întoarcere,* the emotions of past experiences, as a substance of the interior time, are covered by the shroud of memory (*... şi simt în piept / Cum giulgiul amintirii se lasă – şi deştept / Privesc cum îl atârnă drept coviltir pe toate* – (Pillat, I., I, 1983: 23), in *Înapoiere,* the comeback time is spatialised, marking the passing by the stay of windmills, hills and fields, following caravanes, as in a temporal flow:*Şi lanurile de secară, de grâu şi de porumb*/*Fugeau şi ele-n urma văzduhului de plumb* (Pillat. I.,II, 1985: 44, *Înapoiere*).

The memory shroud no longer covers anymore the mystery of life in closure; it comes into force at the meeting with time, because the poet is now aware that here the

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authentic feelings of his existence have been developed: *În pocnete de bice şi-n tropote de cai*/*Intrai în amintire cu zgomotos alai* (Pillat. I.,II, 1985: 44, *Înapoiere*).

Critics did not comment on the significance of a traditional-type group of poems, as thematic, in the first state, the Parnasian stage of Pillat poetry.

In 1939, Pillat, the exegete, held the conference *Francis Jammes's poetry,* where he explains the detachment of the French poet from Symbolism, following a traditional theme, which truly represented his originality back in the days: "Here's how, for instance, and in what original way, the poet renders the hidden, but more disturbing life of an antique house where, in turn, their grandparents and parents lived. His poetry was translated back then"(Pillat, I., 1990: 199).

It can be understood that the group of poems could have been written under the direct influence of Francis Jammes, his name being recalled in the text of *Aci sosi pe vremuri.*

The appeal to tradition meant programmatic breakup for Ion Pillat, starting with 1918, from *Viaţa nouă* magazine, where Ovid Densusianu still held high the flag of Romanian. He insisted to mark this reorientation by publishing, for the admiration of Nicolae Iorga, a monumental cycle, *Bătrânii,* programmatic collection of the connection with the literary and bookish tradition of predecessors.

The second stage, the traditional one, is not homogenous, but, depending on the type of evoking practiced by the poet, can be held in three directions: the passeistic phase was emphasized in order to establish Romanian and universal culture and spirituality (*Bătrânii, Biserica de altădată*...); ethnographic rather than poetic portrets (*Satul meu, Calendarul viei*, the latter being a cycle from the final volume *Limpezimi*...).

The third direction, and the most important one, represented by the volume *Pe Argeş în sus,* by means of many of its accomplishments, granted Ion Pillat, as national poet, a literary geography that was less explored with passion before.

The latter should be properly analyzed in more detail, because it is one that rendered Pillat the title of the greatest Romanian landscape designer.

In *Pe Argeş în sus,* the mutation versus the Parnasian-Symbolist stage is highly obvious.

In the first stage poetry, inspiration was bookish, with mythological allusions and scholarly information, the main concern, that remained constant during his entire career, being, as in the Antique Alexandrism, that of formal perfection. The poet does no longer subject himself to the Parnasian imperative of banishing message affectivity.

In the traditional stage of Ion Pillat and, particularly in the volume *Pe Argeş în sus*, we feel the emotional intelligence spreading throughout the poems of the volume, the poet remaining to write, according to his own words, a traditional, indigenous, simple and sentimental poem.

As it was shown, from Parnasianism remained only the temptation of perfect forms.

Actually, in poems where rationality has fully vanished and where the poet emotionally evokes landscape elements, the poetic value remains as sentimental lyrics. Almost all poems considered valuable have a rational area: the meditative thrill of the irreversible flow of time and life fragility opposed to it. In this case, human existence is left only with the chance of its many forms being continuously repeated in order to forever remain the same .

The existential feeling in Pillat poetry has unmistakeable characteristics: the poet descends among things, practising a painting perception, as it seems issued by the objects themselves, reasoning in universal dimensions (Călinescu, 1973: 167).

