

MIHAI EMINESCU BETWEEN KANT AND SCHOPENHAUER

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Abstract. The study examines the huge cultural debt of Romanian culture and philosophy before Mihai Eminescu. In the terms of Emil Cioran, besides Eminescu, everything is approximate. Eminescu is in his view an inexplicable exception for us. He wonders actually how it was possible to have someone as him into existence: What business had here the one who could have made a Buddha jealous? Constantin Noica named him “the complete man of the Romanian culture” and included him among the most significant Romanian thinkers. After Eminescu philosophy has a definite central role in Romanian culture and a specific language enriched by meditation on Greek and Roman philosophy and, especially, Schopenhauer and Kant. Both these influences are interwoven in his *avant-la-lettre* postmodern masterpiece, *The Poor Dionysus*.

Key words: Eminescu, Kant, Schopenhauer, philosophical language, *The Poor Dionysus*, postmodernism.

Mihai Eminescu whom we also name according to Constantin Noica “the complete man of the Romanian culture”¹ was among its most significant thinkers. Eminescu was among the few read even by Emil Cioran, in a superlative key, considering that he gave purpose to our nation: “Everything created in Romania until now was under the sign of the fragmentary. Besides Eminescu, everything is approximate. None of us bragged about him. For haven’t we not declared him an inexplicable exception for us? What business had here the one who could have made a Buddha jealous? Without Eminescu, we could have known that all we could have been was mediocre beings that it is not exit from ourselves and we would have adapted perfectly to our minor condition. We are extremely indebted to his genius and to the uneasiness that he poured into our soul”.² We shall start from the definition given philosophy by Mihai Eminescu, emphasizing his high esteem for all who are into the philosophical meditation according to *Mihai Eminescu – Kantian Readings* quoted also by Constantin Noica: Eminescu noticed: “Philosophy is the situation of the world into notions, for which precision thinking resides to no other authority than its own, by this eliminating any *captatio benevolentiae* be it as faint as it may be. It is not in philosophy’s manner to find the *God of Science*, nor the relationship among the exact sciences, nor the immortality of the soul, nor the principles of moral. The judgement makes *tabula rasa* of all these, they are for it matters whose nature and standing are to be researched, without any preoccupation for the outcomes which it is to encounter. For this, any preconceived idea has to be firstly rejected. For this reason, the thinker can imagine neither absolute time, nor absolute space, nor will absolute causality – for all these form a chain within his mind, unlimited at each end, outside any absolute fixation”.³ This shows that metaphysics is not made for everyday minds.

¹ C. Noica, *Omul deplin al culturii românești*, in “Revista de filosofie”, no. 1-2/2000.

² E. Cioran, *Schimbarea la față a României*, Bucharest, Humanitas, 1999, p.78.

³ C. Noica and Al. Surdu, *Mihai Eminescu – Lecturi kantiene*, Ed. Univers, 1975, p. XXXIII-XXXV. Fragment undertaken in *Cultura, creația, valoarea – motive dominante ale filosofiei românești*, coord. D. Gișe, A. Botez, Bucharest, Ed. Eminescu, 1983, p.104-106.

It is restricted to a few genius attempts that most, especially philosophy professors, are not able to understand, says Eminescu. Thus, this tendency, the most noble, but also the rarest of the human spirit enters through the way of the common charlatanism. Professed for a certain payment by

People who are not capable to understand its object, the social organisation calls it to the aid of theology, so, as a maid without authority for Church and unrelated to holiness, it attempts to dictate to exact sciences that do not need it, or to protect the Church as a sweet talker, permitted by the former, unapproved.⁴

”We consider, says Eminescu, that an honest teacher, in the scientific meaning of the word, should conduct with his students, at the most, the exegesis of the writings that are recognised as very good, from antiquity and modern times, abstaining from creating cheap theories, when he is not up to measuring the deep spirits on this grounds, for the positive matters he does not have to teach anyway.

