

**Section ONE**

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**SOCIAL SCIENCES & HUMANITIES**



## Imagery and Fantasy in Dimitrie Anghel's Poetry

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ABSTRACT: Dimitrie Anghel is a remarkable Romanian symbolist for his special approach to the flower universe, especially for his frequent identification with floral element considered to be the avatar of the poetic. At the beginning of the 20th century Dimitrie Anghel's lyrical creation has the merit of contributing to the development of Romanian lyricism by communicating the message through all the senses and his prose proves its modernity by resizing his contribution to the extension of Romanian literature in the European context. The escape in the garden—as a space of withdrawal in ideal, it is achieved through dream, in a symbolic way, abundant in expressive images. The representation of an identity discourse, the dream suggests the space of a human being originating retrieval through continuous metamorphoses, a space of human souls' transmigration.

KEY WORDS: symbol, aesthetic, poem, fantasy, flower.

In the assertion of the naturalistic novel and of the Parnassian poetry among the positivist philosophy of Auguste Comte, in the industrial development era, in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (1860–1880), a unitary and expressive French movement arise, that is named *Symbolism*. This suddenly expands in the entire Europe and knows outstanding representatives even among the Romanian poets. Yet from the beginning, foreign poets participated at this literary trend: Greeks as Jean Moreas, the nickname for Papadiamantopoulos, Flemish as Rodenbach, Maeterlink, Verhaeren,

Max Elskamp, Albert Mockel and Van Lebergue, Anglo-Saxons as Stuart Merrill and Francis Viele-Griffin, Jewish as Gustave Kahn and Ephraim Mikhael, Spanish as Armand Godoy, the Italian Gabriele D'Annunzio, the English Oscar Wilde and the Romanian Alexandru Macedonski (collaborator of one of the first magazines of the trend, „La Wallonie.”)

Then, the exponents of French symbolism meet in different national literatures: Ștefan George, Hofmannsthal and Rainer Maria Rilke, in Germany, William Butler Yeats in Ireland, Swinburne, Arthur Symonds, Gerard Manley Hopkins, Edgar Allan Poe, in England, Ververy in Holland, D'Annunzio in Italy, Machado brothers, Ramon del Valle Inclan and Juan Ramon Jimenez, in Spain, Constantin Balmont, Valeriu Briusov, Alexandru Block, in Russia, Ady Endre, in Hungary, Kostis Palamas in Greece, Tuwim, in Poland, Alexandru Macedonski, Dimitrie Anghel, Ion Minulescu and George Bacovia, in Romania.

The trend is theorized by Jean Moreas and it is named according to an article—programme/ manifest, “Le Symbolisme,” that was published in the French paper “Le Figaro,” in 1886. This becomes the literary and aesthetic programme of this trend. In the same year was formed the group that named itself *symbolist* and it was headed by the poet Stephane Mallarme, and Rene Ghil founded the *symbolist-harmonist* school that became the *philosophic-instrumentalist* school.

The poets that considered Paul Verlaine the Head of the school were calling themselves *decadents* as a gesture of defiance. They were represented by Arthur Rimbaud, Tristan Corbière, Jules Laforgue. Nevertheless, the Decadents was considered no more than anticlimax, a simple pastiche of the old models, a copy of the eminescian pattern, showing reticence to the new and not an innovation.

Being mainly lyric, Symbolism had a propensity for poetry and contaminated with its lyricism also the prose and the symbolist theatre.

Because of the powerful desire of reacting against ordinary places and surfeit of emotions of the Romantics, the Parnassians have reached the antipode: to a real coldness and inflexibility,

without the lyric core, spiritless; to a formal and tedious virtuosity. Moreas, one of the founders of Symbolism, created a Symbolist Roman school that started just from the desire to protest against the surfeit of Symbolist's poetry; "lyric and spiritual, melodious an innermost, it was a matter-of-course to rise as an objection against the bourgeois' materialism, represented in literature by the surfeits of the Naturalist novel and the sheer graphic formalism of Parnassian poetry. . . . Any new literary movement starts with a release and ends with a dogma."<sup>1</sup>

Symbolism, as the Parnassian and the Romanticism, didn't have a spontaneous generation. During the Romanticism, Gerard de Nerval, in his Symbolist sonnets with Symbolist titles ("Les Chymeres"), foreshadows Baudelaire and Mallarmé or Verlaine. The Symbolism "had an origination period of almost half a century."<sup>2</sup> This implies "a new reincarnation of the poetic myth that anchoress now on the realm of sheer lyric, of intuition and dream, of the melody and suggestion."<sup>3</sup>

