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Grigore Vieru – the Poet of Values

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Abstract: Grigore Vieru is the poet of the Romanian thinking and sensation. His creations are an echo of the dominant ideas of our national consciousness. In Vieru's writings there are expressed all our soul stirrings, all our quotidian worries. The veneration of the sacred mother - a symbol of all the beginnings, of the eternity, of the motherland and of the homeland – is one of the main motives of Grigore Vieru's creation. Therefore, mother in Vieru's verses represents a model of patience in face of all the vicissitudes of life, a historic prototype of the nation's courageous fight and a calm sense of the destiny. Grigore Vieru's literary creation is rich, embracing great themes and issues and being representative for the national culture. The nature's beauties of the native homeland are exceptionally expressed with the Poet's genuine warmth. In Vieru's verses the Prut and Danube rivers hold a special place: on the Prut banks his childhood was spent and the Danube – the witness of the glorious historic events of our nation, an inexhaustible source of beauty and wealth.

Keywords: poet; issues; the Danube; culture; values; spirit; heritage

Introduction

Grigore Vieru, our renowned and beloved poet, by pursuing a noble mission, has left an immensely precious literary heritage to the present and future generations. The poet's lyrics being imbued with a profound patriotic feeling, with love for mother, for the Romanian language, for our sacred bread and parental home, will keep making us reflect on assuming such values as honour, faith, devotion, dignity, honesty, humanity – these defining Grigore Vieru himself throughout his life and making him the nation's spiritual model worthy to be followed.

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An eloquent proof of Vieru's timeless actuality is stated by the tremendous success that the poet has on behalf of the readers of all ages.

In the lines below we'll appeal to some of Grigore Vieru's creations to highlight the poet's way of conceptualization of sacredness, his incontestably delicate wisdom, the unique creative resonance that is associated with our national cultural vision, deeply anchored in the Romanian artistic imaginary and cultural area, as well as his lyrics contributing to the preservation of historical truth.

This is a piece of the poem *Din râurile noastre (Off our rivers)*:

“You say: a mother
Even at hearing
The most terrible news
Won't let the child
Fall out of her arms.
Fall out of its arms
Nor the Danube will let
The Carpathian Prut”.

Actually, the above - mentioned lines are included in Grigore Vieru's anthology with a suggestive title *Taina care mă apără. Opera poetică (Secret that protects me. Poetry work)*.

In the foreword, the poet Grigore Vieru confesses that he wrote the book during thousands of sleepless nights and addresses to the reader: “I arrived to think of the sleep like of a stranger. As a result of a convict job I ended up with this volume that I consider the book of my life” (Vieru, 2008, p. 5). The academician Mihai Cimpoi states in the anthology's preface: “Vieru's poetry is a poetry serving to the edification of life in everything that it is a miracle and kindness and faith”.

The volume was launched in Iasi on December the 8th, 2008. On this occasion, the editor of the book, Daniel Corbu, said that the work was one of the greatest books of the Romanian poetry written by one of the greatest Romanian poets (Info-Prim Neo, 2008).

It has been some time since, after the tragic accident, the national poet Grigore Vieru left us, going to Heaven. We feel acutely his absence. This spiritual emptiness is

filled up by reading the poet's lyrics, by listening to the songs on his verses, by dedicating monographs, essays, publicistic articles to his memory, by setting busts and monuments to Vieru, by naming educational institutions, libraries, village and town streets in honor of the one who defined himself "a teardrop of Eminescu".

"I am the faithful servant
of love for my country
The servant of love for mother.
The servant of love for woman.
The servant of love for stars."

We appealed to these lines of Vieru's poem *Sunt... (I am...)* since it illustrates the civil and artistic credo of our nation's great martyr. It is evident that Vieru's poetry expresses "strength and simplicity" (Ognean Stamboliev, Bulgaria). What is more, "for Vieru, love is the axle of the world, and craving the clearness, this lyricism has a mission: it targets communication, communion" (Adrian Rachieru, Romania).

In fact, Grigore Vieru perceives poetry as a ritual. In this respect we appeal to the opinions of the academician Mihai Cimpoi: „Poetry for Grigore Vieru is a ritual, similarly as his ancestors used to perceive ploughing and all other field works as a ritual, that is why we can easily imagine that, as being an honorable and faithful descendent of theirs, he proceeds to writing by passing through fire his tools for purifying them... This ancient faith of the ploughman is transposed in plan of aesthetics by Grigore Vieru: his quill will always have on the tip that purifying fire, without which the writing would alienate from its great missionary role and would lose from the sacredness that is being shared to all those who come to listen to his word" (Cimpoi, 1987, p. 6).