For this job is fitter the philologist who knows well the Sanskrit language (for the hymns of the *Veda*), Greek for Greek philosophy and Latin for the philosophy of the Middle Ages and Renaissance. Within this context the theories have at least historical value and form a course of mind gymnastics that saves the students from believing easily and without meditation any general theories issued in law studies, political economy and in the hypotheses of natural sciences. Philosophy has a critical value, it increases the intellect of students, and it bars their laziness of thought and the too great trust in foreign ideas, it uses the students to think things through genetically and mull over every word before placing it within a theory”.⁵

Many interwar philosophers (Petrovici, Blaga, Vianu, Noica) referred to the determinations given by Eminescu to the birth of that Romanian philosophy to which we still aspire nowadays. Preoccupied by the philosophical expression in Romanian language, he is the one who created most of the modern philosophical language. Started with Dimitrie Cantemir and Samuel Micu, the creative approach producing such a language attains at Eminescu a point of maximum accomplishment. Luckily, German philosophical language and spirit fitted Eminescu’s mental and emotive structure. The procedure by which Eminescu brought the most profound accomplishments of Kant, Schopenhauer, Hegel into Romanian thought and philosophy was, first of all, a linguistic one. With a special interest for the domain of philosophy, about which he considered that it cannot be frequented by just anyone, he entertained the dream to appropriate Romanian language to philosophy.

The process is well captured by Ion Sânu-Georgiu⁶ in his paper *Eminescu and the German Spirit*, which we are going to present as following, to emphasise that what is presented surprises the main characteristic elements for the description of the place of Mihai Eminescu in Romanian philosophy.

”During his university studies, German language becomes so familiar to him that he uses it not only for the university exercise, but also in his daily notes and annotations and even in his correspondence with acquaintances from back home. Thus, when he writes Titu Maiorescu from Berlin he uses German language with much

⁴ *Ibidem*, p.106.

⁵ *Ibidem*.

⁶ Ion Sânu-Georgiu, *Eminescu și spiritul german*, in ”Revista de filosofie”, no.1-2/2000, restitution after ”Revista Fundațiilor regale”, no.10, 1934.

elegance and ease. Indeed, Eminescu came to know in depth Goethe's language, to the extent that we can argue that he even thought in German"⁷, wrote Sân-Georgiu. This is the only way we can explain the certainty and the ease in his writing in German and only this way one can understand why did the poet use German for his daily notes. In his manuscript note-books there are numerous annotations wrote directly in German. Eminescu even thought about gathering in a volume these German aphorisms, project that he gave up eventually, as he had given up so many others. The use of German language for his writings with a clear philosophical character, should not be surprising at all with Eminescu, who used to think in Kant's language and he could not do anything else but resort to it when he addressed in writing the philosophical ideas that preoccupied him most. Anyhow, Eminescu felt so much this lack of a philosophical vocabulary and of a scientific language that he attempted to be, single handed, the creator of such a philosophical Romanian language himself. The first contact with the difficulties of such a linguistic creation he has when he initiates his enterprise of translating the *Critique of Pure Reason* by Immanuel Kant.

Eminescu confesses that he knew "hands on, relatively late" to the two preferred German philosophers, Kant and Schopenhauer, and, in what Kant is concerned, "the unpropitious influence of the philosophy of Herbart" made him dispense himself "at Vienna of the study of Kant"⁸. Only after two months since the beginning of his philosophical studies he returns to his activity of eclectic and subjective self-trained man and studies in depth again the two great German philosophers, Kant and Schopenhauer. There is no doubt that Schopenhauer was closer to the soul and spirituality of Mihai Eminescu, by the distinctive subjective element of his thought, by his pessimism, by his connections with the Indian philosophy, by that "will to live" that is found at the basis of his ethics and especially by the literary form of the deliverance of his philosophy that vests thought in images.

For this reason, maybe the poet knew Schopenhauer even before his arrival in Vienna. Anyhow, once in Vienna, the works of this philosopher become the favourite lecture of Eminescu and his main preoccupation. He recommends his friends to read Schopenhauer, he discusses with them his ideas and, not even during his Sunday journey he parts with his works so inappropriate for a restful stroll. A few joyful poetry lines evoke a clear image for the interest Eminescu had for Schopenhauer: "*I am jumping on the train with a hunger of balaur, /Between teeth, a long, long, pipe. /Underarms had Schopenhauer*".

