

**"GEORGE EMIL PALADE" UNIVERSITY OF MEDICINE,
PHARMACY, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY FROM TÂRGU MUREŞ
DOCTORAL SCHOOL OF LITERATURE, HUMANITIES AND APPLIED
SCIENCES
FIELD: PHILOLOGY**

**THESIS
ABSTRACT**

Candidate:

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Scientific leader:

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THE MOTIF OF THE FLYER IN GREEK-LATIN AND ROMANIAN LITERATURES

ABSTRACT

The doctoral thesis entitled *The Motif of the Flyer in Greek-Latin and Romanian literatures* aims at a mirror analysis of the aspects related to the main characteristics of the myth and motif of the Flyer, between the ancient concept, referring to the literary creations of ancient Greece and the Roman Empire, passing through the medieval period and reaching the current vision, that of Romanian literature. When we refer to myth, we remember all those manifestations with a spectacular character, rites, rituals, but also moments from the life of prehistoric man, which directly or indirectly, prepare him for the creation, knowledge, awareness of literary works, as we perceive them today.

From the beginning we wanted to offer a clear look and definition of the concept of myth, bringing together the basic visions so far, with a perspective that takes into account the current evolution of civilization. The term in question brings from the night of primitive humanity unusual images, true flashes of a remarkable unique. Myths are a living proof, with a human voice, talking about objective, phenomenological, unusual transcendental realities, worthy of being remembered and transmitted to the following centuries.

The rules, prohibitions, taboos in the life of primitive man represent great themes and at the same time the premises for the creation of a literature, with all the stages, transformations and resuscitations of the Flyer's motif, over time. But, as if more than ever and everywhere, they find their abode in contemporary literature.

The research proposes, through the chosen theme and the means of expression that reflect it, an advanced approach to the literary and pre-literary phenomenon, both in terms of rites and rituals of primitive peoples, rituals and beliefs of the ancient world and contemporary literary works, from the perspective of transformations and the psychological determinations of the consumer of literature. The thesis aims to investigate the direct or indirect determinism that underlies the phenomena that take place before and after the creation of a literary work. Aspects related to psychology, sociology, psychiatry, literary aesthetics, literary history, literary criticism, etc. will be scored. Therefore, we can observe a good location of the topic in the context of scientific research in the field of arts, but also in an inter- and trans-disciplinary context.

The proposed objectives aim at analyzing the myth and motive of the Flyer since its appearance, in popular beliefs, beyond what really and obviously appears on the stage of

literature, the unspoken and little known part of it - unconscious determinations, motivations, dream, the greatest fears, expressed desires, but also hidden ones, in a word the inner life of man, which is often parallel to the obvious one, which is presented to us.

The central motif of the research, however, remains the love (eros) that gives rise to remarkable literary creations, and the human is attracted to it by the very construction with which he is born. Human is not a mechanism, it is a paradox. Although his condition has remained the same since the primitive tribes, he has been subjected to progress, to technological progress. What do we most resemble the human of primitive society? The basal structure, the affective one. Through his construction, the human before discerning, feels, sees, hears, smells and touches - this is how he knows the world.

The folk myth of the Flyer symbolizes the budding feeling of love in girls in their teens. The feelings of the young girls are triggered by a fantastic character, with a great power of seduction, who appears in the evening, makes them fall in love with him, then leaves, leaving behind only melancholy, turmoil. It is like a disease, a passionate love, a passionate, uncontrollable love that consumes and destroys the human soul.

Zmeul, Zmăul, Zburătorul, also called *Ceasul cel rău*, is an evil spirit which, having the appearance of a winged dragon, a serpent or a pear or a roll of fire, descends at night into people's houses on baskets and torments pregnant or unmarried wives, and the big girls, causing them, through restlessness and turmoil, countless bruises on their bodies and great fatigue. "His appearance must correspond to his capacity for seduction. In the exercise of its erotogenic function it can metamorphose into a snake, dragon or roll of fire. That is why he could be confused by strangers with the winged Serpent, the anthropophagous dragon or the Demon of the air, all charged with electricity. But these confusions are not the only ones. After all, all the Metamorphoses of the Flyer pursue the same goal: the hidden penetration in the house of his pubescent or passionate victims, in order to turn into a strong and ardent young man of love. Metamorphosis in the form of animals (snake, pig, dog) or as a roll of fire, mentioned by some folklorists, refers on the one hand to the technique of penetrating the lives of victims and on the other hand to sexual symbolism." (Romulus Vulcănescu, *Mitologie română*).

