

**„Lucian Blaga”University -Sibiu**

**Philology Faculty**

## **The Dialectics of the Imaginary in Gellu Naum’s works**

*SUMMARY*

**Scientific coordinator: prof.univ.dr.Ana Selejan**

**Candidate for a doctor’s degree:Coman Ana**

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### SUMMARY

The title of our critical essay, "The Dialectics of the Imaginary in Gellu Naum's works" synthesizes in a technical formula, the aim of investigating the poetic work of a great surrealist Romanian writer from the point of view of his own semantic approach to the concept of "imaginary". That is why the foray into the poet's work implied at first a review of the dominant ideas concerning this term, marked by the researcher Jean Burgos, in conjunction with those issued by Gilbert Durand or Gaston Bachelard. Agreeing upon the term imaginary not as a structure of imagery but as a structuring, a kind of non defined and non finite transformation, reiterated by each reading, by the perception of the works, all these provided ample scope in the study of Gellu Naum's work in the sense of identifying its specificity.

By adjusting the imaginary to the esthetics of surrealism, a twenty century vanguard literary trend, which still makes itself echoed today, the relevant idea emerges that, on the whole, the imaginary could be treated as a possible reflex of the surrealist doctrine, through its open, discontinuous character, always permeated by its author's intuition and vision. Taking into account all these restraints, we invested upon the structure "dialectics of the imaginary" new facets of the hermeneutic method, a course that accessed the structure of our analytical approach into five main parts, imposed by the vastness and varied semantics of Gellu Naum's work.

The first part of this paper, **Footnoted bibliographical profile** (containing the author's and other writers' ideas) a kind of preamble to the analysis proper, consisting in a thorough outline of the writer's bibliographical profile, parallels the biographical events with their reaction in the consciousness of the poet and of other iterati.

The conclusion of this kind of approach which implied study of a remarkable amount of documents and sources, the corroboration of information to avoid ambiguity and confusion, all of these also subject to the principle of respecting the truth implied in the reconstruction of a bibliography, is that judging by the replay of biographical events, Gellu Naum reveals himself as a unique literary identity within the Romanian cultural environment, bringing forth the example of the perpetually modern writer.

Through intuition and through his own upbringing, the poet created his own perspective of the world seconded by a constant poetry both in his relation with literature, with his writing but also with the few people in his life. All through his 86 years long lifetime, as Gellu Naum was born on the first of August 1915 and died on the 29th of September 2001, more than seven decades dedicated to writing, the poet discreetly marked his presence in outer reality and especially in the artistic one.

In order to prove the above statements we point out the main events in the poet's existence in a biographical profile attached to this summary ( see .339 )

We are of the opinion that when dealing with the work of a writer it is absolutely necessary to apply a filter consisting of the writer's own ideas, the concepts and literary orientation. Despite not being a theoretician in the ordinary meaning of the term, provided by the writer, Gellu Naum established his aesthetic literary views in the early stages of his writing, 1936-1945, the defining and argumentative demon leaving him in the 50's.

The first part of the paper, **Gellu Naum's poetics**, defines the concepts, the ideas and the trends to be found in the poet's literary thinking concentrated within the manifesto concepts contained in the volumes **The Criticism of squalor** written in cooperation with Paul Paun, Virgil Teodorescu(1945), the volumes **Medium**, issued in February 1945, **The Forbidden Formidable** ( 1945 ), **The Castles of the blind**, (1946 ), **The specter of longevity –122 corpses**(1946 ), written in cooperation with Virgil Teodorescu, **Versify, versify...**( where compendium of the works **Medium The Forbidden formidable** can be found) in 1945, **The Serpent's way** was finished in 1948 and it was published posthumously in 2002, and his pseudo diary **Bone white** ( 1947 ).The literary outlines in Gellu Naum's poetry follow the principles of surrealism, defined by Andre Breton, a certain detachment, a straying from it in the case of his poetic pragmatics is achieved. It is mainly concerned with the poet's revolt against literary conformity, a negation of tradition, a kind of " poetic dismantling of the universe of its false poetry", a search of new poetic areas, practising literary techniques subject to stream of consciousness, the objective haphazard, the valorization of oneiric experiences, the discovery of the original meaning of the word, defining of the poet's status and his creation. Added to these ideas, to complete the poet's literary orientation is his insistence in using specific concepts familiar to the surrealist discourse as well as the "surreality", the " convulsive beauty", the "medium state" , "the eruptive certainty", "epiphany object", "clava", "dogma," "the propitious", "the unpropitious", "environmental archeology".

