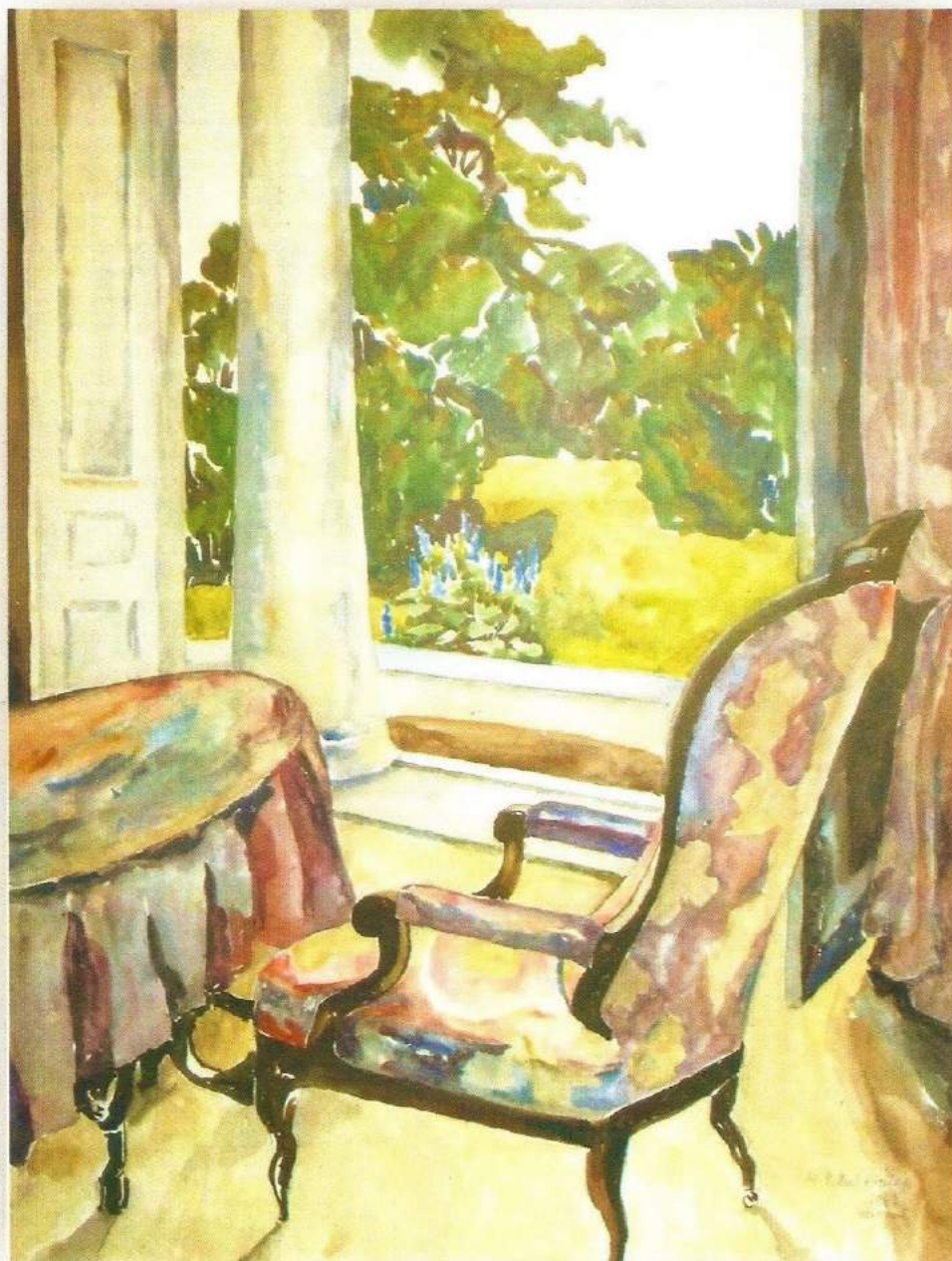


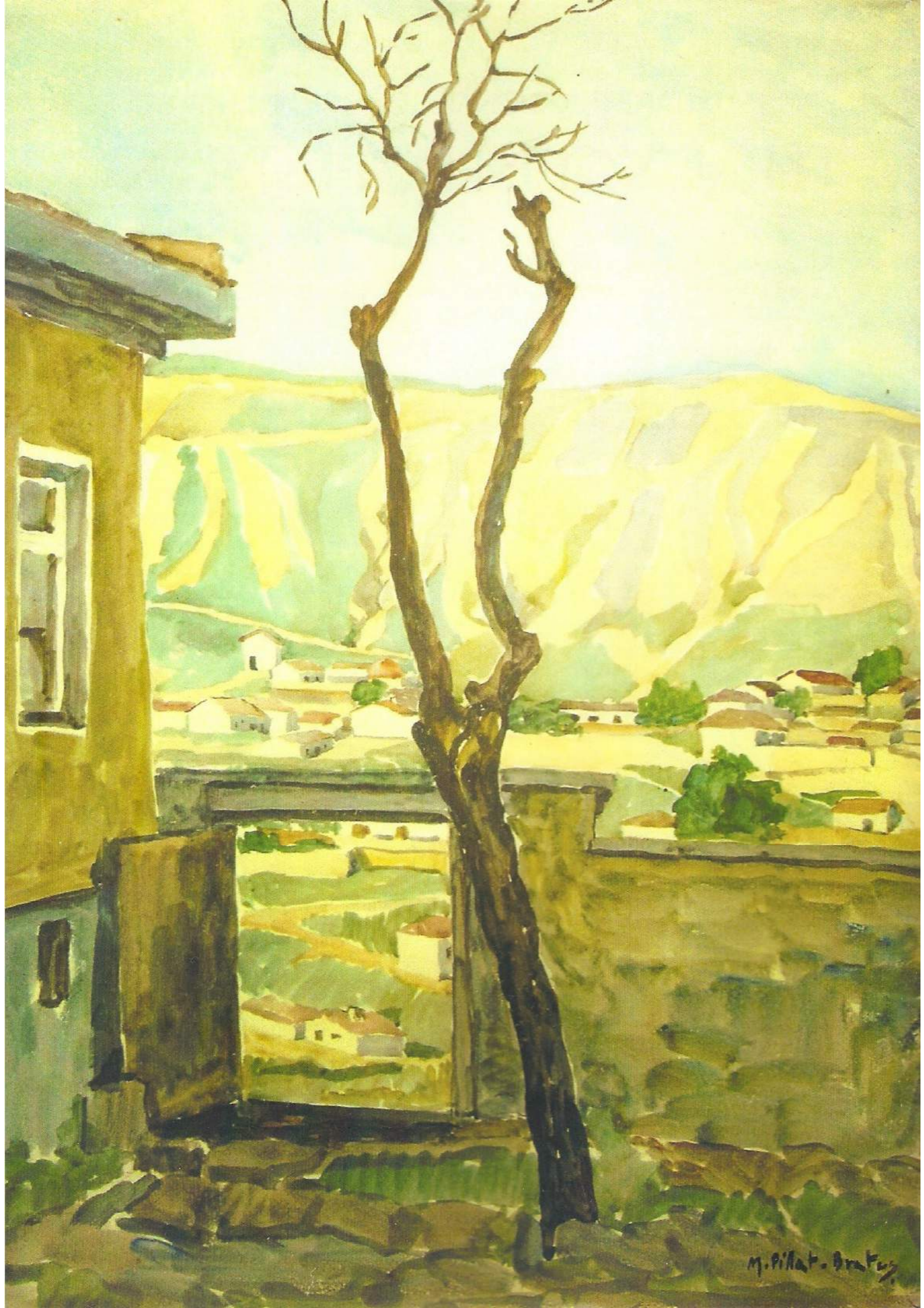
“SPIRU HARET” NATIONAL COLLEGE BUCHAREST

THE ENGLISH OFFSPRING

4, NOVEMBER 2011



THIS ISSUE IS PUBLISHED IN CELEBRATION OF 90 YEARS SINCE DINU PILLAT'S BIRTH. DINU PILLAT WAS A STUDENT AT "SPIRU HARET" HIGH SCHOOL BETWEEN 1932 AND 1940.