The Flyer is an erotic demigod, an evil archaic demon. It symbolizes all forms of sexuality, from puberty to hysteria of women who live only for bodily pleasures. Studies on the erotic myth of the Flyer, starting with that of G. Călinescu, have highlighted the fact that it reveals a specific vision of love, imagined as a disease caused by the action of a mythical, fabulous character, which can be healed by magic. The importance of this myth remains

related to the fact that it gave rise to a motive of oral poetic creation: the erotic motive of the flier.

With a wide folk circulation, the motif was treated with the means of different species, such as enchantment, carol, ballad, legend or story. Converting the myth into a poetic motif and spreading it in an area of aesthetics, however, involves, in folk creation, treating the motif in a similar way, by repeating, from one species to another, the same situations or moments. This unitary treatment is explained on the basis of the strong links that exist between the poetic motive and the myth. The research aims to treat the approached topic in a unitary way, it will represent a syncretic body of ideas, analyses, currents seen in their interdisciplinarity, outlining the premises for understanding the literary phenomenon.

The importance and topicality of the theme lies in the attempt to decode the ways in which Eros and the story of Amor and Psyche, from ancient literature, survived and were transformed and inserted in the creations of contemporary literature, in the invisible mechanisms of its scene. The thesis can have a wide range of readers, from those in the field of psychology, sociology, psychiatry, anthropology, to the field of literature, but it also targets the average person. To understand the transformations that have taken place in the perception, acceptance and assimilation of rules, prohibitions and taboos, the method of comparative research will be applied. The methodology includes documentation activities, data processing, practical works, data collection, interpretation and exploitation.

Through research on the myth of the Flyer, we tried to discover not only the hypostasis of an archaic evil demon, but also his evolution towards the angelic face reflected in Romanian folklore. Thus we managed to characterize the Flyer in the creations of ancient and Romanian literature, emphasizing the importance of the myth in creating true works of art. He mysteriously appears in the night, when the world is enchanted by the charm of the dream and disappears just as mysteriously, becoming a shadow in the dark, unseen by anyone.

We underlined the qualities of the Flyer reflected in the Greek-Latin and Romanian literatures, thus demonstrating the uniqueness, superiority and angelic charm of this supernatural being. But still, regardless of the name under which Eros / Cupid / the Flyer is known, his face remains a secret of the dream, always hidden by the wings of the night, a bearer of superstitions and, at the same time, a standard of beauty.

The thesis is structured on two sections that sum up five chapters, with a distinct but unitary approach, following the essence of the myth and the motif of the Flyer, that type of essence that requires us to return to the origins. The first section starts from a wide

information on the subject, by consulting different national and foreign works, with reference to the concept, to the manifestations of primitive man, rites, rituals, his customs, literary manifestations of ancient Greece and Rome, major themes, in agreement with which the ritual scenarios and the literary scenarios were created later, not much different from those of today. This first part will argue the very essence of the myth and motif of the Flyer - that of the rituals of primitive man, but also of the verse or prose creations of Greek Antiquity. The second part deals with the metamorphoses of the Flyer's motif in literary creations.

First chapter, *General considerations. Myth, mythology, mythology and related. Myth, fairy tale, legend. The essential myths of the Romanian people* is part of the grand plan of the entire work, being conceived as a real foundation of the issue and starts in a systematic treatment of the basic theme, being a massive and necessary preamble. Although the core of this project is the Flyer's motif, between the ancient concept and the current vision, from the beginning we wanted to offer a clear look and definition of the concept of myth, bringing together the basic visions so far, with a perspective that takes into account the evolution current state of civilization.