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We need to highlight a few aspects: thematic similarity often emphasized by critics, with Marcel Proust's roman fleuve, *In Search of Lost Time;* the characteristics of Pillat's descriptive art, the shift from a simple description of an object towards a painting, spatial vision.

The thematic obsession of Ion Pillat, in this creation stage, the same as that of Marcel Proust, was exploration, the recovery of the golden age, of the childhood lost paradise: "Regarding poetry and soul structure, the role of memories, experiences and childhood influences, even from adolescence, they all seem capital" (Pillat, I., 2003: 67).

Empathising with the purity of feelings back then could be lived either as a human close-up to perfection or as creating a distance from the inevitable time of death. The stages of this alternative are not always in adversity in case of the Romanian poet. As it will be observed, at language level, semantic spheres of the two topics are both well represented.

It was proven that, whereas for Proust, magnitude, diversity and affective depth succeed to dilate existential dimensions, in most poems having the "vision of Ion Pillat, his representations on the past do not exceed, however, most often, the stage of visual impressions"(Anghelescu, A., 1983: XVII).

This is true, but it actually means that, by not writing a novel, the Romanian poet, for which knowledge of painting is equal with that of poetry, complies, as it will be shown, to the saying *ut pictura poesis*.

In the study *Poezie şi plastic*, by theorizing on basic concepts, Ion Pillat shows that for certain types of poetry, plastic character is essential.

It is true that poetry has as artistic material the word, but words have objects as reference, the latter having plastic existence: spatiality, figurative aspect and a certain chromatic order.

Descriptive procedures of combining music and painting, into poetry, were always common to creation, but Ion Pillat notes, in the XIXth century, a prevalence of music in English and German poetry, influenced by the song and lied and a preponderance of painting in Romanic (French, Italian, Spanish) poetry.

Some paintings are created along the structure of the paintings , as in Musset's *Veneția*: *Dans la Venice la rouge / Pas un bateau qui bouge, / Pas un pecheur dans l'eau, / Pas un falot* (Pillat, I.,1990: 351).

For symbolists, as Baudelaire has demonstrated, the law of correspondence diversifies the sensorial: *Comme les longs échos qui de loin se confondent [...]/ Les parfums, les couleurs et les sons se respondent (Ibidem*: 360).

But even about these, Ion Pillat states: "I do not know another poet, not even Gautier, for whom the plastic interest plays a greater part as compared to Baudelaire"(Pillat, I.,1990: 360).

While describing the chromatics of Pillat poetry, L. Vasiluță notes: "from everything surrounding us, the writer feels attracted to the harmony of cultures and sounds, finding their immediate reflex in plastic and sound images that create together a sensitive painting with great artistic force" (Vasiluță, L., 1973: 138; *acc. to* Călinescu, 1973: 298).

Literary critics have frequently recorded that the everlasting values of Ion Pillat, (who actually has a cycle of poems called *Pictor ignotus*) are generated by visual structure and affective nostalgia. Therefore "In Ion Pillat's poetry existed, even from its beginning, full sensitivity, a natural sense of beauty, a lack o metaphoric ostentation and [...] and, especially, a permanent inner fire" (Tăuşan, V., A., 1972: 7-8).

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By edifying the intensity and depth of the sense of nature, landscaping art was considered a fundamental theme, ”imposing the author as one of the most important Romanian poets” (Anghelescu, A., 1983: XVIII).

When discussing the unexpected life of ”soul landscapes”, the poet marks, by his own confession, the fundamental signs: ”poem of the earth spiritualized in time”; ”time materialized in memory”; ”the ripe fruit of the soul”; ”the soul of a child once before”; ”nostalgia after the lost heaven of childhood”...(*acc*. *to* Pillat, 2003: 70)

Some of the images are alive and attract senses and imagination by their secret to cause deep affective disorders: ”As time passes we grow tired of anything: mountain, forest, hill. However, you cannot grow tired of a simple image in its hidden architecture, since all its richness and its entire charm is given not only by the light of an enormous sky but the shadows of clouds built in the surreal of forever dying and reviving time”(Anghelescu, A., 1983: XXIX).