M. P. Khat. Bratko

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Many thanks for their support to professor Monica Pillat Saulescu, professor George Ardeleanu and to Adrian T. Pascu, former headteacher of our college.

Illustrations :

Cover 1:

Interior in Miorcani, watercolour on paper, 450x340 mm, 1942, signed M.P.B., Pia Edwards Collection

Cover 2:

Landscape in Balcic, watercolour on paper, 429x318 mm, 1937?, signed M.P.B., The National Art Museum Collection.



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In "Hunting" the journey back to the family's manor house after many years is the pretext which enables Mrs. Monica Pillat to undergo a special experience: the imaginary encounter with her father, when very young. His presence permeates every object and landscape with joy and sadness. It is an act of epiphany.

HUNTING

By Monica Pillat – The Road to Emaus

It was noon and the fragrance of hay was rising from the fields. Flocks of wild geese were whirling in the idle air while my heart was frantically thumping. I got close to the park gates and as if in a dream they opened to let me in. I stepped along under the tall trees and the alley sounded my steps in the profundity of a deadliest silence. From under the leafy branches the light twirled in its depth and though I was advancing it seemed as if not a fiber in me had flinched.

At last I reached the house. The windows were wide open but the shutters were drawn and the ivy climbed the walls like winding smoke. In the light breeze a crimson shawl was swinging in the rocking chair. I clung to a tree. I dared not go forward, hindered by a thought: if I pressed the handle, the door would have swung open revealing either a void or the sweetness of an unreachable world, a world whose end was brought by my arrival.

As I was standing there holding my breath the door opened and he came out with a rifle in hand. From the rocking chair the shawl sprung up and fancifully took the shape of a dog. I pressed myself numb against the tree.

Leaning over the dog he was talking but the words reached me indistinctly, it was only his voice and not even that, only vibrations that reached me.

I followed the boy and the dog, slipping among the trees in a fantastic hide-and-seek game. The path took us down to the pond and the rusty foxes of the sundown glimmered through the reed. Quite soon, from the dark of musty waters a boat came into sight. It was propped against the left bend of the bank, A bird whizzed above my head stealing into the folds of the willow.

I saw him untie the rope and push the boat on the slant surface of the pond. The dog had already jumped in and was sniffing around. He joined him in a rush and grabbing the oars turned around and sat down facing me. That was the first time I could fully see him from up close.

Lean and dark, his face was the same but sharper, his skin untouched by the saw of time, painfully smooth. I could recognize the tension of his slender hands while rowing, his thoughtful mouth. Unable to hide any more I pushed the reed aside and I shouted:

"Father!"

He lifted his face and his hazel eyes brimming with melancholy looked vaguely in my direction as the boat moved away.

But how could that sixteen-year-old boy answer me? What inner riveting of his free soul, yet undefined at dusk, could catch a glimpse of me, who was but the latency of a dim future?

A shot shattered the glassy air, shuddering the gliding light and the first goose paddled like hanged in the vast skies. A growing rustle covered the pond and the boat looked as if hoisted up all of a sudden on million wings. But the torn-up landscape caught shape again only to be smashed to pieces once more. The bullets were reaching full target, the fall darkened the waters and the air was tight with throttling feathers.

I looked at his eyes watching the fall, at the fury of the wounded birds frantically struggling to escape and I was getting cold. The dog swam ceaselessly, snatching and carrying the prey to the boat until the flocks of geese lost consistency and turned into a vague movement of dots along the clouds. Their tracks in the sky were reflected by the pond in ever thinner streaks of blood and the waves dissolved the former panic into still oblivion.

In the deepening evening, the boat came back to shore and the barking of the dog reverberated in the air.

What did he do?

I could hear him walk in the grass, his breath deep and quick; his coat stained with blood and his face rougher now with the victor's fever.

"Father!" I shouted in an attempt to catch and keep in my memory that smile of his, unknown to me, a smile of an unconscious imperial defy.

The dog, the birds, struggle and death, the fading twilight were kneeling at his feet, like a vast vanquished empire.

"Father!" I said, touching his face.

He did not move but sadness suddenly darkened his childlike eyes, only for a fleeting moment; soon afterwards, seized by some growing anxiety, he started running like the wind in the night. The dog fell silent.

Translated from Romanian by Dorina Enciu



Drawn by Maria Preda Corcau

12A

History Pages

THE EIGHT-YEAR STUDENT PERIOD AT "SPIRU HARET" HIGH-SCHOOL, BUCHAREST



Dinu Pillat at his
graduation in 1940

Pillat C-tin loan. This is the name by which he was registered in the school records stored in the archive of the college situated in Italiana street.

It was by the first name Dinu that he came to be known among his high-school mates, especially among those ones belonging to the "Spiru" generation between 1932 and 1940.

*

1932-1940. These years represented the "development stage" in the history of "Spiru Haret" College from Bucharest, the very period when it became a "culture centre". One may wonder to whom this step in the institution's evolution should be greatly indebted. The craftsmen were three exceptional principals: D. Focsa, a mathematician, St. Zottu, a biologist researcher, and G. Serban, a philologist- "a noteworthy personality of the Romanian school". They were supported by the venerable "apostles" and "scholars" in the teachers' room, which represented a genuinely spiritual home, also shared by a Pleiad of enthusiastic and dedicated young teachers.

After graduating from "Clementia" primary school, Dinu Pillat discovered the intellectually brilliant personalities of the noteworthy teachers in "Spiru Haret" high-school. Some of their names should be mentioned: Constantin Moisil, a reputed scholar in the service of Clio, the Muse of History, and a collaborator of the Romanian Academy, was a forerunner in the study of sciences related to history. The Latin scholar Ilie Almajanu, bachelor of Letters and Law at the University of Bucharest was also the beholder of a postgraduate studies degree in Paris. I also feel bound to mention Dimitrie Papadopol, bachelor of the University of Berlin, a teacher of French and German, as well as Iosif Frolo, his colleague at the Foreign Languages Department, the remarkable exponent of a genuine generation of teachers...We should also mention Artur Voitonovici, an expert chemist, beholder of a doctor's degree, awarded in the capital of Germany...

As one can easily notice, the teachers illustrate the school's ethnic and linguistic diversity, its multiculturalism and religious pluralism. These democratic values were soon to be adopted by the 95 generation colleagues of Dinu's, who were admitted in the first high-school grade at the beginning of the school-year 1932-1933.

I would like to mention the names of several students who were educated in the traditional spirit of "Spiru Haret" high-school. Abramovici S. Ionel, Borisov C. Eugeniu, Campeanu D. Radu, Dedroglu A. George, Grazzari A. Giulio, Kelemen A. Stefan, Magiari Gr. Claudiu, Petit I. Antoni, Rosner A. Iulius, Stancov G.-I.- Gheorghe, Tataru I. Ioan, Ulieru Gh.Eugen-George, Vasilescu N. Valeriu, Witzling O. Elias. The same as the other scores of mates in the first year of the high-school inferior cycle, it was by the teaching and learning process that they moulded a critical and flexible way of thinking, characterized by rigour and coherence. They developed positive interpersonal relations, expressed pro-active attitudes in personal and social life, solved conflicts in a non-violent manner, and assumed ethnic, religious and cultural tolerance. Not surprisingly, one of their school-mates, Cernovodeanu I.Dan, was included in His Majesty, King Mihai's preparation class, organized in a monastery with a historical renown for the Romanian spirituality. It was to the spiritual dimension that Dinu contributed, by his literary creations. In 1933, an anniversary year for the high-school where he studied, he made his first appearance as a writer in "Mladita" ("The Twig"), a magazine dedicated to the younger students, belonging to the inferior cycle. He had not yet turned 12 when he published "A Voyage to Constantinople", which represented a decisive step towards memoirs and poetic prose. Three years later, he opened the series of literary micro-studies published in "Vlastarul" ("The Offspring"), the main high-school magazine. After one more year, he became better known in Romania, thanks to a short creation in prose that was published in a magazine in Ploiesti, entitled "Lupta" ("The Struggle").