Gellu Naum's particular handling of poetic pragmatics both in the poetic creations and in his dramatic works on the one hand validates his alignment to the ideals of the manifestos. On the other

hand it records the effort of the author in achieving a personal poetic aesthetics within the imaginary of his work.

Gellu Naum's personal note in his poems consists in placing in the discourse metaliterary statements resulting in the inclusion of one or several ideas of the manifesto in each of his anthology. The volumes of his debut contain the author's revolt against restraints; the poet brings forth the stance of "the incendiary traveler" proclaiming the creator's supreme freedom and at the same time he reveals the falsity and rigidity of the literature of his time. (The volumes **Vasco de Gama**, **The incendiary traveler** and **The Corridor of sleep**)

In the works written after 1968 the doctrinaire ideas will be assimilated within the discourse, the poet pays special care in choosing themes, motifs and literary symbols to respect the dogmas. The votive space of surrealist poetry is subject to dogmas, the oneiric space in which any type of opposition is invalidated, the main themes of his works being love, life, death, dream, metamorphosis, the journey, all these added to specific motifs and symbols : phantoms, statues, women, water, fire," the erotic horse" and the objects. It is also the case of his prose works written after 1970 ,the novel **Zenobia**, 1985, where doctrinal concepts are included . They refer to the genesis of a literary work , the status of the writer, the authenticity of the generated text, the revolt against tradition thus imbuing the text with the dimension of a literary manifesto , a fact less relevant in his dramatic works. Gellu Naum's poetry generates a series of strategies in order to structure the discourse which take into account both forms and the means of poetic expression. The poet denies the grammar dogmas, resulting in a change in semantics, the poet's work often resorts to means of expression such as the occult of the message, the false metaphorical evocation, added to semantic or syntax means.

In order to clearly study Gellu Naum's works, the stages of his literary creation were defined taking into account the views of such literary critics as: Ana Selejan, Paul Cernat, Ovidiu Morar and Ion Pop :

- The first stage called the period of inter-war surrealism contains the volumes: **The incendiary traveler** poems with illustrations by **Victor Brauner**,(1936),

- The freedom of sleeping upon a forehead**,poems illustrated by Victor Brauner(1937) **Vasco de Gama**, poems illustrated by Jacques Herold (1940).

- The second stage, after 1944, that of post-war surrealism, starts with the volume of poems **The corridors of sleep** (1944), followed by the prose volume called **Medium** (1945). They are followed by **The criticism of squalor**, a manifesto written in cooperation with Paun Păun și Virgil Teodorescu,

**The forbidden formidable**,(1945), a manifesto with a frontispice by Paun Păun , **The specter of longevity –122 corpses** written in cooperation with Virgil Teodorescu (1946), **The castle of the blind**, prose,(1946), **L’infra-noir**, (1947), **Eloge de Malombra**( manifesto published in cooperation with Gherasim Luca, Paul Păun, Virgil Teodorescu and D.Trost) 1947, works written in French which meant the enlisting of the writer in the world literary trend. This period of Gellu Naum’s creation belongs to the first stage of the post-war surrealism.