By returning into childhood and feeling, the poet has the revelation of objects generating images and surprises them as such, applying like no other, the antique principle *ut pictura poesis*.

Critics have seldom noted the poet’s preference for the visual:”Ion Pillat is, in poetry, the *painter*; since he has plastic and decorative imagination” (Manolescu, N., 1987: 215).

This suggestion comes from Nicolae Grigorescu, the penultimate mentors portrayed in *Bătrânii*: *N-aş mai picta cu pensule de păr, ci aş privi/În rama lor firească priveliştile vii ... / Închide casa, trage obloanele şi vină.../Ne-aşteaptă drumuri albe şi-o ţară de lumină* (Pillat, I., II, 1985: 91, *Cel din urmă*)

Objectology, as a branch of poetry uses a method of creation passed for centuries, based on the substitution of images with the acute-sensorial presentation of objects generating them: «Nous remontons de l’image à ce qui est à son origine, c’est-à-dire aux objets sensoriels... Les objets n-ont pas besoins de devenir une image, c’est-à-dire une figure de style pour jouer un rol en poésie» (Varga, K., 1967: 559).

A definition of poetry from an objectology point of view was elaborated: «La belle et noble Poësia... il faut qu’elle représente les objets dans leur verité el leur naïvété toutes pures» (Varga, K., 1967: 559).

The most often used procedure in baroque poetry, diversity in object unity, represented an important direction in baroque ornamentation. This generated the literary critics illusion to consider Ion Pillat as a baroque poet *par excellence*: ”the baroque crisis of Pillat”; ”baroque transformation of Pillat’s poetry”; ”whoever doubts the baroque of our poet”; „Pillat-baroquist”(Miclău, P., 1983: 111).

This procedure was resumed with great repercussions in Surrealism, literary current to which Ion Pillat did not adhere.

Entire poems are composed by crowding objects from one verse to another:*Din bulgării vin care cu vinete şi verze, / Se-afundă-n zări, departe, un unghi obtuz de berze. / Am întâlnit o fată cu tufănele-n braţe. / Un vânător, la iazuri, a tras cu puşca-n raţe./ Aud prin porumbişte chelălăind ogarul. /Loveşte rar şi ritmic, butoiul gol, dogarul* (Pillat, I., II, 1985: 35, *Septembrie*).

Discontinuity created by the diversity of objects generates atmosphere, becoming stronger as the distance between objects increases: *carriages with eggplants and cabbage– obtuse stork angle; girl / arms – hunter /ducks.*

Such example of text illustrates the characteristics of objectology, as depicted by Kibédi Varga: « Dans ce poème, les objets surgissent les uns après lea autres, sans précision supplémentaire, presque sans épithètes» (Varga, K., 1967: 563).

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Regarding language, the poem text comprises mostly nouns (33), whereas verbs are less than half (15). Objectology does not harvest the epithet: in the analyzed text only 3 adjectives can be found. When using the epithet, in a text of this type, the force of suggestion that should generate the message is diminished: *Pădurea arde-n toamnă cu flăcări vegetale / Şi plopii urcă-n ceruri ca facle rituale; / Şi ulmii lui Vergiliu, eminescianii tei, / Cireşii – roşii focuri, cu foile scântei / De la vânjosul carpen la frageda ferigă*... (Pillat, I., II, 1985: 58, *Aşteptându-i*).

For Florica however, *Pe Argeş în sus*, the critic acknowledges the peace of Vergilian bucolic and the rest of Alecsandri's pastels, which Pillat got to know later on.

Poems represent nevertheless the mirage of a return, of resizing existence: "Florica, the cycle of poems which I wrote post-war, is the soul transposition of my childhood [...]This poem of earth spiritualized in time, of time materialized in memory, is the direct product of the life I had in childhood" (Pillat, I., 2003: 63).

Objects are not only the return of image to its source but have, above all, the magic role of a time travel, something we can see elsewhere too, not only in poetry.