*

During the first four high-school years, Dinu Pillat's schoolmates were divided into two distinct classes. "Which was the separation criterion?" one might ask. It was a very different criterion from what we are used to nowadays. At that time, the alphabetical order had priority. The list with the students in the initial year was divided by the letter "I". The school records of the time were organized in accordance with the following division criterion: from the first student, whose family name started with "A", up to the antepenultimate schoolboy, whose family name started with "I", in the first class (class A), while the second class (class B) included the last two students whose names started with "I" up to "W". The new students who were registered in the other three years of the inferior high-school cycle were distributed according to the number of the existing students. As there was a multitude of options for "Spiru Haret" high-school, the two classes became extremely numerous, counting up between 47 and 57 students, if we refer to the classes Dinu Pillat belonged to.

At the end of the school-year 1935-1936, when the inferior high-school cycle came to an end, Dinu's class was comprised of 48 graduates, 40 of whom were admitted, as a result of an exam, in the first class of the superior high-school cycle, unique in the whole school year, for which 45 student positions were allotted. During the next school year, the total number increased by three students, one of them being Dan Cernovodeanu, who came back at "Spiru Haret" high-school. During the school year 1935-1939 and 1939-1940, Dinu's class reached a "reasonable" figure of 40 students.

During his last high-school year, Dinu Pillat obtained only good and excellent grades. He excelled in Romanian language and literature, by obtaining the highest mark-ten. Each semester, he was assessed by grades of ten in Religion and History. As a result, he finished the last semester by obtaining the highest average in both subjects. He obtained the same grades in Hygiene and Physical Education. He graduated the final high-school year with maximum grades in Old Greek, Natural Sciences, Conduct.

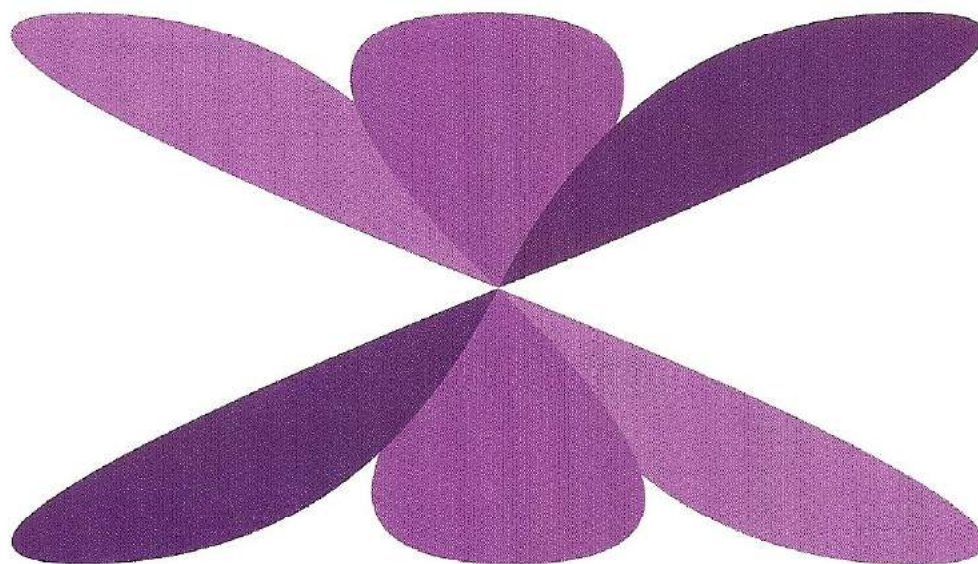
In fact, all 40 students passed up the last high-school year and were declared graduates. We can find the photos of all the 40 school-leavers in the summer of 1940 in the graduation picture. We are going to mention their names, as follows: Dan Angelescu, Ionel Armasescu, Bestelei-Oncescu brothers- Anton and Mihai, Victor Carap, Dan Cernovodeanu, Petre Corfu, Vladimir Cunesco, Alexandru Dailis, Cristian Dimitriu, Radu Fasie, Gheorghe Ghimbanescu, Teodor Giurgea, Crisoliti Goldstein, Constantin Grigoriu, Eugeniu Guralivu, Emil Ivanescu, Liviu Kavassi, Nicolae Koslinski, Alexandru Marinescu, Eugen Neagu, Paul Nicolescu, Aristide Pappo, Ioan-Constantin (Dinu) Pillat, Boris Pisteleak, Stefan Pisicescu, Nicolae-Vlad Racoviceanu, Ruben Reicher, Mihnea Romalo, Albert Samuel, Remus Silvestru, Marian Solomon, brothers Lucian and Marian Spataru, Constantin Straja, Constantin Seibulescu, Victor Talasescu, Aurelian Vlad, Giorgio Voghera.

Over the years, as future teachers, engineers, historians, doctors, artists, writers, they were to contemplate, once again, the stately building of their high-school, animated by the affectionate memory of the teachers who had handed over the culture torch, for the spiritual progress of the 1932-1940 class of students.

Each and every one of the 40 graduates were to take pride in exclaiming, at least once in their lives:

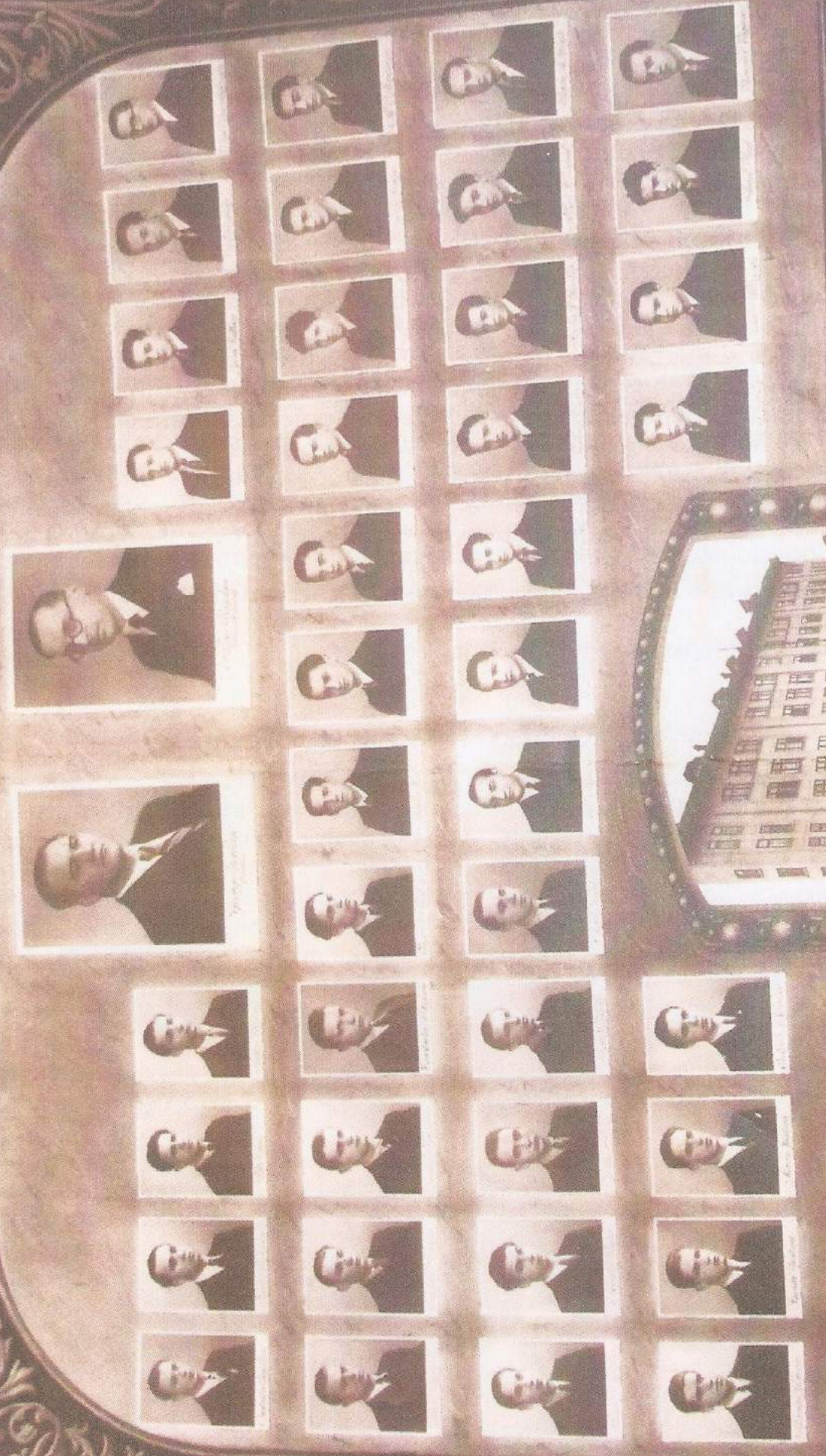
"I also studied at "Spiru Haret" High-school!"

