

**UNIVERSITATEA DE MEDICINĂ, FARMACIE, ȘTIINȚE ȘI
TEHNOLOGIE « GEORGE EMIL PALADE » DIN TÂRGU MUREȘ**

**ȘCOALA DOCTORALĂ DE LITERE, ȘTIINȚE UMANISTE ȘI APLICATE
DOMENIUL: FILOLOGIE**

FLORA AND FAUNA IN ROMANIAN SYMBOLIST POETRY

PhD Coordinator:

Prof. univ. dr. Alexandru CISTELECAN

PhD Student:

Diana Livia BUZILĂ

This present paper suggests an analytical endeavour through which it approaches the major themes of Symbolism, focusing on the vegetal imagery and that representing the fauna in the Romanian symbolist poetry.

Our endeavour covers a path which runs from the general to the particular, from presenting and illustrating the major themes of Symbolism to a compared analysis of the vegetal and animal symbols in the Romanian symbolist poetry. The first part of the study (first three chapters) offer a brief examination of the history of the symbolist movement, going through the contributions brought by Baudelaire, Mallarmé, Verlaine and Rimbaud, considered to be the precursors of Symbolism, and up to its import to the Romanian literature and the presentation of the symbolist aesthetics. The second part of the study (last four chapters) has a pronounced practical nature and suggests the analysis of the poetry of selected authors according to the symbolist timeline proposed by Zina Molcuț (1880-1899; 1899-1908; 1908-1916).

This current thesis is organised as a theme-based thesis, in its endeavour to trace the main themes of the symbolist poetry I have tried to get carried away by reverie, especially by vegetal and fauna-related imagery using Bachelard's method. The theme-based critical endeavour focuses on developing the correspondences between the different sensorial levels (visual, olfactory, tactile, gustative, auditory or caloric¹).

Moreover, this present thesis has a comparatist nature as we aimed to analyse in a comparative manner symbols appearing in the poetry of the poets mentioned within the thesis and to see which type of reverie induced the same symbol to several from the mentioned authors. We will observe, for example, how the same flower arouses different images in the imagination of the poets, how these become different symbols for contradictory moods. As one will notice, we have used both analyses of the imagery, influenced by Gilbert Durand, as well as stylistic analyses.

Symbolism makes the transition to a new type of lyricism which overcomes objective reality, staking on the dimension which is not caught by the eye, a transcendent one, which can only be vaguely intuited, suggested, being revealed through symbols which must be deciphered. The poetic images have in the symbolist movement an implicit symbolic function, removing poetry from the field of discursivity and of the descriptive in order to take it to an area of emotiveness. Suggestion becomes the new criteria of the poetic, and big themes (nature, love, the

¹N.B.: The classification belongs to Paula Diaconescu in her study *Epitetul în poezia română modern (The Epithet in Modern Romanian Poetry)*, II, in SCL XXIII, no. 3, Year 23, Bucharest, 1972, p. 259.

social) "are modulated at the level of characteristic motifs: autumn, rain, emptiness, the floral universe, musical instruments, neurosis, the *spleen*, great departures, exotic lands, suffocating city, fatidic numbers etc."²

The first lyrics of Symbolism, namely that of minor poets grouped around "Literatorul" literary magazine, shows a tendency of cultivating the macabre, lugubrious and minor Satanism (in Rollinat's style), simultaneously with a poetry striving towards evasion. The main feature of their poetry is the "exacerbated sensuality leaning towards spasmodic passion, often delirious, with a hint of malady"³, sometimes on a strident and ostentatious note. The poets of the "Literatorul" literary magazine are symbolists through their preferred themes and motifs found in their poetry. One can mention, among them, the following: the angst, fear, spleen, neurosis, voluptuousness of death, ecstasy, pretentiousness, mannerism, perfumes, urban or garden flowers (lilac, lilies, and roses), precious stones, ornaments, synaesthesia, "correspondences" etc. These themes have been cultivated even before the Romantic or the Parnassians poets. Both in France and in our country, Symbolism was confronted from the very beginning with decadence. As we have seen, the eclectic style owed to the merger of these grounded movements and the new tendency in poetry coexisted during this period. The delimitation (through some specific means of expression, or aesthetical or stylistic particularities) will be made later on. Ștefan Petică will be the first to integrate both in his poetry and theoretical articles a coherent Symbolism.