•From 1968 on the second stage of the post-war surrealism manifests itself, a period in which the poet publishes the poems volume **Athanor** ( 1968) followed by the anthologies **Selected poems**, with a portrait by Victor Brauner(1970), **The animal tree**,poems, (1971), **My tired father**, poem, (1972), **Selected poems**, (1974), **Description of a tower**, poems, (1975). In 1979 the plays **The Island**, **The Taus clockworks**, **Maybe Eleonora**, are published. There then follow the poems volume **The other side** (1980), the novel **Zenobia** ( 1985), **Cover and over cover** and **The blue shore**, poems (1983-1993), (1994); **Black fire**, poems, (1995), **Sister well**, poems, (1995), **The questioner, prose**,(1996), **The animal tree** and **The advantage of the vertebrae**, poetry ( 2000), this being the last book published under the author’s supervision.**The ascet at the shooting gallery** (2000) is followed by the author’s translations from works by: Gerard de Nerval, Th.Gautier, Ivo Andric, Rene Char, Julien Gracq, Samuel Beckett, Kafka, Peter Weiss etc.

These two moments are separated by an” existential loop” the one of socialist realism, consisting of the volumes: **The seam**,(1952), **The mountain camp**, a novel for teenagers,(1952),**That’s what Sanda’s like**,(1956), **The greatest Gulliver**,(1958), **The book about Apolodor**,(1959), **Poem of our youth**, illustrated by Jules Perahim,(1960), **The second Apolodor book**, illustrated by the author himself,(1959),**The calm sun** poems,(1961).Posthumous publications include: **The way of the serpent**,(2002), **The very same time**, drama(2003), **All about identical and different**,(anthology,2004), the German volume of complete works, **Gellu Naum, Poehesia. Sämtliche Gedichte**. Aus den Rumänischen übersetzt von Oskar Pastior und Ernest Wichner, Herausgegeben von Ernest Wichner, Basel, Weil am Rhein: Urs Engler Editor, 2006, **The fifth essence**, poems. An anthology in Italian translation, containing biography and critical notes by Geo Vasile,(2007) and **Vasco da Gama and other poheme**, a Romanian-English bilingual edition with a preface and translation by Alistair Ian Blyth Bucharest, (2007).

Gellu Naum’s individual brand of the imaginary, in the two surrealist stages, inter and post-war ones, bring forth his fundamental themes, motifs and symbols, the dream, the voyage, love, death, woman, phantom, the animal motifs, the efiatic object, sleep, etc.

The three debut volumes of poetry describe the revolt, the reaction against stereotypy of poetry, the institutions, fed by the use of twisted, shocking language containing images of the oneiric ( in poems such as : **The incendiary traveller, A centaur raping the trees of poetry, The factory stacks will urinate clover , I sleep, succumb, on the flux shoulder, Vasco de Gama**).

The poetic discourse after 1968 has a more defined rule, as a result of a mathematical poetry about the oneiric knowledge, about objective philosophy, the erotic experience and the dissolution of humanity, the dogmatic message being relegated and dropped The lack of surrealist tonality is compensated for by a verse that is symbolist, mystical or expressionist .

Gellu Naum's literary works are characterized ith each new anthology, thus **Athamor**, a connecting volume between the poet's periods of creation, sets forth concentrated, sometimes confession-like poetic structures while in poems such as **Heraclit, Athamor, The tamed triangle, The wall, The Filter**, etc. The main themes are, the condition of the poet, alchemical experiences, love, dream, the degrading daily routine or death. The poet's imaginary once again returns to the technique of infinite associations in **My tired father** (1972), using the automatic dictation ,the poet makes combinations of the absurd trying to prove that literature can do anything disregarding any grammar conventions. **The description of the tower** personifies a type of poetry that is free from any external conventions, being in itself an illustration of prosaic discontinuity.

Poetic existence is subject to the stereotype of academic study resulting in the annulment of its authenticity, the writer opens therefore the other circle or tower, seen only by creators.

The poems in the volume **The other side**, highlight in Gellu Naum's imaginary the hinted virtues of his work, materialized in unique, fundamental, and summarized representations which results in a double equation „here” meaning the visible side of the word „there”, these showing the hidden shadow of the same word, a biblical parable most of the time.