Translated from Romanian by Georgiana Musat, English teacher



ABSOLVENTII LICEULUI SPIRU HARET ANUL 1940

Magistrul-șef al comisiei de examinare
Școala Liceului "Spiru Haret" nr. 10, Cluj-Napoca



LA REVEDERE IN ANUL 1950

Echoes to Diary of an Adolescent

A New Page

First things first, here I found myself in "Spiru Haret", a great middle-class school, not heaven, but pretty close to the clouds, welcoming me to countless promises towards better. Good, I really see the change, I found something that until now I naively thought I already had. True friends. Only fate could plan our strategic location, each student having for granted his own clique to fit in.

However, there is a quite obvious class hierarchy. I want to emphasize that the boys were limited editions, the remaining seats being stocked by girls, and unfortunately as you may know, there are more types of girls than there are insect species. We had, of course, the kind of girls, on the peak of entourage, I don't know how to say, since honestly I didn't see them as bad, they were just ... more rebellious, if I may say so, but once serious one would leave you astonished before their eloquence. Variations were born here, I don't want to offend anyone, but mockery, flattery, airs and graces were floating rather often in front of us. Who were we? Girls who learn, come to class, and... that's about it. Not to mention that we made up a minority, three quarters of the class being filled with the categories explained above.

Regarded as lifeless people who are always with their nose in their books and seeing the word "fun" as an unclassified term. How do I know this? Let's say in elementary school I wasn't exactly considered one of the most studious girls. Therefore having to experience the opportunity of examining both social ecosystems, I put the pieces together and went on ahead.

Imagine my surprise when I saw myself just in that category, since I completely avoided excessive studying.

But I saw that was the high school life. A path of evolution of self-knowledge, of intellectual flowering? Yes, one in times of war, mined at every turn. A small "Counter Strike" of life may I say? Even if the most substantial existential crisis will be that X is flirting with Y, when they obviously know that you like X. It's simply just the current, typical adolescent thinking. Forever dreaming of what one cannot have, making slalom runs among responsibilities, and of course being always right. And yet so like them. So ungrateful, choosing to ignore the last consolation of freedom.

All for the better, if not high school, then what would prepare us for ... for!

By a weary traveller from 10 A

Echoes to Diary of an Adolescent

My Diary

Dinu Pillat, son of Ion Pillat, the poet, and Maria Pillat-Brateş, painter, was born on the 19th of November 1921 in Bucharest. He studied primary and secondary school at Spiru Haret High School in Bucharest, starting off by writing lyrical prose and literary criticism for the school magazine "Vlastarul".

One of his most popular works is "The Diary of a Teenager". The school environment and the relatively modern narrative style of the novel are the main reasons why I enjoyed this book. In some cases I could even relate to certain events, or to the reactions of characters.

Although there aren't many striking differences between times reported in the novel and the present way of life, I could find some that have drawn my attention.

High school students were separated in schools for girls and schools for boys. Because of this, encounters with the opposite gender were real occasions of joy. Due to increased interest and shyness, relationships evolved at a slow and cautious pace, relying mostly on feelings, and always on respect. Unfortunately, I cannot say the same about most teen relationships these days. Although it is true that there are young people who think this way, they are few, and they usually change their views after a while (because they cannot find someone similar, thus starting to believe that they are weird). My opinion is that teenagers contemporary with Dinu Pillat, although seemingly naive, loved more sincerely and innocently, "tasting" the stages of a relationship gradually, thoroughly.

Like now, there were many types of teenagers, some rebels, some conscientious. However, I have seen many positive aspects related to the students. Although very different, they were not divided into groups according to superficial criteria as we are in the present. They acted like a real team: they would always go out together, stand up to demanding teachers, treated each other with equality and tolerance. Many qualities and moral principles were strong in the mentality of young people then, which now seem outdated. What I noticed is that, regardless of their grades or extracurricular behaviour, all of them had a passion for reading. This is an impressive habit which our generation has lost.

In both times, students do not miss the chance to make fun of certain teachers. However, this was unacceptable and the consequences for not obeying a teacher were more serious. Therefore, in general, students abstained from jokes in class. When Sandu revolted against his Geography teacher because the latter unjustly punished some students, he was suspended for a month and sent to the headmaster, even though he was completely right. In contrast, imposing the respect between student and teacher seemed more forceful and exaggerated back then, and now, in many cases, it is almost lost. Teachers were more demanding, students were tested more often, exams were more difficult, and there was much more to learn. All of the school work took up much more time than it does today. Because of this, holidays and spare time were reasons for celebration.

In conclusion, we should be thankful of the free time and the relatively easy classes, and never waste a moment without doing something satisfying. Just think that at your age, Dinu Pillat couldn't have been more eager to have even half of your free time. Be positive and feel good to be living today by comparing two different ages.

But is it truly better today, when 'friends' is just a social label, and naive love is obsolete?

The Model School Columnist

DINU PILLAT SIGNS IN WITH "THE OFFSPRING" (VLASTARUL) MAGAZINE

To the benefit of the Romanian education system, the 1934/1935 school year smoothes the way for the new eight-year high school span instead of the previous seven-year one.

The beginning of this transitional school year witnesses the new high school structure being brought in legislation and, consequently, a new curriculum being put together and made public on the pages of "Vlastarul". The concise but very persuasive comment in the magazine bears the signature of professor V.V. Hanes, PHD, who has only just taken over the editorial coordination of the high school magazine again. The author points out the fact that the new curriculum, far from being aimed at "making high school students achieve a strict specialization", "is rather intent on keeping in with their own educational preferences, based on their specific inclinations". Thus, it is not before the final high school year that the future graduates are to enlarge upon specialized training in the particular area of the curriculum of their choice.

Professor Hanes urges his students "to heartily welcome this curriculum renewal". The extra-school year structure and the curriculum re-organization are here to meet both "the pedagogical experience" and the psychological requirements which "are dictated by the natural inclinations of our students".

Professor V.V. Hanes, "the father of Vlastarul", which he has been editing since the 25th of December 1923, also considers that all the post-1928 high school graduates leave school "too early", inasmuch as "their soul is not well-prepared enough to engage on the path of University studies, that is of higher education, or to cope with the hardships of social life, for that matter".

The new educational objective professor Hanes has in mind takes shape, indirectly, in the closing part of his comment in Vlastarul, editorial year XI (corresponding to the 1934/1935 school year). The issues nr. 1-2, coming out in the autumn of 1934, and 4-5, out in the spring of 1935, present us with an efficient means for the "Spiru" students of "rounding out their general knowledge". The following issues (nr. 6 and 7-8/1935) reproduce the summarized versions of a number of lectures on topics of the world literature, within an interdisciplinary approach, given by professor Hanes at "Sala Dalles", in the presence of his students. In the presentation of the respective topics reference is made to geopolitical and image-related issues, elements of arts history, fragments of literary history and criticism, virtual models of literary analysis, all this being meant to endow the students with the necessary competences which are to make them into well-commended candidates for the baccalaureate exam.