Many of the poets in that period started to write this manner long before the emergence of the groups they acceded. The Symbolism' forerunner is considered to be the French poet Charles Baudelaire through his poetry, "Correspondances," that had the most powerful influence on the development of the Symbolist lyric (since 1857, from the first edition of "Fleurs du Mal"—"the true poetic art of Symbolism;"<sup>4</sup> and in which he achieves, for the first time, techniques that are considered to be Symbolists. In this sonnet we can find, "almost 20 years before, the entire programme of the new lyric"<sup>5</sup> and is created here "the new framing of the Symbolist poetry"<sup>6</sup> having "a combination of the familiar with the symbolic."<sup>7</sup> Baudelaire communicates his poetic programme "through all the senses, . . . the poetry of fragrance . . . with blends and interpretation of symbols."<sup>8</sup>

The innovation consists in Baudelaire's and symbolists' meaningful contribution. Ion Pillat considers Mallarmé to be "the Socrates of Symbolism."

The remarkable power of spiritual suggestion is realized by introducing some notions of texture, flavor, fragrance, tactile sensations, symbols from the musical area and also some old

qualities concerning the verse's colour and harmony—"the music and the poetry are only the alternative sides of one certitude: the Idea . . . —the elementary reality."<sup>9</sup> The music and the poetry interpenetrate each other, remaining contaminated by one another.

The first verses were chants with musical accompaniment—the word "lyric" comes from "lira" and confirms the instrumental origin. The innovation of Mallarmé consists in the fact that he "didn't try to replace an exterior accompaniment with an organic collaboration as in the Wagnerian drama," but he "claimed to incorporate again the music in the midst of the words, brought again, to their real lyric meaning, that cannot be less than symbolic and musical, through a subtle and specific syntax of the poet—strange and misunderstood fantasy of a lunatic."<sup>10</sup>

Romanian Symbolism is considered to be, by some men of letters, a trend that has arisen as a reaction to the rhetoric Parnassian and to Naturalism promoting the concept of modern poetry. However, to a closer look at the literature of that era, the Symbolism appears to be more a reaction to the eminescian followers and to the semanatorist ideology. This literary trend takes from the previous schools all that fitted with the restless and eager soul of its representatives. These wanted to offer the undiscovered and are more nimble to the novelty in domains as: drawing, music, philosophy, science, arts in general. The Symbolists make the effort to enlarge the poetry's theme by exploiting the urban universe, to renew the lyric expression. Thus, the Romanian poets proved to be very receptive to the French influence—France was the place where the renewal of the poetry's fundamental happened.

Romanian Symbolism doesn't need to be interpreted as a copy of the French one because it was perceived at the same time and converted gradually, developed according to social reality, the spiritual context and inland sensitivity with the actual evolution of Romanian literature. It is a profound and original dimension, adapted to our national singularity under "the fundamental of the creative influence, which doesn't dry, but only fructifies the own virtuality."<sup>11</sup>

In Romania the Symbolism is recorded together with the advent of "Literatorul," in 1880, under the guidance of Alexandru Macedonski. The Romanian Symbolist trend is a heterogeneous one and is remarkable through its representants: Ștefan Petică, Iuliu Cezar Săvescu, Dimitrie Anghel, Ion Minulescu, G. Bacovia, D. Iacobescu, I. M. Rașcu, Emil Isac, Al. T. Stamatiad, N. Davidescu, Elena Farago, M. Cruceanu, Demostene Botez, Barbu Fundoianu.

The source of Symbolism is found in Romanian poetry preceding this literary trend—especially in Mihai Eminescu's poetry, a poet that followed the German romantic school and he embraces in his poetry a musicality similar with the Symbolist one („Melancolie," „Se bate miezul nopții".) Thus we can conclude that one of the Symbolism's origins is the German Romanticism, the music of Wagner (through Ovid Densusianu), the impressionistic drawings (through Monet's school) the romance and the eminescian musicality which develops sensations.

Symbolism is repelled in all the papers of that time and done for; it is declared antisocial. Titu Maiorescu himself notes that Symbolist poets have the sickness of creating new; a futurism which does not include "the core of the classical beauty" and considers that the town poetry is artificial, external, with a lack of profound and authenticity of the village's poetry, which is an internal one. Sometimes Symbolism was considered to be eccentric.