Starting from a broad information on the subject and consulting various national and foreign works, with reference to the concept and the way it is approached, I distinguished two broad categories in the sphere of myths those that come from the beginnings of human existence and the so-called modern, such as those of Empedocles, Heraclitus, Protagoras or Plato, ie from periods of the civilized world, in order to make more accessible their own philosophical concepts. We have thus proceeded to a selection of useful works, giving up certain ontologies that seem either outdated or too inconsistent with the moment we are in and we have established some coordinates that could meet a wide acceptance for a definition of the chosen theme. Myths are oral or written narratives, creations of small groups that try to give an explanation of cosmic phenomena that have reverberated in the lives of all humanity. We thus have an attempt to express ourselves symbolically, often with the aim of externalizing a belief or knowledge about spectacular phenomena, saving and perpetuating moral principles. Hence the efficiency and practical utility of the mythology. The myth, from which the literary motif arises, represents an oral or written narrative that tries to give an explanation to some cosmic phenomena that have reverberated in the life of all humanity.

We can talk about an efficiency, a practical utility of mythology, because, without a pertinent motivation, we cannot explain why so many impressive myths have not been extinguished in the night of time. First of all, it is about the fact that we have a justification of our own beliefs, even a kind of guarantee of their validity. We should also consider the

satisfaction of a deep human curiosity to answer the great questions of existence, seemingly simple, but to which science has failed to find an acceptable answer. I pointed out the differences between terms like myth, fairy tale, legend, saga that would seem synonymous, at a superficial glance. In reality, they are not, even if their similarities are based on some congruences, meaning something of a story, a narrative attached to the unreal, fabulous, imaginative and I made a short review of the fundamental myths of the Romanian people.

The second chapter, *The Flyer - from myth to literary motif* has as a starting point the superstitions, the hypostases in which it appears in the beliefs of various peoples of the world: Dorliss - Incubus - The Flyer.

There are many connections between the three hypostases, which leads us to believe that there is a nucleus, a common starting point. Myth is defined as a fabulous story, fabrication, entered into tradition, about the beliefs of peoples, about gods, events and legends, considered as the founder of a culture.

Prehistoric man was aware of the importance of dreams, so it seems that he managed, with the help of drugs, to control everything that means the activity of the unconscious. Through a dream he had the revelation of the great enigma of his existence: death. Primitive man was possessed by fear of the spirits of the slain, of faith in the afterlife, a total enigma to him, but certainly associated with something negative, for death was the harshest punishment he could receive. Now the question arises why the dead, once the most beloved beings, turn into demons? What caused the primitives to attribute such a change of sensitivity to their loved ones? The fact that death is the greatest misfortune that can happen to a man. They believed that he dies only from causes caused by violence, witchcraft, and the soul of the dead is vengeful and irascible and, wanting to be in the company of relatives, as before, he wants to make others die, through disease.

In English-speaking countries there is a myth about a supernatural being called Dorliss, and known as the Flyer in the popular tradition of Romania. He is an immaterial existence, passing through narrow spaces, under doors, through keyholes, baskets of houses, in the rooms of girls and young wives and which imposes its will to commit sexual intercourse. This impure spirit (demon, rapist) is also called night monster or love thief. At night, in his sleep, with all his opponents defeated, he forces the young girls, who, despite all the opposition, are defeated and forced. There are cases in which the love thief influences their lives, disrupts their marriages and urges them to prostitution. Abused girls or women describe it as a heavy weight that presses on their chest, which immobilizes and rapes them. Many times, when they wake up, they have bruises and scratches on their body. An incubus

is a male-shaped demon who, according to mythological and legendary traditions, lurks sleeping women or men to engage in sexual activities with them. Her female partner is a succubus. Sensual stories about nightmares and succubus have been told for centuries in traditional societies. Some traditions claim that repeated sexual activity with an incubus or succubus can lead to deteriorating health and mental health or even cause death.

There are strong links between the myth of the Flyer and literary, folk and cult creation. It was necessary, therefore, a deep analysis to succeed in highlighting the way in which a fundamental human experience, love, appears presented in the old Romanian mythology, in the oral poetic creation and in the cult literature. We analyzed the relationships between the myth of the Flyer and the corresponding poetic motive and illustrated another aspect of the relationship between myth and literature. Almost without exception, he appears presented as a nocturnal creature that, during the day, hides among the hollows of some trees, in walnut or hazelnut barrels, because it does not suffer from sunlight. Frequently, the character appears as a demonic being, unclean or filthy. The fact that his manifestations are nocturnal, that the action he exercises is presented as something bad, draws attention to the fact that we are in front of a representation from the sacred sphere, which does harm or which is dirty. The Flyer's demonic regime is obvious, especially in the consequences it has on the victims it haunts. The girl or woman haunted by the Flyer can be easily recognized by the pallor, weakness or signs of madness that appear. His visit is often betrayed by the stigmas he leaves, bruises or bite marks. The victim loses weight, becomes paler and more tired, is melancholy, confused, has a restless sleep, with bad dreams, is shaken by chills or tremors, and sometimes can go crazy or die. Often, during the day, the victim has visions, walks in a trance, speaks alone or hugs the trees.