During the 1935/1936 school year, coincident with editorial year XII of the old "college magazine", as G. Calinescu used to name Vlastarul, "an elite bouquet of young offsprings" gather together around professor Hanes. Among others, one particular name is there to add a touch of class to the bouquet, very well-known among the Romanian cultural elite: Pillat. Dinu Pillat, a growing young novelist and literary critic. The new offspring, as yet a student in his junior high school final year, puts his signature on a column treating about "The evolution of the short-story in the Romanian literature" (Vlastarul, nr. 4, 6-7, 1936).

At the age of only 15 years and a half, Dinu publishes more reviews and literary studies: "Ionel Teodoreanu and the Young Age" (Vlastarul, year XIII, nr. 4/1937). In a double issue (7-8) of the same editorial year, we find the student Dinu Pillat, now in his senior high school first year, as a coordinator of the columns "Notes" and "The Literary Review". The former contains "A Belated Letter to Santa". However, the starting point and focus of the "Notes" are the Memories of My Boyhood, which offer the teenage author the opportunity to remark the picturesque, rustic and lively way in which the great writer Ion Creanga, a member of the "Junimea" literary society in his time, conceived his capital work.

The latter column presents in a concise way the work Culture and Literature, a popularization synthesis in which Garabet Ibraileanu confirms the fact that "beyond life itself, from Maiorescu onwards, he is yet there to remain one of the few really great literary critics".

The year 1937 brings along Dinu Pillat's obvious editorial ascension with Vlastarul.

The circumstances which favour his "conquest" of a seat among the magazine "Editing Coordinator-Students' Council" reside in the graduation of the class of 1929-1937, along with its top student, Gheorghe I. Florian, an author and editor for the magazine in the three previous school years. "Goghi" is the very student who constantly wins the first prize in his class at the end of each of the eight high school years. And it is still G. I. Florian, the "Spiru Haret" high school student, who comes in first in the 1937 baccalaureate exam, on the national scale! A huge "legacy" for Dinu and the other followers in Goghi's footsteps... But Dinu rises to the height of his predecessor; proof positive of that stands a piece of his teenage prose, entitled "In the autumn twilight", published in Vlastarul (year XIII, nr. 5-6/1937)

Dinu Pillat is the only "Spiru" student in the class of 1932-1940 to be part of the group of student-editors for Vlastarul in its editorial year XIV. He is also a powerful figure as a writer. In the first double issue (1-2) of the 1937/1938 school year, his literary creation confirms his talent as a lyrical prose writer. The last paragraph of his "Hunting Notes" stands proof to that: "... And the noble head shape of the setter drew its delicate lines against the autumn scarlet horizon filled with the song of the flocks of migratory storks..."

As an author-editor, Dinu Pillat also stands out in the following double issue (3-4) at the end of the year 1937. As an editor, he involves some of his classmates in the work. Thus, Albert Samuel sees his poems (Dusk, Autumn) published in the magazine; Vlad Cunesco stands behind the science column; Dinu himself writes the article "Landmarks in Our Contemporary Novel" (Vlastarul, XIV, in 3-4, 1937). It proves to serve as a reference point which outlines the particular upswing of our national prose in the aftermath of World War I. It also brings out the specific character of the manifold literary works of Liviu Rebreanu, Cezar Petrescu, and Ionel Teodoreanu.

The year XIV series of publications continues with issues 5-6, 7, and 8-10, all of them coming out in the first half of the year 1938. Being the only student editor of his class in the "Editing Coordinator-Students' Council", as we already know, Dinu shares his work there with eight representatives of the class of 1930-1938, and with another 12 of the class of 1931-1939.

In the double issue 5-6/1938, Dinu holds the first entry with his "Impressions" of Christmas Eve, 1937. He watches the window filled with toys at "Cartea Romaneasca's", as a "bright window looking out on the the life of our childhood fairy-tale". He then passes by the University building. He enters a church.

"In the silence and biblical atmosphere inside, it is only some churchgoer that steps in at times, lights a candle in a hurry, and steps back out". Dinu bends and kisses the icon "on which the Birth of Our Lord is clumsily painted. There is so much mystical power in the evocative symbol of that scene that, almost unawares, your train of thought leaves behind the pettiness of daily existence, only to humbly paddle backwards for millennia, back to a point, back to one night, maybe similar to this very one, when the shining star guided the Shepherds and the Magi to the Manger that hosted the rise of the Son of Man". He exits the church, "at peace with himself". He seems to be stepping into "a different world". He can hear "carol singers' voices. It all sounds archaic and patriarchal, if not mythical, in those old songs' verses". He sets out "for home, by night". The snow "rustles under his feet. Stars galore are twinkling in the clear, dark sky above – except that one.. IT has been missing for long, for very long, the ONE star which foretold the world the birth of a Saviour, and the pure light that the darkness in your soul has been waiting for, endlessly waiting...".

The issue of year XV, nr. 2, autumn of 1938, contains a literary review in which Dinu Pillat makes a critical analysis of the novel *Fundacul Varlaamului* by Ionel Teodoreanu. At the end, after having identified a number of "somehow confusing digressions", he outlines the pages in the novel as "full of exquisite verve, pulsating with life". He also appreciates "a number of expressive, unforgettable characters (Nini ..., Ichi, Catita, etc.)" being individuated by the author. The whole story is "written in the same beautiful, metaphorical and suggestive style, only this time accompanied by a most welcome process of purification, too".

The editorial year XV, corresponding to the 1938-1939 school year, includes nr. 6/1939; it is the most representative issue of *Vlăstarul* for the writings that Dinu Pillat published during his high school years. The writing in prose "An Ordinary Spring", his literary reviews of *The Sad Light* by Traian Tr. Lalescu, a poet in the class of 1930-1938, and especially the one of *Pravale Baba*, a novel by Ionel Teodoreanu, all of them bring to light and confirm the literary talent of the Pillats' youngest son.

Together with some of his classmates: Vlad Cunescu, Dinu Grigoriu, Nicolae Koslinski, and Costel Seibulescu, Dinu Pillat coordinates the editing and publication of the year XVI *Vlăstarul* issues; representatives of the class of 1933-1941 are also entered the "Students Council" by professor V. V. Hanes: Sergiu Cunescu, Cornel Belciugateanu, and Alexandru Misu; the magazines of this XVI editorial year come out during the 1939-1940 school year, which is also the final senior high school one for Dinu Pillat and his classmates, the last of the eight years they have been spending at "Spiru Haret". Dinu Pillat's "training time" with *Vlăstarul* comes to a successful end. The best to illustrate this are his articles, written in a specific "Pillat style", especially the ones published in the double issue 5-6, February-March 1940: his review of Liviu Rebreanu's novel *Amandoi*, his notes on "Mr. Ionel Teodoreanu's lecture".

As an apotheosis of his entire high school writing career, comes nr. 7 of May 1940, in which Dinu Pillat offers his fellow students an outstanding piece of prose: "Farewell, Good Old High School!"

The intense emotion we have felt by reading that particular piece of writing has urged us to translate the text in its entirety and have it follow another two of Dinu Pillat's pieces of writing that we have translated from *Vlăstarul*, as well: "Hunting Notes" and "Landmarks in the Romanian Contemporary Novel".

Translated from Romanian by Nicole Stanescu.

POST-HIGH-SCHOOL BIOBLOGRAPHICAL LANDMARKS

In 1940, the graduation year from "Spiru Haret" high-school, Dinu Pillat evoked his high-school experiences in his first book. Entitled "An adolescent's diary", and apparently following the tradition of the literary creation series inaugurated by Mircea Eliade, the manuscript is dedicated to the poet Geo Dumitrescu. The dedication was written on the manuscript that was generously offered by Mrs. Monica Pillat-Saulescu, for the museum that once belonged to "Spiru Haret" College during the first half of the first decade of the 21st century. Unfortunately, as a perfect illustration of the saying "Beauty is but a blossom", the museum does not exist any more. However, at present the copy is being cautiously kept in the English Department room at "Spiru Haret" College.