During its life span, "Vieața nouă" literary magazine also raised the level of intellectuality of the Romanian press. The urbanism of those involved with the "Vieața nouă" literary magazine was translated through the appearance of parks, gardens, dirty streets and luxurious interiors. The city was often a space of damnation, a "sickened city", as depicted Emil Isac or Bacovia. Summarising this period, Dumitru Micu states the following: "The languid, sickly, mimetic, epigonic and agonic Symbolism was never more comfortable than in the magazine advocating for a poetry depicting a tumultuous life."⁴

The year of 1908 was a prolific year for the symbolist movement, as it was during this year that multiple symbolist volumes and magazines appeared. This was also a year of public

² *Macedonski-Bacovia-Symbolismul românesc (Macedonski-Bacovia-Romanian Symbolism)*, commented anthology, issued by Florea Firan, Scrisul românesc Fundația-Editura, Craiova, 2016.

³ Zina Molcuț, *Ștefan Petică și vremea sa (Ștefan Petică and his Time)*, Cartea Românească Publishing, Bucharest, 1980, p.186.

⁴ *Ibidem*, p.167.

popularisation of the movement, as several symbolist poets were mentioned among classic writers. 1908, the year when the manifest article of Minulescu, *Aprindeți torțele! (Light the Torches!)* appeared, is the year during which modern poets considered themselves to be "the others", trying to find the "unpopular paths". This is the year when the first symbolist poems written by Minulescu appeared, and 1915 is the year when Bacovia's *Plumb (Lead)* appeared.

We have noticed that Symbolism radically changed the way in which poetry was written, making a transition towards modernism, the basic principle of this movement being the creation of symbols through the suggestion of images and ideas, through suggestion and synaesthesia (unusual association of images). Visual sensations are represented through the chromatic epithet ("pink wave", "white, blond, suave dreams" etc.), and olfactory sensations are represented through determined nouns ("perfume of ...", "smell of ..."). Auditory sensations, inspired by Wagner's music, are introduced through repetition, chorus and different instruments appearing in the symbolist poetry. Lastly, tactile sensations are introduced through epithets such as "wet", "moist", "muddy", "rotten" etc.

On an ontological scale, flowers determine an entire register of emotions and often provoke ambivalent effects. These can be associated with femininity, the sensorial, but also with the death of passion and are re-dimensioned according to the sensibility of each poet. The floral imagery thus generates both different types of reveries (sublime feelings), as well as severe melancholies (under a nostalgic aura). We have tried to prove that flowers are strictly related to the affective register and interiority of the poets. They capture not just transcendence, eroticism and the ineffable but also the existential cracks.

The doctoral thesis is structured in seven chapters. The first chapter is strictly a theoretic chapter. We aim here to capture the ideology of this movement, the dominant poetics of Symbolism. Thus, the chapter aims to highlight theoretical aspects, but also aspects concerning the timeline and process of the movements, and the manner in which Symbolism is depicted in France in comparison with other movements (Positivism, Naturalism, Parnassianism).

Within the second chapter, entitled *Importul simbolist în literatura română (The Symbolist Import in Romanian Literature)*, we have proven the specificity of Symbolism in Romanian literature compared to French literature, where the movement was born, and the manner in which this movement was "internalised" within the national poetic climate. We highlighted the cultural and historical context in which Symbolism developed in Romanian

literature, we have highlighted the similarities, particularities and even differences between the ways in which Symbolism was implemented on our territory compared with that of France. The appearance of Symbolism implied a change of paradigm, a rupture with prior models of lyricism, an improvement of the poetry with new themes and means of expression and the discovery of new territories and areas of inspiration.