A peculiarity of Romanian Symbolism is the fact that the subject of its denial was not a certain literary-artistic movement as it was said, but rather the fake art or, as the Symbolists used to consider fake literature. They didn't see any incompatibility between the Symbolism and Parnassian. Thus, the Symbolism embodies the Parnassian and develops parallel with the Decadents using yet tonalities and expressive means specific to Eminescu.

Symbolism introduced in Romanian literature a new technique and a new lyric style, the landscape of Romanian poetry enriches and varies: rural space is avoided and is evoked the city with the park and with its monumental buildings, the sea, the exotic landscapes—existence environments less exploited. Also, the Symbolists delicately look for new soul spaces, original interior moods, from a new angle. Thus, the thematic area enriches considerably further:

nature with its seasons are a space of correspondences; love without hope, sweetheart's house became a sanctuary for the lyrical ego where the illness's roughness attenuates, the garden as a space of shelter and meditation, the illness, the great journey, the condition of blamed poet, condemned to live in the middle of aristocracy to write and die understood. Consequently, "to the area's vulgarity is given the cold shoulder through."<sup>12</sup>

According to the mentioned themes, to the wonderful or distressing sights prevalence, we can distinguish two tendencies of development inside Romanian Symbolism. Into the category of fascinating we meet lyrical creations that confess the carving for picturesque, the ardour for travelling on seas or land, to exotic lands, to an objective, subtle existence of some poets, inclined sometimes towards thoughtlessness. The distressing supposes sadness, bitterness, revolt or submission in the creation of some dreaming, melancholy poets, interiorized, deeply marked by everyday life, monotony, aversion from everyday life stereotypy (Șt. Petică, I. C. Săvescu, I. Minulescu), by social injustice consciousness (Tr. Demetrescu, M. Săulescu, Emil Isac, G. Bacovia). Poet's condition and his poem include antifilistin enthusiasm (Al. Macedonski, Emil Isac, G. Bacovia) or a humanitarian sentimentalism (I. C. Săvescu, Tr. Demetrescu, Șt. Petică, I. Minulescu, M. Cruceanu.)

In its diversity, the theme of Symbolist poem expresses a non-conforming attitude, of inappropriateness with a mercantile, philistine world. Symbolist poets reveal the *spleen*, the solitude mood, the neurosis sustained by an entire prop characteristic to Symbolism, which dims the immediate support of these moods arose from world's non-acceptance to society directly reflected in verses.

The solitude motif descends from Romanticism and it is enriched with the silence's melancholy, with undecided and doubtful gestures, with oppressive sadness especially in Dimitrie Anghel's poetry in which we can see his refuge in the garden.

Love, as a literary theme, is not marked by the symbolists in the context of nature, although the poets will find correspondences in communicating their feelings through their predilection for fragrances and music. It is underlined the intimate side of love poetry

by the presence of the objects in Al. Macedonski's creation and then developed by D. Anghel, N. Davidescu, Ion Pillat, Ion Minulescu. Here we find the room, the paintings, the chest of drawers, the library, the inner place where lives, usually his sweetheart.

The theme of nature is accentuated by the predilection for floral. A well known floral universe we can see in D. Anghel's volume: "In the Garden" ("În grădină"), where flowers remind us of the dead, of the love constancy, and the garden is an ideal sanctuary of man's frustrated consciousness. Mihai Moșandrei named him "our spirituality flowers gardener,"<sup>13</sup> Dimitrie Anghel is placed among the *native* symbolism by Lucia Bote Marino.<sup>14</sup>

Dimitrie Anghel distinguishes in the context of Romanian Symbolism through his special approach to flower's universe. He considers the chosen flowers' garden as a space of withdrawal in the ideal, and he frequently identifies himself with the floral element which he transforms into an avatar—interpreted exclusively as a metamorphosis, devoid of any negative connotation. D. Anghel's imaginary is symbolically represented in a conventional manner, similarly, through reality's transfiguration in the wake of poet's terror faced to the coercive real, the actual commonplace.