But Schopenhauer was not for Eminescu just a comrade for his youth; he was a lifelong partner. One may compare the influence of Schopenhauer on Eminescu with the influence that Spinoza had on Goethe. Eminescu, when opening Schopenhauer's book *The World as Will and Representation* [Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung], found himself. Schopenhauer gave only a shape and precision to a thought that existed in an embryonic state in Eminescu's mind.⁹ What should be especially underlined in this case is the assessment that Eminescu did not borrow from Schopenhauer the idea in its abstract subtext, but the idea enveloped into poetic image, as Eminescu was not the man of philosophical systems in the architecture of a systematic construction, and

⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 2.

⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 5.

⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 6.

being rather preoccupied with fundamental metaphysical ideas, clarifying the issues of his cosmos or appease his doubts and his inner turmoil.

T. Vianu¹⁰ appreciates Schopenhauer rather as a literary source for Eminescu than as an ideological one. Thus, Eminescu, encountering at Schopenhauer the comparison with the “sun that when sets down, rises elsewhere”, uses it in his poem titled *Cu mâine zilele-ți adăogi* [You Add Tomorrow to Your Days], amplifies the idea and speculates it with an art obviously absent at the German philosopher, for whom that image was simply intended to render in a more plastic manner the idea. If, for instance, Eminescu adopts the fundamental idea of Schopenhauer that everything is present and that the past and the future belong only to our imagination, or if he undertakes repeatedly a Schopenhauerian theme is that “the world is a moment suspended between past and future” and if he, finally, sees, in a similar manner with the German philosopher, the essence of life captured in the feeling of pain, this only shows us that the poet took the thought of the German philosopher deeper, while maintaining what he considered related to his own thought and sensitivity.

Considering this way that Schopenhauer as a congenial thinker and a literary source, Eminescu used certain ideas and reshaped with the independence characteristic for his literary talent certain literary motives encountered at the German philosopher. The influence of Schopenhauer on Eminescu can be structured in two distinct phases, as notices Ion Sân-Georgiu¹¹, too. In the first phase, of the first introduction and in-depth investigation of the work of the German philosopher, during the years of his philosophical studies at Vienna and Berlin, the influence of Schopenhauer is so powerful that it gains the form of a veritable ideological obsession. There is though an extremely peculiar letter of Mihai Eminescu – probably dating 1874 – to a nationalist German magazine, where his admiration for Schopenhauer is so exclusive that he considers a blasphemy to situate him next to the “Aulic counsellor Hegel, Fichte, and Hartmann *e tutti quanti*”. The Schopenhauerian pessimism that the poet was to deny later on, with its gloomy charm encompassed the thoughts of Eminescu making his colleagues of study to consider him an incorrigible pessimist. All his work in prose, his fragments of novel, short stories and tales are pierced with Schopenhauerian ideas and images. In his prose the influence of the German philosopher is not quite visible, but sustains the very line of Eminescu’s thought. Thus, *Sărmanul Dionis* [*The Poor Dionysus*] is loaded with Schopenhauerian ideas, motives and images and if some researchers have seen in this short story the Kantian influence, this is due to the fact that at Kant and Schopenhauer in what the theory of knowledge is concerned there is a strong relation of similitude, Schopenhauer completing the Kantian conception that we can know but the exterior form of things, not the things themselves by the affirmation that we know things by analogy with ourselves. Only this way we can explain the strange dissonance between the interpretations of Ion Scurtu and Ion A. R. Pogoneanu, in the same quote from *The Poor Dionysus*, the former seeing exclusively the influence of Schopenhauer, while the latter, only the Kantian influence. Truth of the matter is that from the philosophical considerations included in the introductory part of the short story and until the part presenting the metempsychosis of the main character, *Dionysus*;

¹⁰ Tudor Vianu, *Poezia lui Eminescu*, Bucharest, without year, as cited by Ion Sân-Georgiu, *op. cit.*, p.6.

¹¹ Ion Sân-Georgiu, *op. cit.*, p. 7.

this entire intricate story is a strong echo of the Schopenhauerian philosophical categories. The transmutation of the souls, death considered as a continuity of life, the relativity of time, the world conceived as a dream of our soul and Indic Nirvana are motives and ideas that inter-relate with one another and mix together in *The Poor Dionysus*¹².