In the autumn of 1940, Constantin (Dinu) Pillat started studying at the Faculty of Letters and Philosophy of the University of Bucharest. He remained faithful to his literary and journalistic career, and published new reviews, literary columns and literary studies that appeared in periodicals, particularly in "Preocupari literare". Dinu's collaboration with the editorial board of this periodical, that he had initiated in May, 1940, although he was still a high-school student at that time, was continued in 1940-1941. These literary reviews were published in four issues of "Preocupari literare". All of them refer to prose, namely two novels by Ionel Teodoreanu ("Tudor Ceaur Alcaz", "Ce-a vazut Ilie Panisoara"), and a novel by Mihail Sadoveanu ("Divanul Persan"- "The Persian Divan", published in December, 1940 and January, 1941).

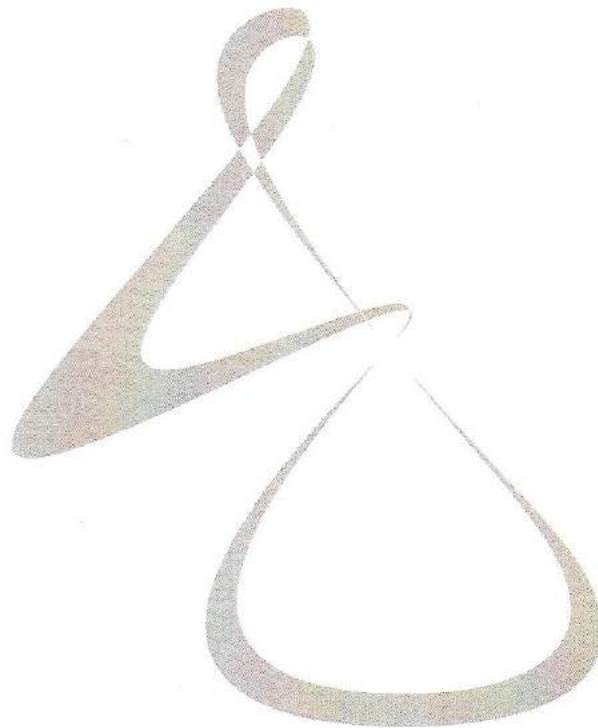
Between March, 10th and June, 15th, 1941, while a first-year university student, Dinu Pillat collaborated with "The Albatross" magazine, named by the eponymous literary group, that he would join, as well. Every month, once in a fortnight, he would sign comments, columns and notes. He wrote on "Viata cea de toate zilele" ("Mundane Life"), by Stefana Velisar., commented on an article about "Karamazov Brothers", published by Septimiu Bucur in "Gandirea". Further notes, included in "The Albatross", were dedicated to "Cartea omului singur" ("The Book of a Lonely Man"), by Vintila Horia, Tudor Vianu's course, entitled "Evolutia stilistica a prozei romane" ("A Stylistic Evolution of Romanian Prose"), "Viori de seara" ("Evening Violins"), by Ion Stanciulescu-Mehedinti, "Mireasa lumii" ("The World's Bride"), by Constantin Stelian, "Closca cu pui" ("The Seven Stars") by Stefana Velisar. He also referred to the National Poetry Prize, awarded by Vasile Voiculescu. Another noteworthy achievement while collaborating with "The Albatross" was the chance he offered his readership, a chance of knowing a fiction work, a novel that had not been edited by then, entitled "An Adolescent's Diary". Gradually published in all the issues coordinated by the gifted student, his first novel proved to be "more vivid and spontaneous" than other contemporary works in prose. Among the college students, "An Adolescent's Diary" remains a strictly necessary source for a possible "imaginary universe", the same as for the daughters of the girls who graduated from "Carmen Sylva" high-school.....

Towards the middle of the year 1941, in 'Perspective' ("Perspectives"), Dinu Pillat signed the literary work in prose entitled "Singuratatea cea mare" ("The Great Solitude"). For the author, inner solitude represents "one of the most tormenting human tragedies, not entirely revealed, so far". "Which are the most eloquent examples, delicately chosen?" one may wonder. 'The most sublime human being: Jesus, the moment when he cried with blood tears in Getsemani Garden, while his closest apprentices were sleeping, indifferent to his suffering.' He also mentioned- without losing the sense of proportion- Rene, the nostalgic, the eponymous character in Chateaubriand's short story. Another example would be Danut, one of the main characters in "La Medeleni", by Ionel Teodoreanu: as it is raining heavily, at the end of the summer holidays, Danut finds a refuge in the attic, "where an atmosphere of nostalgic past dominates the place." He reads the end of "Robinson Crusoe" again, unable to explain how Robinson could possibly leave the island so indifferently, without any feeling of regret, in order to come back among people after an absence of thirty-five years."

1942, January, 3. After three years and a half, Dinu Pillat was again present in the pages of "Universul literar" ("The Literary Universe") periodical. Formerly, as a high-school student, Ionel Teodoreanu's short-stories had inspired him. This time, as a first-year student in Letters and Philosophy, he had the audacity to go further. He would write a new fiction novel, which was to be published in a separate volume. However, the new novel would not omit the "Turning Back in Time", the way this creation is entitled, being written on the occasion of his return to "The Literary Universe".

To be continued...

Translated from Romanian by Georgiana Musat.



Fragments from an eloquent epistolary love novel

Motto:

"Dinu and Nelli lived their love without any of the indiscretions of love. This happened not because they loved each other as in the old times, in a way which is out of fashion nowadays, but because, through its aspiration for perfection, their love aimed beyond pleasure, thus becoming involved in search of a transfigured life. For them, life does not mean biological health but spiritual integrity on the altar of beauty. It means bringing to light the spiritual beauty by completing love. It means eternity (...)"

H.R. Patapievici, "Foreword" to "The Triumph of Love. DINU AND NELLI PILLAT. Pages of Correspondence , Humanitas, Bucharest, 2008

Dinu Pillat met Tica Ivanoviciu in his childhood. When he was 16 he fell in love with her. Still, they remained only "the good friends" of adolescence. They confessed their love to each other. They gave advice to each other in difficult situations. Tica was to be later embodied by Alina, the character in "The Journal of an Adolescent".

When he was a first-year university student, Dinu met Cornelia-Jeana Filipescu. Born in the same year of 1921, she was the elder daughter of Gheorghe Ene and Ecaterina Filipescu. Cornelia (Nelli) made her primary and secondary studies at "Queen Maria" High School. She then became a student at the Faculty of History of Arts and the Faculty of Philology and Philosophy. In the autumn of 1940, she was Dinu's colleague and they became friends. Soon, Dinu's love for Nelli turned into a deep feeling. Tica was the first person to find out about it. It was Dinu himself who confessed: "She knows how deeply in love with Mrs. Filipescu I am. I confessed to her." And two other of Dinu's teenage friends, Nicolae Evian (Nini) and Tudor Trancu (Teddy) must have found it out from Dinu himself. In fact, the three old friends formed a "brotherhood" aiming at turning the people they admired into deities. Thus, they chose to "deify" their three close friends: Gheorghe Florian, Tica Ivanoviciu si Nelli Filipescu. The young ladies have already been introduced. Gheorghe Florian (Goghi) was a former student at "Spiru Haret" High School, three years older than Dinu. Goghi was reading Law but he was still friends with his younger colleagues whom he would often invite in his parents' house in Popa Rusu street.