The escape is achieved by means of flowers' fragrance using the poet's emotional memory (as M. Proust does) which explain his predilection for the world of flowers in a page of prose in "The Story of the Troubled"—"Povestea celor necăjiți:"<sup>15</sup>

I have chosen the world of flowers because in their world I have spent my childhood. I recollected the wonderful garden from where I lived, the sweet sound of the spring, the sound of the trees, the petals wasted by the blowing wind. I remembered the sympathy that I had for some flowers and the unjustified antipathy for others. The fragrances were their secret thoughts, their unique way of speaking and I could have guessed in the darkness, at the night, when their perfume is more intense, and what specific flower sent it to me and later all these memories revived and tormented me, and I searched the resemblance of their gloom in the wonderful composition of the petals of a rose, or a lily, I tried to put it in stanzas.<sup>16</sup>

The poet is so close to nature that he frequently identifies himself with its elements—usually with the aristocratic spirit of the white lily and, at a certain point, with the oak through an allegory—“The Oak and the Mistletoe” (“Stejarul și vâscul”), dedicated to a critic. The oak is the symbol of steadfastness and persistence over time, of power, of masculinity, of immortality and it was dedicated to Hera in ancient times; the Dryads were oak nymphs. The oak’s heavy wood was compared to incorruptibility. Associated with the potential to live long, it symbolizes power and eternal life.

However, the floral avatar motif is significant in a text whose title is intriguing and seems to anticipate it: “Metamorphosis” (“Metamorfoză”), a poetry from the volume named “Fantasies” (“Fantazii,” 1909) and also in the poetry named “In the Garden” (“În grădină”) from the homonymous volume (1905). Instead, in the “Death of Narcissus” (“Moartea lui Narcis”) the poet finds his human avatar.

I, now, submit “Metamorphosis” (“Metamorfoză”) for analysis.<sup>17</sup> In this text, the imaginary transposition is achieved by an impersonal verb used to imply the detachment desire “Și se făcea că fără voie trăiam acum o viață nouă.”

A modal phrase—“fără voie” is added to this in order to emphasize the irresistible force of floral narcosis, followed by apocope—“făr’ de veste.”

The dream motif involves the escape from the real space, the refuge in a permitted, deliberate way by placing, in the first verse, the verb in mai-mult-ca-perfect “lăsasem să m-adoarmă crinii . . .”—assuming some causative idea for what is to come through the intervention of the olfactory: “seară dulce” in which the lily’s fragrance emphasizes its narcotic power.

The parallel, imaginary universe fancied by the poet in which everything is possible is represented by a nominal group “o viață nouă.” We easily identify here the floral avatar by the chosen flower—that is superior and aristocratic. It is a symbol of purity, perfection, mercy and majesty in most cultures; the lily, once symbolized light and male principle, it is the flower of glory and death also. The flower description focuses on an interesting visual contrasting image: the pure, superlative white—emphasised at a

morphemic level by tmesis: “atât de alb eram subț lună”—“abia scriam o umbră,” promoting, at the same time, the desire to be eternal according to the *scripta manent* dictum and the inability to detach from the previous life's calling—writing.

The dream begins in the first verse with the expression of desire (“voind”) and it is enhanced by repeating a verb in gerund in the beginning of the second stanza: “Visând trăiam cu ei acuma”—suggesting the anchoring in the present moment and the inclusion in the vegetable kingdom through the comparison: “și eu un crin ca dâșii.” We identify the lily's preciousness in the final verse of the first quatrain which contains both an epithet and a metaphor: “Îmi întindeam voios potirul să prind o lacrimă de rouă.”

In the dark, in a calm atmosphere, under the guardianship star of the night and reverie (“subț lună”), playfulness comes through a personified epithet: “m-alinta șăgalnic vântul,” and also the reconciliation with itself: “tihnă se făcuse—n mine și caldă inima și bună.”

The metamorphoses idea is reiterated—“sub altă formă, să-mpodobesc și eu pământul”—as an aesthetification, utility, attractiveness way, forgetting the overwhelming feeling of rejection, of loneliness, of futility.

The temporal coordination, by reference to context, is achieved by a relative adverb, “when,” introducing the following indication: “o mână pală . . . / S-a-ntins vrăjmașă să mă frângă”<sup>18</sup>. Instinctively, such an inferior human being: “the pale hand” (“mână pală”)—in visual contrast with its shadow (“umbra sa”)—descends above the lily (representing a part of the whole—“grămadă”) anticipating the thanatic: “Ca subț imboldul unei forțe necunoscute și fatale, / S-a-ntins vrăjmașă să mă frângă.” The mild extinction (“Muream tihnit de-a doua oară în liniștea odăii tale”) is achieved in a favourable and comfortable environment (“cu fața calmă între perne”) in which the poet had taken refuge—his lover's chamber. As in dream and as in reality, the soul's extinction involves the detachment of flesh/body and its subsequent materialization in “another perfect and eternal form”—“altă formă desăvârșită și eternă” preserving the notable essence at a lexical-semantic level by synecdoche.