But Schopenhauer did not have only a direct influence on Eminescu, but also an indirect one, of orientation and guidance in universal thought. Not only did he open for him the mysteries of the Indian thought, but also he guided his steps toward the Greek and Roman Stoic philosophy, where, as shown by Tudor Vianu¹³ in his study, Eminescu could have found so many elements of thought that were similar with these in the thought of the German philosopher. "If the philosophical lectures of the professors from Vienna, and especially Herbart's philosophy, had limited the enthusiasm of Eminescu's thought, Schopenhauer widely opened for him the gates of philosophical speculation and universal thought, and in this respect Schopenhauer was for Eminescu a great and priceless stimulant". Also, Eminescu succeeded to deepen to a certain extent his philosophy so that he dared decline to Maiorescu the offer to give a series of lectures on Kant and even to discuss Kant with a boldness that prove once again his independence of thought. The Kantian theory of knowledge was deepened, interpreted and, on occasion, even censored by the poet. Thus, in the study entitled *Feeling and Philosophy*, Eminescu studies Kantian apriorism and confessed the strong impression that it makes on someone who has studied in depth Kant and his idealism. Eminescu recognises here that the total detachment from this world and its momentaneous will "makes the reason to be nothing else but a window, through which comes in the sun of a new light." He glorifies this power of the soul to stare eternity in the face, beyond the dams of time. There is no doubt that the poet had always an admiring attitude for the idealist philosophy of Kant whose work he refers to with convinced exaggeration as "the Bible of philosophers"¹⁴.

But if he recognises with no reticence the apriorism of time, as understood by Kant, he discusses the apriorism of space, for, after him, there are phenomena that do not need with necessity a shape in space, such as for instance, the phenomena associated with touching and the psychological states in general¹⁵. Also, in what concerns the principle of causality, Eminescu thinks differently from Kant, differentiating an empirical causality and the *a priori* one.

In his few notes and fragments, Eminescu presents himself with all his independence of thought when he interprets Kant. His admiration for Kant is integer though and his repeated tentative to define and explain Kantian apriorism is proof not only for his philosophical passion, but also for his maturity of thought. The relativity of our knowledge as established by the idealist criticism of Kant left obvious and determining reminiscence in the thought and literary work of the poet. At Eminescu, the Kantian idea that we cannot know the world in itself becomes a true obsession, completed as we have seen, by certain Schopenhauerian ideas that deepen and mostly

¹² *Ibidem*, p. 8.

¹³ Tudor Vianu, *op. cit.*

¹⁴ Ion Sân-Georgiu, *op. cit.*, p. 8.

¹⁵ Constantin Noica, *Eminescu – Omul deplin al Culturii românești*, in *Cultura, creația, valoarea – dominante ale filosofiei românești*, *op. cit.*, p. 103-104.

improve in a poetic manner this conception. In *Philosophical Dialogues*, in some articles, fragments and singular thoughts, but especially in *The Poor Dionysus* and in his sketch for a short story, *Archaeus*, the influence of relativism and Kantian apriorism is profound. Especially in what concerns the short story *Archaeus*, the Kantian influence reaches its peak, the thought of the poet only paraphrasing certain Kantian ideas, the same that the reader is going to find later on, transformed and mixed, in his great philosophical poems. Noica also found important to comment on *Archaeus*.

As for *The Poor Dionysus*, the Kantian world of ideas presents itself revised, and anyhow, overwhelmed by Schopenhauerian formulae and images. We encounter in this fantastic story, obviously, traces of the Kantian relativism and apriorism. Kant, though, did no longer dominate the poet's thinking. Eminescu creates from the crumbles of Kantian and Schopenhauerian philosophies, to which he adds numerous Plato's, Spinoza's, Fichte's philosophical elements, mysticism and mythology and an original philosophy, where the fantastic and the poetic elements take the floor.¹⁶ Similarly with the case of Schopenhauer the Kantian influence is direct and powerful only during the years of his philosophical studies, in his unfinished prose short stories and in all the philosophical fragments scattered throughout the yellow pages of his manuscripts.

Later on, his direct and continuous contact with Kant ceases. Eminescu remained, of course, an adept of Kantian idealism, but he did not suffer from the obsession of a thought that he as a poet could accept just in its general traits, and not in the cold and abstract details of its philosophical text. His independence of thought impeded on his receiving without restraint a foreign thought.