The discourse in the volume **Black fire**, avoids the obvious surrealism cultivated by Gellu Naum in his works of the early forties, strongly echoing ,with images foreboding death, similar to Arghezi's or Lucian Blaga's poetic works. The core of the volume reveals the poetic identity that takes shape through the status of art and of the poet and also influenced by real life experiences. The recurrence of biographical elements in the imaginary of this volume, rhymes with the alienated condition of the poet and from this point of view the appeal for real existence tends to recover it.

Solitude gets ample interpretation in the volume **Sister well**, in which the poet says to himself: „ I shall go to the forest where sister well is waiting/ To lean against its fall”. The oxymoron” lean/fall” promotes the idea that it is not important what we see directly but rather the way in which this visible

side of the world changes uncovering, revealing „the other side” which could be anything, mystery, death, surreal.

The imaginary of the volume **Ascet at the shooting gallery**, in 2000, the last anthology published by Gellu Naum, a poet that in 60 years of creation reaches the stage of perfect discourse forms, who places „freedom, poetry, love” in the centre of his surrealist equation, thus closing the circular course of his poetic status once opened with the volume **The incendiary traveller**. The elegiac tonality of the poems in the volume adds the energy of the lyrical age that generates tranquility, through the word firmly settled in the surrealist pattern, which does not necessarily mean depriving the poems of the great emotions the author can generate.

The posthumous volumes complete the visions of surrealist advance as in the volume **The way of the serpent** or they suggest an image wholly Naumnian as in the anthology **All about identical and different** published under the supervision of Simona Popescu, a volume that contains selected works belonging to all the thirty-one cycles written by the poet. The initiation book, **The way of the serpent**, finished by the poet in 1948, reviews and confirms in the imaginary of Gellu Naum’s works, ideas and concepts present in the author’s prose almost contemporary to their creation that are however masked, hidden and transformed into other poetic expressions, a fact that broadens the artist’s options to the area of hidden experiments, but above all substantiates the state of creative freedom as a primary aspiration of any creator disregarding the era’s dogmas they may illustrate.

Gellu Naum’s prose has in the volumes published in the 1940s a pattern that specifies the dogmas of poetic expression. The first prose volume, **Medium**, published in 1945, written by Gellu Naum between 1940-1941, has the form of an essay, in fiction placing itself in „meta literary” enclaves. From the point of view of the structure of the imaginary as well as from the rhetoric and stylistic point of view, in Ovidiu Morar’s opinion, the volume is „a written paradigm” for the prose that would follow. The main archetype of the volume is love, viewed as possibility, as virtual but also vanguard, devouring.

The prose included in Gellu Naum’s volume **The forbidden formidable**, published in 1945, **Versify, versify...**, **The lily bed**, **The silver Cornelius**, **Bone white**, **The reminiscence of memory**, **The Castle of the blind**, **The spectre of longevity 122 corpses** all reviewed in the 1970 edition of **Versify, versify..**(the volume also contains fragments from **Medium and The questioner**) and in the 1996 edition of **The questioner** they are all included in the surrealist imaginary, focusing on love as a central theme. The evoked atmosphere is dreary, bizarre, that of a „black novel” also to be found in **The castle of the blind**, which was published in an individual brochure in The surrealist collection. The poet describes a space haunted by ghosts, in an atmosphere pending death, nothing but

the gothic castle, often evoked by surrealists, with sumptuous, mysterious, nightmarish scenery through which a character wanders carrying a corpse on his shoulders. The narrated event, similar to the volume **Medium**, is intersected by the poet's points to ponder on the status of the poet and the functions of poetry. The fragment **122 corpses** in the volume **The spectre of longevity – 122 corpses**, reminds us of Paul Eluard's 152 proverbs in 1925 also reminding us of the technique called „the refined corpse" („le cadavre exquis"), a technique used by surrealist writers. The fragment contains 122 aphorisms or paradoxes, a clear hint that the author is tempted to establish a special, essence bound communication code. The last prose fragment written before the instauration of the Stalinist regime, **Bone white**, 1947, includes a subversive message, the end culminating in a plea for freedom. *I can tell you by your granite gait, oh, Freedom*, completed with a raving plea for love.

