

## THE PROFILE OF VASILE VOICULESCU

**Abstract.** Vasile Voiculescu, surnamed “doctor-priest without pieces of silver”, was born at 27 of November 1884, at Pârscov, Buzău County, Romania, and he remained for posterity as a Romanian medical doctor, poet, prose man and playwright. He was titular member of the Academy of Sciences in Romania starting 21 of December 1935 and Vice-President of Section VIII, titled “The History and Philosophy of Science; organization, education, popularization.” He was elected member of the Romanian Academy, postmortem, in 1993. Vasile Voiculescu remains a great personality and a lively presence among us through his immortal work. Posterity attempts to honor him, bashfully. Thus, posthumously, *Ultimele sonete închipuite ale lui Shakespeare în traducere imaginată de Voiculescu* (1964), two volumes of short stories - *Povestiri* (1966) and the novel *Zahei orbul* (1970) are published. In 1991 the Society of the Romanian Medical Doctors Writers and Publicists launched a commemorative medal and unveiled several memorial plates: in the central lobby of U.M.F. “Carol Davila” (Bucharest), at V. Voiculescu dispensary (Bucharest), at the Memorial House at Pârscov (Buzău).

**Keywords:** Vasile Voiculescu, medical doctor, poet, playwright, the Academy of Sciences of Romania.

Vasile Voiculescu, surnamed “doctor-priest without pieces of silver”, was born at 27 of November 1884, at Pârscov, Buzău County, Romania, and he remained for posterity as a Romanian medical doctor, poet, prose man and playwright. He was titular member of the Academy of Sciences in Romania starting 21 of December 1935 and Vice-President of Section VIII, titled “The History and Philosophy of Science; organization, education, popularization.” He was elected member of the Romanian Academy, postmortem, in 1993.

Vasile Voiculescu was son of Costache Voiculescu, wealthy manager and of Sultana (born Hagi). He followed the classes at „Alexandru Hâjdeu” High School and then “Gheorghe Lazăr” High School in Bucharest. The intellectual interests of the young personality include materialism, positivism and evolutionism, as well as psychopathology and psychophysics. Among the authors that triggered his early interest we mention: Littré Claude Bernard, Auguste Comte, Darwin, Spencer, Wundt, Höfding, Pierre Janet și W. James. He graduated from the Faculty of Letters and Philosophy in Bucharest (1902 - 1903), and then the Faculty of Medicine in 1903, with a PhD in Medicine in 1910.

Maria Mittescu, student at Medicine, met in his natal village, Pârscov, becomes his wife and muse, many of his love poems being dedicated to her. In

1912 has a début in *Convorbiri literare*. For a while he was country medical doctor in several villages: Ocolul (Gorj County), Bezdead and Tătărani (Dâmbovița County), Buftea and Budești (Ilfov County).

We find out from his biographies that Voiculescu, feeling afar from family and from the cultural environment, sends at October 20, 1910, a poetical petition addressed to the general director of the Sanitary Service which required the transfer to a circumscription closer to Bucharest. "[...] Oh, to which bitter faith, to which curse and hate / Do I owe my exile, oh God, in Petreștii-Vărsături, a crate!... / [...] ... I curse the deaf and cruel fate / I defy the whole world, I swear to abdicate... / I suffocate, under nostalgia's weight, I fade, I vegetate! ... / Life wants me, music, light, library windows / with books that light up as flowers in the, blue, red, golden glittering the windows..." The request brought his transfer indeed, after a few days, in a circumscription within his natal county, at Câmpu (Buzău).

In 1913 he took part in the military campaign in Bulgaria where he gained „Avântul țării” medal, and a veteran brevet awarded only to a few outstanding individuals who took effectively part in the campaign.

He continued to practice medicine since May 1914 at Tătărani, and since May 1915, at Buftea (Ilfov), where we met the royal family, through Princess Nadejda Știrbei, close to Queen Mary of Romania. The former developed a sincere friendship with Vasile Voiculescu, sustained by their substantial correspondence. As the doctor of Știrbei family, he was recommended also to the queen, Her Royal Majesty requiring a consult for Prince Mircea (but this consult unfortunately did not produce the desired result). Nevertheless, Queen Mary sent doctor Voiculescu pocket watch with the inscriptions of the Royal House and a few words of gratitude.