As a creator of literary and philosophical language, connoisseur of the work of the great German philosophers – Kant, Hegel, Schopenhauer – translator of their works, Mihai Eminescu is the one who founded Romanian modern metaphysical thought and illustrated its paradigmatic dimensions in the meeting of reason with feeling, of the phantasm with reality, of history with the actual events, and of the text with the interpretation. Competent interpreter of Kantian work, Eminescu is, in our opinion, also the first Romanian creator of postmodern *écriture* in *The Poor Dionysus*, where history, tradition and the narrative story are interwoven with dreaming, imagination and phantasm returns in space and time.

We appreciate in the study of Sanielevici on *The Poor Dionysus*¹⁷ the characterisation of Eminescu's romantic thought in comparison with Lenau, Leopardi, Novalis, Musset, Lermontov and of the romantic illustration in Eminescu's prose: "Whoever walked incessantly during his youth the path of dreaming, while he did not clearly see his own path; who, poor and sensitive lived for years in the clear and ascending atmosphere of the books, far from the madding world and tormented by the aspirations of the whole humanity; who estranged himself so much from "the dream of the eternal death" that saw life as an imperfect reflection of the ideal world...; who – as Dionysus – vibrated once deep at the blow of piano notes coming in a summer evening through out the window of a clean and withdrawn house then to get lost with the

¹⁶ G. Călinescu, *Opera lui Mihai Eminescu*, Bucharest, 1934, vol.I, p.20 and the following (cited in Ion Sân-Georgiu, *op. cit.*).

¹⁷ H. Sanielevici, *Sărmanul Dionis*, în *Cercetări critice și filosofice*, Bucharest, Ed. Cultura națională, 1925, p.1-54.

perfume of the flowers in the transparent sky... and who stroke by ardent moon light, “the mistress of the sea and loneliness”, in his lonely room or by the end of some alley, felt his chest amplified by great plans and great desires, – he will be the one to find in *The Poor Dionysus* his own youth with all its illusions, with its sweet sadness, with the mirage of eternal love and ferric life...”¹⁸

When I have read for the first time, aged fifteen, the fantastic short story of Eminescu, wrote Sanielevici, I had the strange impression – as any reader might have had sometime – that I collaborated at its writing... I have re-read it numerous times afterwards, over big periods of time, and about three month I worked on its translation into German language; and even today, the dreamy and mysterious atmosphere, soft irony and deep, but quiet lyric, envelops me from the very first pages with the same power as before...As if brought back to life by a magic wand, dreams and feelings from before surround me with their unparalleled charm...I relive times set down forever and I better understand the poetry of desire...Romanticism shall remain, I believe always a literature of youth...¹⁹

Researching Eminescu’s place in Romanian culture Sanielevici arrived at the conclusion that “a connoisseur of the foreign literatures could have predicted of course the apparition of the Romantic school in our literature after 1848, and he might have predicted the figure, so characteristic, and to a certain extent predetermined of Eminescu, for what is *Musset* for France, *Novalis* for Germany, *Lenau* for Austria, *Byron* for England, *Leopardi* for Italy, *Lermontov* for Russia – is Eminescu for the Romanian people...that is, the most characteristic representative of Romantic literature”.²⁰

“All these writers were aristocrats by birth and inspired by aristocracy.” Alfred de Musset, Niembsch von Strehlenau, Lord Byron, count Hardenberg-Novalis, e son of the count Leopardi, aristocrat Lermontov and the son of Eminovici, collector of duties on spirits.²¹

Then, the starting point of Romanticism being the discontent with reality and the refuge in phantasm this school had to select more or less Mediterranean types, whose *irritability* was enhanced sometimes by the hereditary degeneration. The Mediterranean type distinguishes himself, as we have shown elsewhere, by his abstract manner of thought, by melancholic personality and drive for the fantastic element, by pessimism and by the “aesthetic concentration of the reality”; finally, by huge impressionability and violent passions. But these are, point by point, the features of the typical representatives for the European Romanticism; this is why we have resumed the psychological characterisation through the formula: the German is epic and classical and the Mediterranean is lyric and Romantic. In fact, all the writers mentioned above were nervous and cerebral natures, and some, as Lenau, Leopardi, Novalis, and Eminescu were thinkers and scientists. All have suffered from incurable melancholy and were tormented by irrepressible passions. They all had a sad life and a premature death. Musset died at 47, ruined by alcoholism and sexual excess; Novalis at 29, of consumption and degeneration; Lenau was diagnosed with madness at 42 and died at

¹⁸ *Ibidem*, p.1-2.