The novel **Zenobia**, published in 1985, achieves the most subtle move in Gellu Naum's works, that of the confrontation of two opposing areas, each with its own mythology, that of the real world that is bland, finite, blamed, and the oneiric one that allows the exploration of the universe, the switch between these two being orchestrated by the author.

The couple Naum-Zenobia represents the image of the real-world couple Gellu-Lyggia the novel establishing itself as a poem about love as manifested within a human being.

Between 1962-1966 Gellu Naum writes three drama plays: **The Island**, **The Taus Clockworks** and **Maybe Eleonora** which are published in 1979. They are posthumously published again in 2003, in a new edition prepared and prefaced by Ion Cocora under the title *Exactly at the same time*, a volume which also includes the drama play Rameau's grandson (after Dennis Diderot). This volume includes echoing elements from Ionescu and Becket, the text accumulated in its evolution unexpected instances. The taste for the oneiric, macabre, the vague projections of the dialectics Eros/Thanatos sustain the text from the point of view of the surrealist aesthetics.

In spite of the fact that Gellu Naum was discovered very late in his career as a playwright, he challenges modern theatre through his imaginary to use unconventional elements, the unconventional issue of cues in the automatic stream of consciousness on the backdrop of the oneiric scenery which could take any form or shape in the doctrine of a genuine vanguard creator.

The previously mentioned "existential loop" corresponds to the socialist-realism period of his works.

The third part of the paper, **The socialist- realistic period in Gellu Naum's works**, is considered as a necessary act in justifying the poet's literary track in his mid-career, as this period was often rejected, avoided or annulled by literary critics and historians.



Literary criticism and history hardly mentions this moment in Gellu Naum's work and when the interest is focussed on this period, the comments are often terse, with special reference to the lack of presence of the elements of ideological aesthetics.

Either in prose or in verse, the imaginary of his work adopts the symbols of the dedicated literature ( the new man, the party, the communist, factories, dams, hero soldier, the great October revolution, etc.) or when he writes children literature, Gellu Naum introduces surrealist elements. The presence in his poems implies an attitude which the poet could not refuse due to life and safety reasons. A close scrutiny of the text in the volumes **The poem about our youth** and **The placid sun** revealed the intention of keeping the same themes found during the inter and post-war surrealism( the themes of death, love and alienation) identifying correspondents between the images in the revolutionary poems and some others from the volumes **The advantage of the vertebrae** or **Ascet at the shooting gallery**.

The taste for the narrative exercise, the preference for game playing, took the form either as prose for teenagers( **The seam** and **The mountain camp**) or that of the poems in The Books about Apolodor, 1959, 1964. As the surrealist writers preferred game playing, The book about Apolodor is a masked aesthetic demonstration in which the adventures of a penguin turn into opportunities for the writer to exercise his lexical fantasy. The parable developed in The greatest Gulliver is that of blocking human potential, that of the discrepancy between reality and aspiration..

A case of lucid judgement, Gellu Naum practices the superior game of translation, thus recording his name as "supreme man of letters" for posterity. Between 1955-1974 he translates works from the Russian children literature but also works from French, English, Serb, Chinese or American ( as an unique translator ).

The works of his realist-socialistic period represent within Gellu Naum's imaginary, a literary engramme invested with limited literary virtuosity, works that however unmask the dreary everlasting convention of the world. If we are to consider the poet's decade of dedicated literature as a demonstration of the philosophy of a creator who lost his bet with history, we are of the opinion that we could give a fair moral meaning to his existence.