We also find out from the above mentioned research of Mihai Cimpoi what namely served as an urge for Grigore Vieru to lay his thoughts on paper. The poet had fear of soul emptiness. From the necessity to overcome the first significant emptiness which he experienced in his life –loneliness – his verses appeared.

Therefore, since it came to this terrible feeling – loneliness, we'll remark that it is profoundly rendered in Grigore Vieru's poetry *Cântec despre alb (Song about white)*:

“- In your hair mami,
a strand has whitened why?

- for longing to see you, for caring,
My loved and dear child.
- Granny is more whitened,
I am dearer to her. Why?
- More children has she,
That's for has whitened she.
- And aunty's even whiter,
Children she doesn't have,
- Which is why she's whiter,
For very lonely's she."

In this context, the opinions of the literary critic Gheorghe Crăciun, who met Gr. Vieru in the house of N. Stănescu: "The poetry of Grigore Vieru is prolonged and infinite longing: for tradition, for love, for tomorrow... The major symbol of longing takes, in Gr. Vieru's creation the clear countenance, which is also named simply *mother – native language*" (Crăciun, 1988, p.356).

A passage of the poet's verses dedicated to mother is presented below:

"Babies babble it.
Elders dream of it.
The sick whisper it.
Dumbs think of it.
The fearful cry it.
Orphans shed tears for it.
Wounded call it.
And the others forget it.
Oh, Mother! Oh, Mother!"

(Gr. Vieru, *The word mother*)

In Vieru's poetry mother's image is identified with the image of homeland and vice versa. Accordingly, the sentiment of love for mother is the key to comprehension of all the other sentiments: uneasiness of the nowadays human, peace beauty, solemnity of nature, eternity of homeland and of the native language.

As an echo to the above ideas, a fragment of the poetic creation of Grigore Vieru is offered.

“Mother,
You are my motherland!
Your head –
The mountain peak
Covered with snow.
Your eyes –
Blue seas.
Your palms –
Our ploughings.
Your breathing –
cloud
from which rains fall
over the field and town.
The ring
on your finger –
the sight
through which I aim
at the foe.
The shawl –
a flag,
beating
like the heart...

Mother, You are my motherland!"

(G. Vieru, *Mother, you are my motherland*)

After having read these verses we'll be convinced, one more time, about the verity of I. Damian's statement: „To write about mother means to honor the resources of humanity and kindness of our personality” (Damian, 1986, p.3). This is greatly illustrated in Gr. Vieru's poetic art, who succeeded in expressing the naturalness of human aspirations to spiritual perfection through sincere love for mother, faith and dedication.

Likewise, a trait worthy to be noted is that Grigore Vieru succeeded to edit a considerable number of volumes during his lifetime . A great part of them is for adults, however, the verses dedicated to children are greatly impressive as well, by their inimitable warmness and genuine simpleness:

„My dear bitty girl,
Dear bitty boy,
You're size of a crumb,
And you're size of a bud!
I've nether purple grape,
Nor watermelon holdings.
Grandad sends you some poems.
For at my hearth
Such grapes have ripened yet.
You may take wether four
And you may take eight.”

(G. Vieru, *Letter to children*)

Once, in a conversation with his readers, Grigore Vieru confessed: „My poetry starts its way from over there, from the childhood itself. The poetry for adults signifies, in my case, ploughing in hot weather into a dry soil. Poetry of children is the pure rain, which washes me from the daylong dust, brightens me up, strengthens me...”.

It is certain that so in his poetry for little ones, as in the poetry for adults Vieru is philosophic, profound, lyric. The poet possesses all the qualities which can give birth

to an artist of the written word for children: kindness, tact, intelligence, vivid fantasy, love for each gentle being.

This way, Vieru's poetic creation for children – playful and ironic, onomatopoeic, colourful and lightly confessional – ascends up to profound artistic visions via a sort of associative thinking that, even if not being on a child's behalf, however it is genuinely characteristic of a child's one in real life. Thus, the wind is excessively evil, for it is unaware of mother (the poem *Mama*) (*Mother*), in spring, the sun is warm in the field like an egg of a meadowlark (*Primăvara*) (*Spring*), in the lonely house the snail tells fairy tales to itself, but none is beautiful (*Ce zicea puilul de melc*) (*What the baby snail used to tell*), the crying eyes of the small fish are not seen in the water (*Peștișorul*) (*The small fish*) etc. The poet has in the child's person an equal interlocutor rather than a learner, whom he should give advice.