¹⁹ *Ibidem*.

²⁰ *Ibidem*, p.3.

²¹ *Ibidem*, p.5.

48; Byron died at 36 of fevers and especially alcoholism, in Greece, where he was driven by his titanic impulsiveness; the crooked and degenerate Leopardi died at 39; Lermontov died in a duel at 38; Eminescu died of madness at 39²².

Analysing Eminescu's short story *Sanielevici* underlines how Eminescu describes Dionysus: "He was an orphan, living an existence deprived of hope and besides that, he was *determined by birth to orient toward neopositivism...* and this freedom of choice among the elements of culture made him read only what suited his dreamy predisposition of his soul. Mystical things, metaphysical subtleties attracted his thought as a magnet – is though a wonder that for him the dream was alive and life was a dream"[...]" He looked again toward the web of red lines – and the lines started to move. He put his finger to the middle – a soulful pleasure embraced him as if by an invisible hand he was pulled back into the past".²³ Dionysus awakes and the action of the short story continues as if real, the maestro alchemist Ruben and monk Dan appear (transmuted in Dionysus) who is "dreaming that he dreams he dreamt" and he constructs the desired space. Maestro Ruben was an old man of antique beauty. A tall forehead, almost bald, curled by thoughts, gray eyes, turned inside the wise head and the long beard, that flowed from under the deep cheek bones to the chest always a bit folded, giving him the appearance of a Wiseman from antiquity. His appearance was quiet – but not gentle. Only around his muscle mouth one could perceive sweetness, bitter by doubts. He is a learned Jew, who flight from Spain to Poland, where he could not be a public teacher because he remained in his own law, and he was called by the prince of Moldova as mathematics and philosophy teacher at Socola Academy. Monk Dan is one of the students at the Academy, especially of maestro Ruben...Ruben is Faust and Mephistopheles rolled in one..."²⁴

He expresses the idea of returning in time when he says to Dan: "It is understood that then we have to separate forever; for in desired spaces the day will be a century. Upon your return you will find a man similar to myself, who might not know you, though, or might be lost in the mysteries of his teachings... But mind it that browsing through the book at each seventh page there is a divine clarity in each row. This is a mystery I do not get myself." And it is said that for a man sure about the being of God nothing related to the hidden thought in this strange counting can come to mind. You may ask your own shadow... and it does not know anything of it. It is said that to the Devil, before the falling, this strange idea came to mind and then he fell. If you thought of it, you should know, everything around you vanishes, time and space run from your soul and then you are left as a dried out branch from which the time ran [...].²⁵

"But why man does not ever taste happiness!" – wonders Eminescu... It is the problem of Faust: always man should be tormented by the contrast between the immortality of soul and the weak powers of the body. "If we say to the moment '*stay*' then I am yours – says Faust to Mephistopheles, sure I am never going to find, in anything the perfect content state".²⁶

²² *Ibidem*, p.5.

²³ *Ibidem*, p.22.

²⁴ *Ibidem*, p.25.

²⁵ *Ibidem*, p.26.

²⁶ *Ibidem*, p.31.

A Hoffmanian double appears, between eternal existence, all-knowing, Faustus-like and the mortal being, rank-and-file, unsuspecting and the interconnection of the products of fantasy and real world.²⁷ Sanielevici quotes from *The Poor Dionysus*.

“Only one closed door Dan and Maria could never pass. Above it, in a triangle, there was an eye of fire, above the eye a saying, written with the crooked letters of the dark Arabia. It is the Dogma of God. The saying is an enigma for the angels themselves.

– I wish I saw the face of God, he said, to an angel passing by.

– If you do not have it in you, He does not exist for you and you are looking for him in vain, said the angel seriously.

At once, he felt his head full of songs. It was as a bee’s hive, the music parts swarmed clear, sweet, and filtered, in his mind drunken with bliss, the stars seemed to move after music, the angels smiled passing by him, humming the songs in his head.