By describing objects in his grandfather's chamber, the poem notes: "His chamber was left unchanged, from the smallest trinket, his horn wood cane, his soft felt hat and his junker uniform back from Ghica Vodă's time... kept together with my grandmother's wedding dress, in a glass cabinet, up to the primitive bathroom with wooden tub still smelling as walnut leaves"(Papadima, O., 1974: 69-70).

Poetry hardly changes the ceremony of object presentation, introducing only time perspective: *Văd rochia bunicii cu şal şi malacov*, / *Văd uniforma veche de „ofiţir" la modă / Pe când era el Junker – de mult –sub Ghica Vodă...* / *Şi ceasul vechi tot bate, tic-tic, la poarta vremii* (Pillat, I., II, 1985: 24, *Odaia bunicului*).

By reviewing fundamental subjects of the volume *Pe Argeş în sus* (*memory* – 9 entries; *past* – 9; *grandpa, grandma* – 21; *dead, grave, death* – 13; *autumn* – 11, *childhood* – 7, *dream* – 5...) we observe that the poet does not stop at objective empathy level, the building objects by their sensorial features, but they determine the poet□s existential universe.

First of all, pictorial view lays objects according to spatial perspective.This was observed by the critics of Ion Pillat: "The poet proves an exquisite pictorial sense in perceiving nature. Beyond the pictorial aspect, the poet pursues in a landscape the coherence of a compositional structure[...]a dosing an alternation of light and shadow sourced, usually hidden to the eye." (Anghelescu, A., 1983: 30).

It is not a three-dimensional perspective, as in usual painting techniques, but the summoning of a fourth spatial-temporal dimension that actually involves the purpose of experiences conveyed by the message (Genette, G., 1978: 143).

Although the fundamental themes of the volume could be named nostalgic, the poet is not a pessimist. He does not wail. The romance of experiences comes from the theme specifics, excessively cultivated by Romantics, but Pillat realistically reports, as a life style, without exacerbating soul tensions: "I gaze upon old elms, childhood friends and the my friends today. Such greatness and nobility of plant life to the animal kingdom [...] Such reconciliation of self, with the sky and with the earth, such creating modesty" (Pillat, I., 2003: 94;).

Assaulted by memories and nostalgia, the poet seems to be in the way of spiritual desolation: *În zare cine-nscrie al berzelor triungi?/ În inimi cine-nfige trecutul ca un junghi? / Vezi Toamna şi-amintire – surorile divine – /Când una ne soseşte şi cealaltă revine* (Pillat, I., II, 1985: 33, *Septembrie*).

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A fourth dimension assumes connecting time to space and brings the poet again in the world of object, the multitude of feelings functioning as therapy for the existential pain (Dilthey,W., 1977: 204): *Zadarnic cred că vremea cu anii a crescut./ În fiecare toamnă reintru în trecut./ Copilăria-mi toată dă buzna la uluci,/Când stă la poartă coşul cu struguri şi cu nuci* (*ibidem*).

The volume *Pe Argeş în sus* contains Ion Pillat's most beautiful poems*: Înapoiere, Aci sosi pe vremuri, Inscripţii pentru o fântână, Toaca, Rusalii, Înălţarea, Hanul cu rândunici, Toamnă la Florica, Toamnă la Miorcani...*

They are representative not only for the poet's creation, but for Romanian Poetry Traditionalism, in general: "The Poet that most clearly embodies Traditionalism here is, of course, Ion Pillat, even though along his literary production he tried everything" (Manolescu, N., 1987: 214).

They are a measure of poetic talent of their creator, creating, along with the other, a representative topos of the Romanian poetry universe.

Concluding, Pillat 's literary creation keeps in the structure of the poetry he wrote a constant balance between tradition and modernity, in each volume presenting the relation between new and old from different perspectives, in a poetic journey of over forty years of sustained search, experiments, with social, human and cultural transformations, associations of words in their purest forms, proving that the way Pillat created his poetry made him worthy to be placed together with well known universal modern poets, but at the same time finding his well deserved place next to the national traditional poets of all times.

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