While leafing with much care and attention through the pages of Grigore Vieru's books, which are situated in places of honour on the libraries shelves, we have remarked the following fact: most of them contain personalised inscriptions. To whom? To the poet's mother Eudochia and to The Great Eminescu.

“Eminescu got to me late. It seems to me I was about 19 years old when I first saw and took into my hands His book – these are Vieru's confessions in the foreward to one of his anthologies – By discovering Him, I discovered my soul. Know yourself... It must have been that only then I perceived the wisdom of this saying... Around Him (around Eminescu – author's remark) I am like in front of my mother” (Vieru, 1984, p. 140).

In this context, one of Vieru's most famous poetic writings is *Legământ* (*Testament*), written in 1964 (at 29 years old), being published for the first time in the magazine „Nistru” in Chișinău. The poem is also known as: *poem-premonition*, *poem-testament*, *poem-visionary*. The *Testament* was consecrated to the genius Mihai Eminescu. The late publicist and linguist Vlad Pohilă mentioned in an interview: “I don't know who else succeeded in immortalizing Eminescu as Grigore Vieru did by *Legământ* (*Testament*)” (Vlad Pohilă, 2009). Comprising a deep philosophic message, it addresses all the following generations to guard over the continuation, the onward transmission and the sacred preservation of Eminescu's cultural inheritance.

The statement of the distinguished eminescologist Mihai Cimpoi is in unison with the poet's message for the nation's generations: „Eminescu is our spiritual icon, the

working bible which helps us to develop, to become ourselves, to open the horizons of our culture toward Europe, toward the World” (Mihai Cimpoi. 2002).

Our contemporaries still remember the calm, kind, parental, unique, recognisable voice of Grigore Vieru, while reciting *Legământ* on the stage of the Palace of Culture in Cahul, in the last evening of his life before the tragic accident on his way home.

Testament

To Mihai Eminescu

“I know: one day, deep in the midnight

Or may be at Sunrising moment,

My eyes will blow aut

Still leaning over His writing”.

Vieru’s spiritual-father Ioan Ciuntu recalls with pain in his heart the last moments of life of our nation’s great martyr.

In this respect, I will reproduce some facts that have been selected from one of the articles written by the chief editor of the weekly *Literatura și Arta (Literature and Art)*, Nicolae Dabija: “In those moments, when Grigore Vieru was on his deathbed, after the tragic accident, the priest Father Ioan officiated at the bedside of the poet sunk in unconsciousness the divine service Holy Unction. Although the poet didn’t show any signs of life, at some instant, a big teardrop sprang from the corner of his eye, and rolled down the cheek. The priest Father gathered it immediately into his palm. He preserved it in the palm until the tear evaporated. Vieru’s teardrop, which was left as an inheritance, turned into a book *As I knew him*” (Dabija, 2014, p. 1).

Upon consideration, we’ll present the views that have been expressed in the same article, being resumed to the following: the destiny of the author who wrote the book *Taina care mă apără (Secret that protects me)* reflects the destiny of the nation. Accordingly, struggle for the rehabilitation of our language, of the Romanian authentic values, of the ancestors’ faith is the struggle of the whole nation. Thus, Vieru’s popularity is great as in our native society, so through translations, in the whole European space.

Furthermore, there have been launched initiatives to translate Vieru’s literary writings into many languages, given the fact that in his literary creation, alongside with the representation of the Romanian specificity and mindset, together with our historical truth and present day concerns, the eternal values of humanity are

genuinely expressed. So, namely talented, good translations of the poet who out of discretion defined himself “a teardrop of Eminescu”, will contribute substantially to the establishment of prodigious literary international relations. Upon reflection, we’ll consider Vieru’s uniqueness by his motto pursuant to which he perceived poetry “as a ritual”, similarly to his ancestors who perceived ploughing as a ritual. A ritual and not glory, for, our poet states: “glory is a wound. The glory which one doesn’t feel as a wound, is like a jewel – it glows, but it doesn’t warm up”.

In the light of these considerations we’ll reflect on the opinions of the expert Răzvan Theodoreanu which can be summarised as follows: Vieru is a poet and a man of great culture who directed in a sense the destiny of the basarabian culture in times when we all were in despair. Vieru’s civic and artistic faith translated into his literary message in the name of love for our motherland and it is focused on the following concept: The language, faith in orthodox church, faith in God, our faith primarily in the Romanian language kept alive, throughout centuries, the essence of our national character.

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