In the fourth part of this paper called **Specific symbols and trade marks in Gellu Naum's works**, synthesis, as a means of investigation of the imaginary in Gellu Naum's work, allowed us the marking of the specific, individual overtones through a unique reference to the suggested symbolism. We contained the imaginary in Gellu Naum's works in a chart containing the earthly-marine-airy-fiery areas thus discovering new configurations of primeval elements accepting their singularity or heir interdependence, we then cut out the mathematical symbolic representations so that to proclaim as characteristic to Naum's works the motif of the elastic woman and that of erotic horse.

The feminine identity created in the universe of Gellu Naum's works bears the scars of the European surrealism, as it is described as decomposed, shapeless, actualizing the illicit in art, some parts of the body being erotically accented, the Romanian poet maintaining them or even multiplying them, thus assuming the emblem term of "the elastic woman" alongside other grotesque terms evoked such as "the vegetal woman", "the wax woman", "the huntress".

Another cliché motif generated by the imaginary in Gellu Naum's works is "the erotic horse", (the poem *The erotic horse*) a representation of the fascinating universe, caught in a continuous metamorphosis, engendered by the stream of consciousness. With perfect dynamics, Naum invents a mathematical alphabet alongside an aquatic one (the poem *Aquatic alphabet*), a zero degree imaginary in the discourse of an initiated poet striving for spiritual mastery. Undergoing a poetic treatment, the numbers and the geometrical shapes, hint at the same symbol, that of perfection, unity, and summation in poems such as *The triangle*, *The tamed triangle*, *My tired father*, *The way of the serpent*, *The adventure of the circle*.

The fifth part of the essay, **Gellu Naum's work and its reception and critical posterity** presents the image created by its significant elements, which keep to the surrealist dogma but at the same time mark the main individualistic trends of the writer. If the opinions of experts lead to a perfect assimilation of the imaginary in Gellu Naum's works by the vanguard movement promoting it thus to the modernist trend of artistic creation. The creative course of the poet does not contain major shifts; the temperate tonality of the critics accepting its intervention in the Romanian literary scene

The typical beginner's rejections, in any creative field, are due to the nonconformity in the formulas Gellu Naum cultivates, which shock the comfort of critical reception (points of view expressed by historian Nicolae Iorga and the critic Vladimir Streinu) The critics' belief that the worth of the poet's works resides in a gradual acceptance of the surrealist aesthetics followed by its internalization later in the day, with Gellu Naum's insistence in dropping tradition and convention. The important critics of the time kept silent about the works of young writers seeking confirmation (G. Calinescu, for example) a thing which doesn't seem to detain either Naum's poetic flow or the readers access to the written word, a fact elegantly accepted by the writer which a true sign of true greatness. The critics' monitoring of Gellu Naum's volumes intensifies with the writer's reconnection to the surrealist zone all the writer's manifestations being closely scrutinized and interpreted critically: all his revolts, the vanguard range of themes, the shifts in tonality, the ever expanding imaginary sphere. Gellu Naum's work had an insufficient, sequential, critical exposure up to 1989, peppered with intuition such as those of the critics: Al.Piru, Ion Pop, Eugen Simion, Nicolae Manolescu, Dan Cristea, Cornel Regman, Ștefan Augustin Doinaș, Lucian Raicu, Laurențiu Ulici etc., the last decade of the

previous century being marked by a revigoration in the interest for the vanguard movement which also includes within the new critical paradigm the poet's exemplary biography .

The first thorough critical study of Gellu Naum's poetry was not done by a Romanian critic , but by a French one, Rémy Laville, named **Gellu Naum. Poète roumain prisonnier au château des avengles** (1994), partially translated into Romanian.

The sluggishness of the Romanian critics up to the arly 21st century was compensated for by the publication of five critical studies with monograpy overtones: the first one **The saving of the species (About surrealism and Gellu Naum )**, published by Simona Popescu, writer and literary critic, professor at Bucharest University in 2000, the second belongs to Ion Pop, called **Gellu Naum. Poetry versus literature**, published by the Casa Cărții de Știință, Cluj n 2001. Ovidiu Morar published in 2003 a study called **The avatars of the Romanian surrealism**, with a chapter dedicated to the poet and called **Gellu Naum**, containing significant ideas and interconnections.