As a typical situation, the poetic motif of the Flyer remains related to the myth, the cultural form that gives birth to it. But the existence of literary motives remains linked to other situations, and may have determinations in social life, in moral life, revealing attitudes towards certain reprehensible issues, such as the motive of the traitor or unfaithful wife, or in the sentimental life. Among the species of popular literature in which the image of the Flyer is often evoked, the enchantment holds the most important place. Numerous enchantments of the fly are recorded in different regions of the country and suggest the frequency of cases, but also the diversity of aspects under which the disease may manifest, as a consequence of the various appearances under which it may manifest. In Romanian folklore, there is not only an erotic myth of the Flyer in relation to which appear, in addition, ritual practices of defense or

expulsion of the Flyer, but also an erotic motif of the Flyer, closely related to the myth that gave birth.

The motif, taken over by literature, is found in the works of many authors such as: Ion Heliade Rădulescu, Vasile Alecsandri, Mihai Eminescu, George Coșbuc, Tudor Arghezi etc. The passage of the motif in the literature was accompanied by a refinement of the treatment procedures and, especially, of a deepening of the problematic that it implies, of a sublimation of the substance of the myth. This sublimation can also be explained by the fact that, in the examples presented, the myth was subjected to a lyrical treatment.

The third chapter, entitled *A Vision of Greco-Latin Mythology*, deals with the image of Eros / Cupid in Greek and Latin literature. Beyond the image of a handsome and carefree young man, the Greeks portray Eros as a god of physical and passionate desire who pushes his victims into a state of confusion and uncontrolled exits. Hesiod describes him as one of the first gods who were responsible for the creation of the world, representing, at the same time, an abstract principle and ensuring cohesion in a world ruled by division. In the works of Greek philosophers and poets, we are dealing both with an Eros, in the guise of a mythical character, and with the concept of eros. Eros is sexual or passionate love, and its arrows cause a kind of madness. On the other hand, the concept is assimilated to that of life force, somewhat closer to Schopenhauer's concept of will, a fundamental process of struggle for survival and reproduction. The roots of Apuleius' story about Amor and Psyche are found in Plato's *Banchetul*. The theme of the dialogue is love, more precisely eros. Eros has here the status of true opinion, which is neither true nor false because it does not propose a proven truth and is, as such, something that lies between science and ignorance. He cannot be an entity of divine essence, because the gods, having the good and the beautiful, are happy, and Eros, who is desire, therefore lack, cannot be happy, so he is not a god. He is an intermediate being, a daimon, a mediator between humans and gods, always in search of what he does not have and always gains and loses, never stopping in his search. We then proceeded to an analysis of Greek literary creations, selecting several authors: Plato, Sappho, Moschos, Bion, Orpheus, Longos. Eros appears everywhere with an angelic figure, but with a cold, deceptive nature, being both savage and ruthless, hurting both gods and humans. The young people affected by Eros suffer, they do not sleep, it seems to them that they are burning, they barely taste the food, they become silent. They suffer as the one who first tastes the deeds and words of love suffers. In Latin literature, the story of Amor and Psyche, which served as a source of inspiration for Romanian authors, appears in three authors: Apuleius, Martianus and Fulgentius, each treating it differently. Apuleius' tale seems to bring together all the meanings