On the 21st of May 1942, hesitant and shy, Dinu invited Nelli at his name's day party. After several years, when they were married, he remembered that day in detail and with happiness. "A day with a deeper significance" because he spent it with Nelli for the first time. "The corner of the house on Dacia Street, the pavement of the tram 5 stop. The tobacconist's with its frame for newspapers. And you, enchantingly fresh and young, coming with the surprise box in your hands. Your excitement before you could see my face. My bewilderment when I clumsily opened the box. And suddenly, in small size, in a childlike, but finally in a palpable way: the island we both had been dreaming of, like a miracle in my hand. And beyond the sand strip, beyond the white elephant, beyond the scaly palm tree with the little monkey hanging heavily, your large, serious eyes arched like the open wings of some water birds tremblingly enclosing the horizon."

"Late in the evening", when the light of the lamp next to Dinu seemed to belong to a magic lantern, he started to write his first letter to the donator of the painting. Nelli, back to her parents' house, was to read "Dedication written by Dinu (...) on the book Van Gogh by Charles Terrasse" offered to his lover in that spring of the full of hopes year, 1942:

Take this book, please, as a reminder of our winding friendship. I dearly hope that some day a deeply harmonious understanding will release us from the present cage of our inner loneliness.

It is on 21st of May, on Saints Constantin and Helen's Day that the "epistolary novel" begins, a novel which epitomizes Dinu Pillat's love for Nelli Filipescu and Nelli Filipescu's love for Dinu Pillat.

The painting offered to Dinu – The Island with a Palm Tree becomes the starting point of the first thematic section which contains letters from the years 1942-1946, composed "at length". The other three thematic sections entitled Facing shipwreck (1942-1962), Back Home (1964-1975) and The love after (1976-2001), contain letters which are "more and more valuable under the pressure of the events" as mentioned by Mrs. Monica Pillat who looked after this edition to piously honour her parents and "the spiritual treasure" they created.

Having been granted Mrs. Monica Pillat-Saulescu's permission, we have translated some eloquent letters belonging to The Triumph of Love.

Bucharest

21st May, Saint Constantine's Day, 1942

Dear Nelli,

It's late at night.

The light of the lamp by my side seems to come from a magic lantern. It singles out in the shade of my bookshelves the exotic contour of a palm tree, on which a monkey has climbed, eyes wide open with fear. An elephant – with ebony shades – has stopped moving, his trunk at a standstill in the air. He is watching the monkey in the palm tree in the same way the fox in La Fontaine's fable once looked at the crow. Next to it, there is a cactus in bloom. Its flowers are red, reminding me of the red lollipops in Balcic.

I have the feeling that I am lying on the beach of some remote seashore. I almost hear the noise of the waves with their white foamy crests.

I feel you are somewhere nearby. I can't see you. I can't hear you. But I can sense your presence.

I forgot that I live in a house with bourgeois habits, in a stuffy grey city. I forgot that today is engraved on a calendar leaf which tomorrow will get into the paper bin. I forgot that the clock – this cricket of time – ticks each passing moment, taking with it some part of ourselves forever. I forgot it is wartime and people are dying. I forgot....

This is a strange moment, late at night and in solitude.

Once upon a time, a child – on the eve of his birthday – woke up, turned the light on and, against the same shades seemingly coming from a magic lantern, watched with serious delight his new gift-toys lined up on the shelf.

That child died inside me a long time ago.

Now, another child with the same serious delight is looking at the island he has been dreaming of in the company of a girl.

Nelli, why is happiness sometimes as devastating as sorrow?

Bucharest
21st May, 1945
Dear Nelli,

21st May, Saints Constantine and Helena's Day, 1941

Today is my name's day. A day of a deeper significance since we first spent it together. The corner of the house on Dacia street, the pavement of the tram 5 stop. The tobacconist's with its frame for newspapers. And you, enchantingly fresh and young, coming with the surprise box in your hands.

Your excitement before you could see my face. My bewilderment when I clumsily opened the box. And suddenly, in small size, in a childlike, but finally in a palpable way: the island we both had been dreaming of, like a miracle in my hand. And beyond the sand strip, beyond the white elephant, beyond the scaly palm tree with the little monkey hanging heavily, your large, serious eyes arched like the open wings of some water birds tremblingly enclosing the horizon.

I was as happy as Christopher Columbus. And the name of the newly-discovered realm was yours, the little goddess of the island with the elephant and palm tree on and, since then, you have become the great goddess of this letter's sender.

Time has not ruined our realm because nothing can ever ruin it. I have felt the deadly step of time. Around us and sometimes inside us. But our great love, the contents of our secret island have stayed untouched. It would not sink like another Atlantis into the sea.

And every morning I feel like Christopher Columbus, discovering your novelty over and over again. And so, every single day of the year turns into a celebration of my name's day. It is you who makes this possible. How many words do I need to simply say "I love you"?

Dear Nelli,

Take this book, please,
as a reminder of our winding friendship.
I dearly hope that some day
a deeply harmonious understanding
will release us from the present cage of our inner loneliness.

Dinu Pillat

Lines written by Dinu Pillat on the front page of the book Van Gogh by Charles Terrasse, a gift which he offered to Nelli Filipescu in 1942.

Bucharest, 7th March, 1946,
Dear Nelli,

I am writing to you again after a long period of silence. What a pity, I would rather express my longing for you on this page, as before, in my letters from Predeal last autumn. In the monotonous grey of these winter days, a letter to voice the words of affectionate warmth which silently echo inside me like the latent sounds of the keys of a closed piano. A letter taking shape on an ordinary day of our life together, that somehow comes out in a natural way, as calmly and, yet, as hastily as the ripe fruit of a tree which fully enjoyed the season of its "Annunciation".

Unfortunately, in our lives, in people's lives, things seem to happen in a strange way, unseasonably, sadly unforeseen and quite different from the vegetal world.

It is true, this letter, the letter of my secluded depths, does not come out on one calm morning and crystal-clear harmony. After a night like the one in "Boz endormi" (poem by Victor Hugo) for instance. On the contrary, it comes out after a sinister night reminding me of the night when my father died . A night I could feel you distant, closed, cold and impenetrable like a dead body holding within another corpse and myself. An opaque silence. The dark around. Your muffled cough, every now and then, like a stranger's, from afar.

The imperceptible ticking clock, the cricket of time. And, everywhere, a feeling of heavy and weird wakefulness reminding me of the deathwatch in Dostoevsky's novel, *The Idiot*. And it is after such a night that my letter comes out.

I do not know very well what I would like to tell you, because usually at such serious, crucial moments, we either start explaining things in an apparently funny way – masking the tragedy of our fright –, or simply we get dumb, trying via telepathy, to communicate a thought suspended in the void, a vague gesture. But I manage to adopt neither solution.

That is why I resort to writing again, my old way out, stammering as I am now, and, even so, not being able to express myself in an intelligible way.

I do not know very well how to conjugate the verb "to love" in the correct sense of the grammar of feelings. But deep inside me, in the equation that binds us together, there is this awareness of an eternal present unspoiled by the past or the future. The feeling of this present is the most pressing reality, the only certitude, maybe the unique proof that we exist within the frame of some contingencies.

In no way could we kill the certainty of this inner presence, even if sometimes, when the fog comes in between, your doubt declares it absent. And then, let us remember that after all: *La chair n'est pas triste et nous n'avons pas lu tous les livres...*

Your old friend,
Dinu

21st May, 1946, Bucharest
My Dear Dinu,

I remember the first time we met to celebrated your name's day. I had tried to write my first letter to you the whole morning. I had fallen in love with you and alternately my shyness and my courage prevented me from revealing the inner turmoil I felt inside.

However, I do remember I wrote to you that our meeting was for good and that I was at the beginning of a love story which I wished would never end.

The little monkey and the elephant looking at each other under the palm tree, near the cactus in bloom, are still here as they were when I looked with enchanted childlike eyes at the symbol of our little island which I had offered you.

Today the elephant has only one ear and a leaf has fallen from the palm tree.

We have not changed since then, my love, we are still the same, so let us keep our soul young, let us always believe in the flowery island, in the midst of the blue, peaceful ocean, waiting for us to come and unfold there our never ending story.