Simona Popescu published in 2004 a in a new paper , **Clava. Critical fiction with Gellu Naum**, a first part in the first essay completing the portrait of the poet with a consistent biography as a justification of the posterity's respect for the poet .In 2005 Vasile Spiridon, literary historian and critic, professor at the Letters Faculty of Bacau, with the title **Gellu Naum, monography, commented anthology, critical perception**.

We add to the list of the five studies the one one by Alina Ologu, teacher at the Ovidiu University in Constanta, named **Gellu Naum, poetical experiment**, published by Pontica Publishing house in 2007, which accesses the poet's writing from the point of view of its "experimental side", the same aspect also invoked by Marin Mincu while he was analyzing the ovel **Zenobia**, in 1986.

The critics' expertise firmly states the idea that the poet Gellu Naum assimilated the surrealist aesthetics and turned it into a *modus Vivendi*, into an existential attitude, as the poet himself affirmed. The imaginary of his work is enclosed within the surrealist movement like a manifesto, manifesting , after , a detachment from its idiosincrazies, the dogmas being structured according the poet's personal aesthetics, which places in its core poetry freed from the daily mundane ballast , the artist vacillates between love and death i.e. *eros/ thanatos*.

There is a convergence of the critics' opinion on Gellu Naum's works, consisting in its originality , the extremely dynamic imaginary, the continuity in the structures of the volumes, the writer's playful and parody-like attitude, the precedence of the irrational, the oneiric in the act of creation, the vanguard dimension of the objective universe, the rejection of dogmas in forms.

The critical posterity places the writer alongside the great literature creators, Simona Popescu Considering him “the only authentic representative of surrealism in our country”,his work’s influence having contemporary influences and overtones.( viz. the poetry of the eighties).Gellu Naum rejected enthusiastic and exaggerated appreciation, true to his personal ethicsin which glory and great names are part of the transitory, confessing audaciously:

*“freed by the adjustment of the name... ( **Thinking like that** )*

*“ we both sat in my deaf ear, my elderly child*

*Waiting to be born, we were, as it is said, **admirable ( The stepping stone )***

We assume the note that any interpretation has its own limitations, we consider our limitation as a demonstration of the fact that Gellu Naum’s writing is not meant for the great literature initiates only but also for those aspiring for knowledge through poetry.

## **Biographical profile**

**1875**, 18th of August. Andrei Naum, father of the future writer Gellu Naum. He was a poet, translator lieutenant colonel. The Naum family is of Aromanian origin, having been replaced from Macedonia to Romania in the nineteenth century.

**1915, the first of August**, Gellu Naum is born in Bucharest, Ilfov county, the seventh and the youngest offspring of the Naum family.

**1917**, 18th of August the poet's father dies in Marasesti, aged 42 only two years after the poet's birth.

**1922-1926** Gellu Naum attends Primary school in Tunari, Bucharest, Ilfov county.

**1926-1933**: After finishing Primary school he enlists in the „Cantemir-Vodă” College in Bucharest which he graduates in 1933.

He has his literary debut in 1931, in **Cuvantul** magazine, under the pseudonym **Ion Pavel**.

**1933**: He attends the Letters and Philosophy University in Bucharest which he graduates in 1937 with a bachelor's degree in philosophy.

**1936**: He has his first volume of poems called **Drumețul incendiar (The incendiary traveler)** published in 150 copies on blotting paper by Alfa Publishing house in Bucharest.

**1937**: His second poetry volume called **Libertatea de a dormi pe o frunte (The freedom of sleeping upon a forehead)** is published illustrated by Jacques Hérold.

**1938**: He continues his studies in Sorbonne, Paris to get his doctorate in philosophy with his paper „Abelard's studies” (unfinished however). Here he meets Gherasim Luca, one of the future group of surrealist Romanian writers and Victor Brauner, his lifelong friend.