At Bârlad, where he activated as a military doctor, he met Alexandru Vlahuță, during the cultural nights that the latter organized, in the midst of the First World War. V. Voiculescu said: „There was no though unsaid, no verse unread, no deed unknown to him.”

Vasile Voiculescu's first published volume is titled *Poezii* [*Poems*] and it was issued in 1916. During the same year, following a recommendation from Macedonski, Voiculescu collaborated with *Flacăra* journal when editor in chief was C. Banu. The poetic dawn of Vasile Voiculescu stays under the influences of writers such as Vasile Alecsandri, Alexandru Vlahuță and George Coșbuc.

In 1917 the Ministry of War grants him a brevet through which “His Majesty the King deigned the ‘Romania's Crown’ with spades in degree of Officer to Voiculescu Vasile, MD, for his exceptional role and devotion in caring for the sick people in his hospital, in 1917.”

---

The following year he was rewarded for the poetry volume entitled *Din țara zimbrului și alte poezii* with the Prize of the Romanian Academy, and he also became a medic of Bucharest circumscription.

Since 1919 edits at Bârlad (with G. Tutoveanu, T. Pamfile and M. Lungeanu), the journal *Florile dalbe*. Until 1928 he publishes articles of sanitary education in *Flamura*, then in several other journals such as *Vatra*, *Albina*, *Farul căminului*, etc. *Albina* journal establishes a practice in 1925, led by doctor Voiculescu, with a subscription to the journal as sole honorary fee.

Vasile Voiculescu was nominated as the medic of the Administration of the Crown Domains in 1920. The following year, publishes his third book of poems *Pârگا* (at Cartea Românească Press) and is nominated sub-director of the Cultural Foundation, promoting to director the next year. This is the year when he activates as medic and Hygiene Professor at “Pompilian” Institute in Bucharest, as well as promoting to “definitive medic of Urban Practice.”

The volume *Poeme cu ingeri* (1927), which was awarded the Prize of the Society of Romanian Writers, was published in „Cugetul românesc” edited by Tudor Arghezi and Ion Pillat. In 1928 Voiculescu edits with T. Păunescu-Ulmu and N. I. Herescu *Pleiada* journal, in Craiova. In the same year he establishes with publicist Gh. D. Mugur a collection for the popularization of science called “„Cartea vieții”, including a broad range of subjects, from economy, to history, art, ethnography, hygiene and social medicine. Series of popularization booklets appear, published in large numbers of copies, some in several editions: „The new disease – Acute poliomyelitis or child paralysis” (in collaboration with G.D. Ionășescu, Bucharest, 1927), “Syphilis” – a guide for the sick and healthy (Bucharest, 1930), “Tuberculosis” (consumption) (Bucharest, 1930), “The Social-Medical Knowledge of the Environment. The Hygienic Education of the Villager and Worker” (*Cultura Sănătății*, Bucharest, 1933), “The Guide for Home Pharmacy, with Medicines for the First Aid for Cultural Houses Leaders and Village Hygiene” – in collaboration with Manoliu MD (*Editura Fundațiilor Regale*), “All Medicines at Hand” (*Editura Fundațiilor Regale*, 1935), and “Defend Yourselves from Diseases.”

Voiculescu collaborated with various literary journals such as “Viața literară”, “Însemnări literare”, “Dacia”, “Kalende”, “Gândirea”, “Luceafărul”, “Revista Fundațiilor Regale”, “Viața Românească”. Since 1930 he was redactor for the radio weekly show „Ora satului”. During 1927-1936, he published articles of sanitary education in „România administrativă”.

His play, titled “Fata Ursului,” was played for the first time in 1933 at the National Theatre. This was the year when he became literary referent at Radio, and then director of the literary program (until 1945). In 1934, he published in “Azi” journal the play in one act „La pragul minunii”.

Other volumes of poetry: *Destin*, 1933; *Urcuș*, 1937; *Întrezăriri*, 1939; *Poezii*, 1944). În 1943 publică teatru: *Demiurgul*, 1943 și *Duhul pământului*, 1943. V. Voiculescu's poetry, traditional in a first phase, gains afterwards strong religious aspects, and next evolutes towards complex embroidery of feelings. His prose, considered more interesting, maintains the lyrical disposition, an often represents a spiritual exercise that combines the anecdotic, the myth and the fiction.