of the *Metamorphoses*. The protagonists of the fairy tale receive symbolic, relevant names: The Soul (Psyche) diligently seeks the love (Amor) acquired definitively only after it is initiated in the divine mysteries of Olympus. In this story, the image of Amor / Cupid is outlined from four perspectives. We have, first of all, the perspective of the author who portrays him as a winged, light-hearted child who, through ugly behavior, confronts public morality. He enters foreign houses at night, puts enmity in marriages and escapes unpunished, being, at the same time, bold and shameless. The oracle of Delphi outlines the image of a terrible, wild and cruel dragon that destroys everything in its path, with flames and iron. Psyche's sisters portray him as a huge snake crawling in thousands of coils, its blood-swollen throat full of deadly venom that will eventually eat it. From Psyche's point of view, Amor / Cupid is the sweetest and most pleasant of the monsters, with a shining head of rays, a rich hair, bathed in ragweed, with a milk-white neck, purple cheeks, at the sight of which even the light of the lamp begins to fade. Martianus is considerably inspired by Cupid and Psyche in the narrative structure of *De nuptiis*, which begins with Mercury's frustrating attempts to find a wife. He considers potential candidates, but finds them inappropriate or unavailable. The setting is an extravagant fantasy - the extraordinarily erudite philology, adorned with vestments and robes of learning, a forerunner of witches in medieval literature, is raised to the sky by a bright light, accompanied by a symphony of planetary harmonies and songs sung of the nine muses, to become the bride of the messenger of the gods, whose medieval role, as the god of eloquence, prevails over his classical roles. Fulgentius' work, *Mitologiae libri*, in the third book, provides a detailed description of the story, as it appears in Aristophanes and Apuleius, and reinterprets it. He embarks on an exegesis designed to demonstrate the madness of the story, while saving its profound meanings. The writer presents the city as if it were the world, in which he places, as king and queen, God and Matter. To these he adds three daughters: Flesh, Spontaneity, and the Soul. The latter, (Psyche, in Greek) is more beautiful because it is superior to Free Will and nobler than the Flesh. Venus (Sensuality) envies her and sends Cupid (Desire) to destroy her. But because Desire is for both good and evil, it loves the Soul and reunites with it. Desire (Cupid) convinces the Soul (Psyche) that she should not see her face, that is, she should not learn the delights of desire and that she should not agree with her sisters.

The fourth chapter, *Metamorphoses of the Flyer's motif in Romanian poetry*, follows the way in which this was processed and capitalized by Romanian poets. The Flyer appears in European folklore and has been the subject of inspiration for countless writers in European literature such as Victor Hugo, Lord Byron or Goethe. In Victor Hugo, for

example, this motif of the Flyer appears in the poem *Le Sylphe*, contained in the volume *Odes and Ballads* of 1826. Inspired by patriotism and driven by the desire to make known to his compatriots, foreign literary texts, Constantin Stamati makes translations that are much closer to the nature of Romanians. His admiration for folklore, traditions and the vernacular explains his initiative to locate the Hugolian ballad *Le Sylphe* under the title *Zburătorul la zăbre*. In Romanian literature, a first mention of the Flyer appears in Dimitrie Cantemir who says that the people have not completely cleansed themselves of the old heresy and still worship or believe in unknown gods derived from the ancient idols of the Dacians. Cantemir's vision of the Flyer presents some common elements, but also differences from how it appears presented in Romanian folklore. The author subtly inserts in the text the idea that he is not just a ghost, an imagination, but rather a creature in the flesh, who was caught and punished, as it should be, by some married men.

Vasile Alecsandri's Flyer is closer to the earthly version of the character, still insinuated by Dimitrie Cantemir in *Descrierea Moldovei*. In fluent verses, with a sonority that supports the idyllic joy of life in nature, in a paradisiacal setting and in a palpable timelessness, Alecsandri changes the image of the Flyer, lowering the character to the terrestrial plane, capturing the sincerity and joy of living, naively, the first thrills of love. In *Legenda rândunicăi*, the poet processes a folk text about the metamorphosis of a young princess into a bird to reject the love of the Flyer. Cezar Bolliac's Flyer includes only two poetic sequences: the interrogations of a curious neighbour about the unnatural manifestations of the girl and her answer, in a manner similar to the poetry of Ion Heliade-Rădulescu. And the demon here is seen as a being who brings the extreme exhaustion of the child troubled by the powerful thrills of love. Bolliac's young woman knows very well the nature of the conditions caused by the Flyer in her sleep. In Ion Heliade Rădulescu, the erotic theme, by evoking the beliefs of this world, finds its point of support in the erotic motif of the Flyer, the fabulous being that the two neighbors evoke so insistently in the final part of the poem. Eminescu took over the pubertal myth of the Flyer, also known as the erotic myth, because, in the conception of our people, the Flyer is a fantasy that can take the form of a beautiful and charming young man, planting for the first time in the souls of young girls the feeling of love. The theme of the poem *Călin (file din poveste)* illustrates the manifestation of the fulfilled feeling of love, overcoming the obstacles that arose. In Eminescu's creation, the fabulous Flyer is embodied by the young man in love, being humanized both by the thrill of love and by the name Călin. The creation is an emotional poem of fulfilled love, a love story with an accentuated lyrical character, in which the spell of the popular myth is kept. In the