The superior man is searching for the perfect form to identify to until merger and which form to reflect his essence of his aspiring to the transcendent—“Eu ca o pulbere de aur m-am ridicat ușor subț lună.” The identification is often made by explicit comparisons and metaphors. The reiteration of the process, of the agony is achieved through the repetition of the indicative verb—“muream” (“I was dying”)—that gives a durative note reflecting the manner of experiencing, of feeling the agony. We can easily observe the abundance of the indicative verbs in the first person singular in each verse of the first two stanzas—they constitute the poetic marks.

The semantic context of the stylistic figures, especially of the comparisons and personifications, includes specific elements of Dimitrie Anghel’s Symbolism: nature (“m-alinta șăgalnic vântul,” “alb ca o zăpadă”), the vegetal element (“Eram și eu un crin ca dâșii”), the human element (“făcându-ți brațele cunună”), the abstract element (“Muream tihnit,” “mișcându-și umbra . . . /Ca subț imboldul unei forțe”), the intertwining of the human and the vegetal elements until identification (“Eu ca o pulbere de aur.”)

The common element of the comparisons that have vegetal elements imply the idea of *purity* by colour (the adjective *alb*—white, the noun *zăpadă*—snow—which emphasize by contrast the night’s chromatic) to which the human being embodied in lily is associated to. In comparisons the noun is predominant and it is also part of another stylistic figure, which is a metaphor: “Eu |crinul| ca o pulbere de aur.”

There are obvious, at the prosody level, the equal measure of the syllables—18 syllables, the cross rhyme and the iambic rhythm. The phonological level has the apocope—“făr’ de veste” and the paronomasia—“fatale—tale,” alongside the usual flow that gives the poetry an elegiac tone.

In an extensive analysis of Dimitrie Anghel’s style, G. Călinescu wrote down:

Essentially a Symbolist, Dimitrie Anghel, is more authentic than others, although the contrasts and blending that constitute a personality. . . . Because of the fact that Anghel

named one of his books *Fantasies*, it remained as some kind of critic cliché that the poet is a fantasist. Anghel's fantasy is the allegoric fabulous, but some imagism arrived from it.<sup>19</sup>

Thus, the dream represents the immersion in the continuous metamorphoses space, a souls' transmigration space, a metempsychosis space, but, especially a space of human being retrieval of originary self. The returning to real space through the ritual extinction of the lily requires openness to new metamorphoses but it also has the significance of trauma because of the ideality and originating painful rupture. The anchoring in the past, in the archetypal times, is performed by Dimitrie Anghel using the symbols with mythological reference: Vestals, Hera, Oedipus, Narcissus, Midas etc.

Through connections (*correspondances*) the author manages to fully express the relation between the poetic—representing the micro and the world—as a macrocosmic universe which is interpreted by symbols at the receptiveness level.

In this manner, Dimitrie Anghel contributed to the development of the Romanian language and he also challenged the future poets to extract the full meaning of the words and also enrich the imagery with extraordinary symbols and expressions.

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> I. Pillat, *Opere*, (București: Editura DU Style, 2003), 234.

<sup>2</sup> Pillat, *Opere*, 236.

<sup>3</sup> Pillat, *Opere*, 237.

<sup>4</sup> Pillat, *Opere*, 237.

<sup>5</sup> Pillat, *Opere*, 237.

<sup>6</sup> Pillat, *Opere*, 238.

<sup>7</sup> Pillat, *Opere*, 238.

<sup>8</sup> Pillat, *Opere*, 240.

<sup>9</sup> Pillat, *Opere*, 250.

<sup>10</sup> Pillat, *Opere*, 250.

<sup>11</sup> Lucia Bote Marino, *Simbolismul românesc*, (București: Editura pentru Literatură, 1966), 107.

<sup>12</sup> Bote Marino, *Simbolismul*, 226.

<sup>13</sup> M. Moșandrei, *Dimitrie Anghel, poet al florilor*, (București: Universul literar, Anul XLVII, Nr. 44, 17 Decembrie 1938), 8.

<sup>14</sup> Bote Marino, *Simbolismul*, 329.

<sup>15</sup> Iulian Boldea, *De la modernism la postmodernism*, (Târgu-Mureș: Editura Universității „Petru Maior”, 2011), 19.

<sup>16</sup> D. Anghel, *Versuri și proză*, (București: Editura Albatros, 1989), 97.

<sup>17</sup> Anghel, *Versuri*, 51.

<sup>18</sup> Anghel, *Versuri*, 52.

<sup>19</sup> G. Călinescu, *Istoria literaturii române*, (București: Editura Semne, 2003), 608–610.

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