Vasile Voiculescu was awarded the Prize for Literature of the Royal Foundation Press in 1939 and the National Prize for Poetry in 1941.

February 1940 became Director of Health Centre no. 4, a position from which he resigned, December 4, 1943, and at December 11, 1943 he retired.

As following he started participate into the literary meetings of the group "Rugul aprins" [The Burning Pyre], from Antim monastery (which abbot was archimandrite Vasile Vasilachi). These meetings gathered either in the salon or in the library numerous writers, people of culture and votarists, among which : Ion Marin Sadoveanu, Anton Dimitriu, Alexandru Mironescu, Paul Sterian, Mircea Vulcănescu, Sandu Tudor, Dumitru Stăniloae, archimandrite Haralambie Vasilachi and the priests Felix Dubneac, Andrei Scrima, Sofian Boghiu etc. The meetings had as a purpose establishing a journal of Romanian spirituality and publishing a column of Christian faith in this journal, as well as planning humanitarian actions and actions for the support of the arts, by awards. In 1948 this group is forbidden – it was considered "a subversive organization, holding clandestine meetings, which attracted a series of reactionary elements among students and instigated at counterrevolutionary actions against the state order in the Popular Republic of Romania (PRR)" – the monks are exiled to other monasteries, while the participants are judged and convicted.

The biographers show that the military prosecutor stated that "the facts of all the defendants meet in law the constitutive elements of the offence of crime, of plot against the social order, as the organization had a fascist character and has as purpose the changing of the existing social order in the state."

Voiculescu's profound democratic convictions brought him difficulties after 1948. In 1948 Vasile Voiculescu elaborated "Prefrontal Lobocoagulation" – an edifying works especially for the new system that was in course of setting itself up –, where he approaches the most brutal modality of brainwash, through an operation of the nervous centers of anxiety and of instigation to freedom (created by the "Perfect Permanent Presidium of Peace Peoples"), with the purpose of annihilating individual consciousness and obtaining an obedient citizen.

During 1954-1958 Voiculescu elaborated *Ultimele sonete închipuite ale lui Shakespeare ...*, a moment of apogee, an elaborated and refined jewellery of his artistic language. As the critic Ovid S. Crohmălniceanu showed the 90<sup>th</sup> sonnets represent a monograph dedicated "to the paradise and inferno of love."

---

At 5<sup>th</sup> of August 1958, Vasile Voiculescu was charged with “conspiracy against social order and crime of intense activity against the working class and the revolutionary movement.” He was forced through the means specific for the inquiries of the period, to admit to “the pursuit of activities hostile to the regime of PRR,” to admit to the “guilt” of writing “numerous poems with mystical themes and hostile religious character,” and of taking part in discussions manifesting hostile discontent that in PRR there is no freedom.”

The biographer Gheorghe Postelnicu shows that, during the fall of 1957, in Voiculescu’s house from Dr. Staicovici street, C. Pillat presented in a French magazine a review of a book of Eliade, *The Forbidden Forest*, that later on was read by Voiculescu, too, without considering it valuable in its entirety, in another meeting as well in Voiculescu’s house, C. Noica read the letter received from Cioran, from which it was clear that he expected philosophical studies to publish in the West. The letter circulated in the intellectual environment in Bucharest, typewritten. Although it was not political, being more a sign of life from someone afar from his friends, it was considered dangerous. “These hostile discussions” addressed to PRR started mostly from the discontent of the writers with the lack of freedom to publish uncensored thoughts as they waited for a liberalization of the literary life. The defendant admitted that “realist-socialist literature in PRR was lacking value, as writers do not write from conviction and the regime limits the development of the true literature and the writers do not have the possibility to write about what they think.” No one agreed to appear in the communist press. People preferred to write for themselves and for better times.