“That’s the question”, said Dan slowly. “The enigma entering myself. Aren’t they singing what I think? Aren’t they moving as I want?” He hugged with dark pain Maria, close to his heart. The pearls of the earth burns in her strain of beans... “*What if without knowing I am myself Go...*”

Bang! The sound of a huge bell – the death of the sea – the fall of the sky – the skies breaking, their blue enamel split and Dan felt stroked and stuffed in boundlessness. Rivers of light bolts followed him, peoples of old thunders, the noise of boundlessness trembling moved... O, unfortunate thought! he rambled. Spasmodically, he held Zoroaster’s book and instinctively he broke the pearl of the earth from Maria’s necklace. She fell from his arms as a foggy willow that stretched branches toward him and cried while falling (as Eurydice).” Dan, what did you do to me?” And another voice was heard: “You, unhappy being, what you dare think? It is your luck that you did not complete the word!”

...He descended with a book in his arms; the thick clouds came down to earth, he already saw the glimmering heights of a town, scattered lights, a summer night with blond air, perfumed gardens, and ... he opened the eyes.²⁸

Also significant for the interpretation that we are giving here to the creation of Eminescu as postmodern is the discussion of the short story at the literary meeting of “Junimea” where it was criticised as too philosophical, for its fantastic and devilish style, based on an idea that is difficult to grasp (Eminescu’s expression) that the historical truths are not respected, and that it accepts metempsychosis and the placement within an aberrant space and time.

Gheorghe Panu, in *Memories from “Junimea” at Jassy*, speaks about *The Poor Dionysus*, the famous short story of Mihai Eminescu that it surpassed as philosophical lucubration over passing everything that was produced at “Junimea” until then. And he considered that if it were not for the language, that beautiful language of Eminescu – though, pretentious and emphatic in *The Poor Dionysus* – the short story would have been considered an extravagance of an ascetic man, tortured by hunger, thirst and abstinence and weakened by daily flagellation”.[...]”²⁹

²⁷ *Ibidem*, p.40.

²⁸ *Ibidem*, p.32-33.

²⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 43.

Here is the description of the meeting of presentation made by Gh. Panu, and reproduced by Sanielevici: “One evening I go to ‘*Junimea*’ and Mr. Pogor tells us: ‘This evening we have lecture, Eminescu reads a short story, Maiorescu who read it says it is a masterpiece’. Eminescu, who sat back in an armchair, seemed bored and indifferent to everything happening around him. Mr. Maiorescu arrives and the reading begins.... After the first pages of philosophy: We look at each other, the eight became thirty, not knowing what is this and where was it going. Only later Eminescu provides the explanation of this metaphysics, reading that his hero, Dionysus, was an orphan, imbued with metaphysical astrological theories, living in a ruined house and having from his parents as sole inheritance the portrait of a figure, semi-man and semi-woman, but more man than woman, since it was the portrait of his father, who died very young.

We all took a breath. Here we are, we said, back to the ground; from now on the short story is going to be a true short story, we expect a story, we already know the hero... That is, a short story to be a short story needs an intrigue and to unfold on earth...”³⁰

“I do not recall well the critique made by Maiorescu to the short story, but I know he made one. As for the others, they all admitted that using the theory of metempsychosis the short story was an unforgivable extravagance”.³¹

But it is unfortunate that Mr. Panu does not remember exactly the opinion of Maiorescu, says Sanielevici, and he considers wrong that Panu applies to the short story *The Poor Dionysus*, *realistic criteria*; he speaks of “characters”, “living life”, “entering in detail”, etc. He could have also asked how does the one deserted by mankind, Dionysus, his letter to Maria, wherefrom appears a medical doctor precisely when Dionysus faints, and especially, which legalised data confirm the inheritance rights of Dionysus...

Eminescu, though, answered before to all these questions, indiscrete from the perspective of the Romantic world, saying to the reader: “the proof granting inheritor rights to the *juridical person*³² answering to the name of Dionysus *are not of interest for us*”; and in the philosophical ending of the story, supported by the words of Théophile Gautier, Eminescu protests against the belief of the reader that the adventures of Dionysus would have been but a dream, composed of the real elements of his life. The end is written in a characteristic style, ironic toward the reader, characteristic for contemporary postmodern writers.

Translation by Henrieta Anișoara Șerban

³⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 45.

³¹ *Ibidem*, p. 51.

³² Maybe Eminescu added at the last editorial revision this irony, especially as an answer to the objections raised by Panu during the lecture...