**1940**: He publishes the volume **Vasco de Gama** illustrated by Jacques Hérold.

Initiated by Gellu Naum and Gherasim Luca, the group of surrealist Romanian writers is founded. Its members were Gellu Naum who had already published three poetry volumes, Gherasim Luca and Paul Paun had contributed at Aurel Baranga's **Alge** magazine, D. Trost, sometimes present in the **Meridian** magazine in Craiova, where Gellu Naum and Virgil Teodorescu had published poems too. The letter had also published poems in an obscure magazine Liceu in Constanta, in 1932 and in the **Meridian**.

**1944:** He publishes the poetry volume **The Corridor of sleep** with a portrait done by Victor Brauner.

**1945:** His first prose volume, **Medium** is published, a manifesto jointly written by Paul Paun and Virgil Teodorescu called **The Criticism of squalor**, a prose volume entitled **The Forbidden Formidable** with a frontispiece by Paul Paun

**1946 :** He publishes the volumes **The Castles of the blind, The specter of longevity –122 corpses** ( poetry with Virgil Teodorescu). He is appointed Professor in philosophy at Poarta Alba. He marries Lyggia Alexandrescu

**1947:** The group of surrealist writers disbands because of the communist regime. Gellu Naum and Virgil Teodorescu are the only ones that do not flee the country. Virgil Teodorescu (1909-1987) adapts himself to the new regime, becoming one of its emblematic personalities .Gellu Naum isolates himself. His manifesto volumes are published **L’infra noir**, in cooperation with Gherasim Luca,Paul Paun, Virgil Teodorescu and D.Trost; **Eloge de Malombra-Cerne de l’amour absolu**, in cooperation with Gherasim Luca, Paul Paun and D.Trost .

**1950:** he withdraws from the literary scene. He is offered the position of deputy Professor at the Pedagogical department of the Agronomical Institute. He refuses his promotion in the university hierarchy.

**1952:** He publishes the prose volumes: **The Seam, The mountain camp**, literature for youngsters.

**1955-1959:** He writes and publishes children literature, **That’s what Sanda’s like** ,**1956**, also published in German and Hungarian in **1959**.**The Biggest Gulliver**, also published in German and Hungarian in 1958; **Apolodor book** , illustrated by Jules Perahim, **1959**.

**1960-1961** He publishes the volumes **The Placid Sun** and **The Poem of Our Youth**.

**1970-1980:**The volume **Selected poems**, published with an introductory note by Ov.S. Crohmalniceanu, **Versify, versify...**prose and selected fragments,**1970**,**The animal tree**, poems, **1971**, **Apolodor’s book**, **1972**, **My tired father**, a poem **1972**,**Description of the tower**, poems,**1975**, **The books about Apolodor**, illustrated by Dan Stanciu,**1975**, **The Island, The Clockwork , Taus, Maybe Eleonora** , drama **1979**;**The other side**, poems, **1980**.

In **1975** he is awarded the prize of the Writer’s Guild for his poetry, Bucharest.

**1985-2000:** Cartea Romaneasca printing press publishes the novel **Zenobia** ,in **1985**, the year he was also awarded the special prize of the Writer’s Guild for all his literary activity. The volumes **Amedeu the kindest lion**, stories, **1988**; **Apolodor, a voyaging penguin**, stories, **1988**; **The blue shore**, poems,**1990**. **Cover and over cover**, followed by **The blue shore– poems(1989– 1993)** **1994**; **Sister well**, poems, **1995**; **Black fire–poems**, **1995**; **The questioner**,**1996**;**The other side/L’autre cote**,

poems, a bilingual, text in Romanian and French, translated by Annie Benteoiu and Andree Fleury, **1998. The animal tree followed by The advantage of the vertebrae, 2000, The ascet at the shooting boat**—poems, anthology with and afterword by Ioana Parvulescu, **2000.**  
**2001**, 29<sup>th</sup> of September The poet dies in Bucharest.  
**2005**, March, Lyggia Naum, the poet's wife dies in Bucharest.