The dominant marks of Romanian Symbolism lie under the arch of chaos, and a feeling of lack of belonging and isolation, most symbolist poets feeling or perceiving their environment as being asphyxiating, miserable, unsanitary and demoralising. Given these conditions, the riot against bourgeois society is justified.

The third chapter attempts to systematise the concepts related to the *Symbolist aesthetic code*, although this endeavour is hardened by the contradictions of the movement and the impossibility of having a unitary image on Symbolism. When writing this chapter, I used reference books in the field, such as the study of Tzvetan Todorov, *Teorii ale simbolului* (*Theories of the Symbol*), as well as *Structura liricii modern* (*The Structure of Modern Lyrics*) by Hugo Friedrich. The taxonomy of symbolist aesthetic comprises terms such as free verse, suggestion, correspondences, synaesthesia, colour, sounds, perfumes, musicality, symbols, all notions largely discussed in this chapter.

The fourth chapter, entitled *Alexandru Macedonski si prima serie simbolistă* (*Alexandru Macedonski and the First Symbolist Series*) (1880-1899), reveals the definitive contribution of Macedonski through the founding of "Literatorul" literary magazine and its afferent literary circle in cristalizing and spreading the new literary movement. This chapter analyses the following poets: Macedonski, Traian Demetrescu, Alexandru Obedenaru, Mircea Demetriade, I.C.Săvescu, Gabriel Donna, Cincinat Pavelescu, Constant Cantilli, D. Karnabatt and Al. Petroff.

Even though Macedonski or the poets around "Literatorul" literary magazine did not have the power to establish the limits of a new language, they are representative for the transition towards a new form. They are symbolists only through their themes and to a small extent through the symbolist specific "techniques". Before being symbolists, the above-mentioned poets have written a romantic poetry, their poetry being located afterwards on the border between Symbolism and Parnassianism. Gradually, their poetry enriches with neologisms translating new moods in poetry: ecstasy, shivers, neuroses, moods firstly brought to discussion by Macedonski.

The fifth chapter, entitled „*Naționalizarea*” *simbolismului* (*"The Nationalisation of*

Symbolism") (1899-1908), brings to discussion the manner in which the symbolist poetry received a national specific in the poetry of Ștefan Petică, Dimitrie Anghel, D. Iacobescu or Mihail Săulescu. Moreover, it also analyses the poets gathered around "Vieața nouă" literary magazine, namely: Al. T. Stamatiad, M. Cruceanu, I.M. Rașcu, E. Isac, N. Davidescu, Al. Gherghel, N. Bundurescu, and Const. T. Stoika.

The penultimate chapter, entitled *Apogeul simbolist (The Symbolist Peak) (1908-1916)*, largely analyses the main themes from Bacovia and Minulescu's works, focusing especially on the elements of fauna and vegetal elements in their works (regardless if they appear as floral elements or narcotics), the two writers being considered as the peak of the symbolist movement. Last but not least, this chapter analyses the poetry volumes of their wives, Agatha Grigorescu Bacovia and Claudia Millian

If in the preceding chapters we have tried to find key elements which characterise Symbolism in the poetry of the above-mentioned poets and have analysed the vegetal elements and those related to fauna in the poetry of symbolist poets, interfered by the great directions and themes of their poetry, chapter seven, *Analiza comparativă a simbolurilor vegetale si animaliere în poezia simbolistă românească (A Comparative Analysis of the Vegetal and Animal Symbols in the Romanian Symbolist Poetry)* aims exactly at what it suggests through the title. We gradually took *Vegetal symbols* (nature, forest, trees / fruit bearing trees, garden, the rose / English roses, lily, chrysanthemum, carnation, other flowers), the *Animal symbols* (birds, raven / crow, peacocks, insects or domestic animals), and last, but not the least, *Other floral / animal symbols. Drinks and Narcotics* and have tried to find them in the poetry of symbolist poets in order to see what types of reveries or images arouse in them.