Nelli

25th September, 1946, Predeal

This is a clear autumn night. The deep silence is sometimes interrupted by the whistling of the locomotives at the railway station. For a while I stayed by myself on the porch. It's been a long time since I last stayed like that, all alone, facing the bluish ocean of the sky. It's been a long time, maybe since my Miorcani summer holidays. While coming back by cart from hunting wild ducks on the pond, there, I would tie my melancholy to some falling star on that sky which enclosed my world within the boundaries of Predeal, of the "Popas" villa, of your maiden room. From the stars which used to fall at that time to the stars falling now, so many things have happened, time's footsteps measuring life and death. Everything has changed, everything is a little bit different. Only my melancholy tying itself to the stars falling now is the same. Good night, my love!

(Continuation of the letter on 25th September 1946)

27th September

Another morning spent in the glade of our holidays soon will turn into a shade of memory. I said no to Costel, Titi and Nini Kiritescu when they asked me to join them on a trip to the mountain. I feel better here, in this glade resembling a green island. Here, yearning can take hold of you quietly, embracing you thousands and thousands of times, in the rhythm of the sea waves sweeping endlessly along the same beach.

It's strange how after our first separation last week, the palpable loneliness I felt in your absence made me completely lose balance. I could hardly recover after you left. However, now, I no longer suffer that much because I have become aware, not in a reasonable, but in a sentimental way, that you are always close to me, maybe even closer now than when we were physically together. Surely, this feeling comes from the certainty of our accomplished love.

(Continuation of the letter on 25th September 1946)

29th September

It is raining with small grey drops. I am walking to and fro aimlessly; Maria is cleaning the house. My thoughts about the future are like sparrows on telegraph wires. In each thought a question opens.

Soon, we shall start our daily life in the house on 9, Pia Bratianu Street, where now my father is only a shadow hidden in the volumes of his bookcase, in the porte-bonheur bird, in his Panama hat left on the hallstand at the entrance; where mom will always be mom; where you and I are the future that is beginning.

I wish our life were different from this rainy day, a life that would not turn freshness into routine and commonplace, a life that would not wear us from within or from without.

Surely, we may have deserved a different beginning for our impetuous youth: closer to the place in your dream with the two of us arriving one morning to an unknown city, in an unknown country, to find our way in life among strangers.

But dear Nelli, our love and, consequently our destiny, cannot depend on a particular setting. Actually, we give beauty and life to everything around. Our soul is the magical mirror. This is what I believe. And maybe this autumn you will start seeing this the way I do.

P.S. Do not imagine that I am less thoughtful than when I used to write on a better kind of paper. Unfortunately, in "Vestea" there is no trace of letter-writing paper anymore so I was forced to use the old notebooks for my doctorate paper, adjusted particularly to a simple envelope.

1, 000,000,000,000,000,000,000 kisses for you!

Yours,
Dinu

(Continuation of the letter on 25th September 1946)
Tuesday, 2nd October

The clouds are so low that you feel surrounded by a mouldy wall. In the living room of our past holidays, there floats an awkward silence. The family photos are strangely staring at the place where Misu is bent over a book and I, over a letter to you.

And in this atmosphere, the rhythms of some Hawaiian song, from God knows what Western radio station, bring in a tone of some unexpected nostalgic swinging, reminding me of the magic line from "L'invitation au voyage": Mon enfant, ma soeur, songe a la douceur...

At such moments, I feel so devastated by your absence that the words are but the graphic expression of my hand attempting to grasp your hand. To feel the warmth of your palm, the beats of the silent pulse.

Life is so terrible! It is full of shades. And when you are overwhelmed by a feeling, you stammer with the pathos of a dumb person who cannot manage to make himself fully understood.

The Hawaiian music stopped unexpectedly. Someone speaks in an unknown language. Outside, the mouldy wall gets thicker and thicker. Misu, still bent over his books, seems to be inanimate just like the family photos on the walls. I am longing to hold you, to escape, plunging into your being, as into an ocean whose depth could never be reached

Yours,
Dinu

October, 1946

Bucharest

Dear Dinu,

I am in my room, wrapped up in shawls because it is cold and grey outside. This room is so warmly familiar to me because, here, the paintings on the walls, the lamp and the lightly coloured arabesques on the carpet are my friends. I like to look at each and every object in this room which is as meaningful as the features of a dear face, encountered after a long time. It is quiet here and I am sure that I will soon fall peacefully, asleep, in my old times bed. I keep thinking of our life together starting soon on 9, Pia Bratianu Street. And though I love you dearly, I foresee that there, in that house, I'll be like a character moving in a novel whose story is about someone else.

What I mean to tell you is that if I may seem sad, during this story, (I'll do my best to hide such feelings from you), please do not ask me any question. I do not like words whose meanings are not crystal-clear. I dislike excuses not because I am a coward and not because I am suspicious by nature. I believe that two partners, who don't come to a deeply felt understanding so as to spontaneously help and mutually fulfill their aspirations and desires, either do not love each other or are not meant to be together. And, in both cases, excuses are painful because there will always be one who will ask for what the other one will not be able to offer. This may sound strange and maybe you will ask me to be more explicit, but I will not be able to be so.

If we truly love each other and are meant to stay together, we shall find the way to our hearts and to our happiness, leaving behind so many useless explanations.

I do hope that the end of our story will be serene and luminous. We both deserve it.

As for me, I will try my best to have a dignified, accomplished life with you. My only essential request is this: never ask questions about things that do not reveal their meaning in a natural way. It is strange, but I believe that such an approach will help us reach a better understanding and transparency. You will see.

I'm not sending you 1,000,000,000,000,000,000 kisses but I kiss you from the bottom of my heart.

Nelli.

July 28th, 1971

Dear Nelli,

Seven years have passed already since I came back home from prison, a miracle that I cannot fully understand yet. I am sitting in the porch, writing to you. I look around to make sure I am not dreaming: here are flowers, the garden with its small vegetable beds, the roofs of the nuns' little houses lost among the green foliage of trees, the church towers, the wooded hill behind, the sky beyond.

If I choose to stand up, I realize I have the liberty to step down the porch, walk out of the garden in the street and take any path I like. I do no longer envy an ant's or a fly's freedom to move.

Lots of thoughts are crossing my mind - what an extraordinary thing! - you are in Bucharest, in our own home, you are in good health and you have made a way in life, our Monica is on holiday at the seaside, liberated from social and existential complexes of inferiority, dedicated to a safe career, no longer afraid of what tomorrow might bring.

Yet, I am seized with remorse and shame for all my dissatisfaction or disillusionment experienced during these last seven years, for my reluctance and my lack of sensitivity, while living by your side, for my numbness and boredom, for feeling sometimes weary, upset and complaining

Oh, God, how vividly I do remember my return from prison, after five years, five months and three days of seclusion! In your summer dress, you were waiting for me in Manana's old yard. When I opened the gate, you came to meet me, clumsily trembling with more emotion than on our wedding day. In your bride dress, then, you met me at the entrance of Icoanei Church.

I felt like kneeling before you as Father Zossima did before Dimitrie Karamazov, foreseeing the latter's future suffering. During these seven years of freedom and regular, normal life, unfortunately I have lost the awareness of everyday miracle. But this morning, after suddenly waking up, I felt the same impulse I had long ago. I felt like kneeling like Aliosha whose vision of the Caana Wedding made him piously embrace and celebrate the beauty of being alive.

Let us forgive one another for the neglect and forgetfulness that sometimes make us lose the awareness of our miraculous encounter and re-encounter in this world, let us forgive one another for such moments of estrangement, let us realize how blessed we are in this love that binds us beyond life and death

I dearly embrace you with all my love

Dinu

A fragment from Nelli Pillat's letter to Pia Edwards, Dinu Pillat's sister

March, 28th 1989

On my birthday, after having cleaned the house, a day before, I went through Dinu's letters again and as I read them, peace and happiness filled my soul. I felt safe and well provided for the days to come, not having to worry anymore about tomorrow. It took me so long to come to this essentially astounding revelation...

Letters translated from Romanian by Ana Durac