During 1958 – 1962, aged 74, he served his sentence in a communist prison suffering the interdiction to publish. His biographers and historians show that between 5 and 16 August 1958, Voiculescu appeared in the file P / 202 (vol. 2) in relation to his medical certificate issued by the M.A.I. prison doctor with his diagnostic, “kyphoscoliosis, traumatic dorsal,” confirming the status of a broken spine, due to brutal striking. In 1959 the appeal was rejected and Voiculescu was sentenced 5 years (for the period: 05/08/1958 - 08/03/1963) to forced labour for “crime of conspiracy.” Aiud prison medical records, showed that the detainee Vasile Voiculescu had “third degree dystrophy in a very low muscle tissue” and developed, “chronic colitis,” sinus tachycardia,” as well as “infectious / contagious diseases: typhoid, typhus, recurrent fever, epidemic hepatitis, tuberculosis left lung, cardiovascular syndrome, chronic colitis of fermentation, chronic cystitis, chronic appendicitis. The present state: weight 57 kg, unfit for work.”

On May 2, 1962, Vasile Voiculescu is pardoned (Decree 291/1962). On the night of 25 to April 26, 1963 Vasile Voiculescu dies in Bucharest (at his domicile address, 34 Dr. Staicovici Street).

Gheorghe Postelnicu showed in *Vasile Voiculescu – Alte contribuții biografice* [*Vasile Voiculescu – Other biographical contributions*] that in 1966, three years after the writer's death, Romanian Literature Museum received result of an address of the Minister of Internal Affairs, “a series of materials” belonging to the poet: cuttings from newspapers, books postcards, letters with envelopes, several medical tests bulletins and tickets of hospital leave, and also a typed conference “The Stalinist Constitution” by D. Stăniloai presented in the dissertations of the group “Rugul aprins.” The Attorney document from October 24, 1958 entitles Ion Voiculescu, the son of the poet, “to receive organs of the Minister of Internal Affairs and keep all things that were inventoried at home and those raised during the searches.” (Gheorghe Postelnicu, 2012)

Vasile Voiculescu remains a great personality and a living presence among us through his immortal work. Posterity timidly attempts to honour him. Thus, posthumously were issued *Ultimele sonete închipuite ale lui Shakespeare în traducere imaginată de Voiculescu* (1964), two volumes of *Povestiri* (1966) and the yet unpublished novel *Zahei orbul* (1970). In 1991 the Medical Society of Romanian Writers and Publicists launched a commemorative medal and several memorial plaques were unveiled: at the central hall of the University of Medicine and Pharmacy “Carol Davila” (Bucharest), at the dispensary V. Voiculescu (Bucharest), and at the Memorial House of Pârscov (Buzău).

## THE WORK

- **Poetry**

*Poezii*, Bucharest (1916)

*Din țara zimbrului*, Bârlad (1918)

*Pârğa*, Editura Cartea românească, Bucharest (1921)

*Poeme cu îngeri*, Editura Cartea Vremii, Bucharest (1927)

*Destin*, Editura Cartea românească, Bucharest (1933)

*Urcuș* (poeme), Fundația pentru literatură și artă, Bucharest (1937)

*Întrezăriri* (poeme), Fundația pentru literatură și artă, Bucharest (1939)

*Ultimele sonete închipuite ale lui Shakespeare în traducere imaginată de Vasile Voiculescu* (1964)

- **Prose**

*Capul de zimbru*, nuvele postume, 1966

*Ultimul berevoi*, nuvele postume, 1966

*Zahei orbul*, roman elaborat între 1947- 1958 dar publicat postum, 1966

---

- **Dramaturgy**

*Duhul pământului*, volum ce include piesele „Umbra” și „Fata ursului”

*Demiurgul*, 1943

*Gimnastică sentimentală*, 1972

*Pribeaga*

#### REFERENCES

Gheorghe Postelnicu, *Vasile Voiculescu – alte contribuții biografice*, „România literară”, no.43, 2012

Gheorghe Postelnicu, *Viața și opera lui Vasile Voiculescu*, Bucharest, Europress, 2012. “Scriitori români”, “13 Decembrie 1918” Press, 22.12.1978.

<http://scriitoriclasici.blogspot.ro/2012/06/biografie-vasile-voiculescu.html>

<http://foaienationala.ro/biografii-vasile-voiculescu.html>

<http://www.ro.biography.name/scriitori/8-romania/154-vasile-voiculescu-1884-1963>

[http://www.romlit.ro/vasile\\_voiculescu\\_\\_alte\\_contribuții\\_biografice](http://www.romlit.ro/vasile_voiculescu__alte_contribuții_biografice)





## **PHILOSOPHICAL NOTES**