same way, the folk roots of *Luceafărul* are found in the Flyer's motif, the beliefs about undead outlining the general atmosphere of the fairy tale world. In Arghezi's poem *Lingoare*, the myth of the Flyer is only suggested by the girl's illness and by her association with longing. The rhythm of poetry has folk resonances and accents of enchantment. Love is represented here, as in popular mythology, under the spectrum of mystery and the infusion of the fantastic. The feeling of love is captured in a unique hypostasis: that of illness, longing, smoldering suffering that leads to a lethargy of the being, to a dull pain and no cure. In *Fătălăul*, the reason of the Flyer, which accuses the mixture of a dirty sacred form in human destiny, is correlated with elements of traditional, folkloric anthropology, which warns that the evil hidden in man, the predisposition for crime, would be denounced, first of all, by an aberrant appearance compared to normal. The Flyer's motif is metamorphosed in Nichita Stănescu's lyrics, in the *Leoaică tânără iubirea* poem. Here, eros settles in the being and delimits it, dislocates it, expressing a state that we can define as a loss of self because, touched by eros, the ego loses suggestively: eyebrow - indication of clear vision, temple - sign of thought and of reason, the chin - of the confirmation of the identity design, and leaves behind a self devastated and dominated by the chimera of feeling.

In the last chapter, *Metamorphoses of the Flyer's motif in Romanian prose*, we chose to make an analysis of some works representing different literary species: the fairy tale, the short story and the novel. The fairy tales *Povestea porcului*, by Ion Creangă and *Porcul fermecat* by Petre Ispirescu represent a takeover and a reinterpretation of the theme of the story about Eros / Love and Psyche, from the novel *Măgarul de aur* by Apuleius. The myth of Eros and Psyche was codified by Apuleius, but it seems that he reinforced the story based on existing stories. There are some differences between the versions that are more than nuances. In Ispirescu we have a direct intervention of Inferno, while in Creangă it is fulfilled through a medium, seemingly neutral femininity. The essence of the fairy tale remains unchanged, regardless of historical times and the evolution of the mentality. In Agârbiceanu's short story *Jandarmul*, Bogdan's figure is projected towards the demonic categories. The gendarme has in the center a character who is an enigmatic presence or, we could say, an obsessive absence. He does not appear as a man of action, but he is nevertheless very strongly implanted in the de facto gear of the book, living intensely in every branch of it. Its appearance produces a real eroticization of the village. The magic of the gaze, black magic, performed by the demon, deconstructs the being through conditioning, generating the scheme of an existence as a guided dream. The attributes of this type of being are, first of all, the full

dependence on the leading factor, a satellite of the being, an abolition of the limits of individuality.

The immediate result of this conditioned being is the anti-legal conduct, as a result of which the victim, the female character, is quickly exiled by the rural society towards the peripheries of the social ballet of the village universe. The motif of the Flyer overlaps with that of the double, as a complementary principle that generates the fulfillment, the apparent transfiguration of the being in love. At a profane level of reading or, in other words, at a first level, Eliade's *Șarpele* can be considered an erotic story. Procedures specific to the fantastic epic are discreetly inserted in this surface structure, which imposes another level of interpretation, an interpretation according to another code. At this second level, mythical paths intersect, such as the labyrinth, the primordial couple, the Flyer. It is the first writing of Eliade in which the ambiguity between the magical and the profane meaning prevails over the classic rational-fantastic ambiguity, cultivated in fantastic prose. The effort to reveal the magical-mythical structure in the subtext, to decipher its meanings, is the one that amplifies the aesthetic value of this writing. The snake is an overpersonation born of the magical identification of reptiles and man. It is a primordial, telluric, fascinating being because it updates the primordial feelings of those who contemplate it. Women experience a kind of impersonal erotic ecstasy, similar to the orgies of primitive peoples in which the eros, lived violently by the participant has the function of magical communication with the universe.

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