

FRENCH INFLUENCE IN GRIGORE ALEXANDRESCU'S WORK

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***Abstract:** This work tries to emphasize the place of Grigore Alexandrescu in the Romanian literature, by showing his authentic features. He played an important place in the modernization process of the Romanian literary language. His sources of inspiration were represented by the French writers such as: Lamartine, Volney, La Fontaine; moreover many of the French words were adopted by the Romanian language during the XIXth century.*

***Keywords:** Romanticism, neologisms, modernization.*

During the nineteenth century, certain historical, social and cultural events occur that demand the synchronization of the Romanian with European literature.

Through scholars studying abroad and bringing innovative ideas takes place a real process of emancipation of the Romanian people on all levels.

The people want the union of the Romanian Principalities, autonomy and the spread of culture among the Romanian people, attempting synchronization on all levels with the West, whose development was a model for our culture.

In the case of Grigore Alexandrescu, the French influence was the main source of his writings, although his work was created through two distinct aesthetic registers, representing the duality of his consciousness.

As a dominant feature, Alexandrescu is a Romantic, both in his elegies and meditations, as well as in letters and fables, even if the latest are characterized by a slower imaginative spirit and formal balance.

The poet is reflective and practical, controlling his emotions lucidly; he sought to discover the profound truth of their own destiny through self-analysis, but the truth of the external world by denouncing the contemporary vices and defects.

Lamartine's influence in the work of Grigore Alexandrescu is emphasized by George C linescu, who affirmed that: "In a part of it, the poetry of Grigore Alexandrescu is the strongest expression of lamartinismului." (C linescu 1962, p. 109), adding that: "The meditation, reverie and harmony in nature, religiosity, prayer, oceans; immensity are visions of the great French poet. Sometimes the vision gets a hazy Ossianic air and the reflection a Ossian Byronic roar." (Ibidem).

One of the most representative Romanian critics, Eugen Simion, emphasizes the dual feature of Grigore Alexandrescu that is also one of Lamartine's characteristic and is given one one hand by an extremely pessimistic view on life, and on the other hand the ideal of a perfect morality, as the critic sustains: "Nobody has observed that this moral innovator has, when it comes to himself, the feeling of a dark fate. The stanza «and to live in pain is my mood» expresses his vision on life".(Simion, 1980, p.141).

Nicolae Manolescu referred to this influence in the following manner: "In what French influence on our language is regarded, it must be admitted that it was a true magic, creating even a strange biographical archetype: it becomes almost compulsory, following the model given by Milly, a voyage and a love in Italy (Asachi,

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Alecsandri), or the early death of muse (Bolintineanu, Cârlova).” (Manolescu, 2003, p.26).

The sublimity of nature described through the Romanian poet’s stanzas, as in the case of Lamartine and Voltaire’s is also charged with political significance, George Călinescu explaining that: “In a historic moment the country was without prestige and without large buildings, only nature filled the chest of the patriots with the feeling of greatness, and opposed to the misery of feudal landowners opposed its imperishable monuments.” (G. Călinescu, 1962, p.112).

If one tries to compare Lamartine’s poetical universe with Alexandrescu’s one, there are many differences, one of these being represented by the night register that occupies an important place in Alexandrescu’s lyrics; on the other hand, Lamartine oscillates between night and morning registers. Regarding this feature it is sustained that: “After all, this poetry of stars is a praise to the universe, but Grigore Alexandrescu does not possess the Franciscan exult of Lamartine. His eye sees better the register of stars and candles”. (Călinescu, 1962, p. 109).

The Moon occupies a central place in Grigore Alexandrescu’s lyric, and this kind of praise poetry of stars is common to many French poets such as: Fontenelle, Ronsard with his *Hymne des Astres, du Ciel, de l’Eternity*, Voltaire with his *La Henriade*, etc.

This is also the case of Grigore Alexandrescu’s poetry *Răsritul lunii. La Tismana*: “Apoi glob rubinos, nopți dând mi care și via /Se-nal și, dimprejur-i dese umbre depărțând,/Pe-ale stejarilor vârfuri, piramide de verdea /Se opri; apoi privirea-i peste lume aruncând,/Lumină adânci prăpăstii, mână stirea învechit /Feudal cetăuie, ce de turnuri ocolit /Ce de lună colorat și privit de departe /Părea unul din acele osianice palate(...) Niciodată astăzi lună ce înnoată în tărâie,/ Ca fanal purtat de valuri pe a mării câmpie.” (*Răsritul lunii. La Tismana*)

Although the theme of ruins has known an old tradition in universal poetry, in the case of Grigore Alexandrescu’s poetry evoking the ruins and pessimistic meditation which they cause had entered in our literature through the poetry of the French poet, Volney.

In the spirit of Volney, Alexandrescu exclaimed at seeing the ruins of the royal palace of Târgoviște; all that’s left of the old glow of the city, *Adio la Târgoviște*, which then evolves within the meaning of a Lamartinian meditation: “Culcat pe-aste ruine, sub care adâncit /E gloria străbună și umbra de eroi./În liniște, tăcere, văd lumea adormit /Ce uită-n timpul nopții neazuri și nevoi./Dar cine se aude și ce este să suneț?/Ce oameni sau ce armii și ce repede pas?/Pământul înclătețer zboinicescul tunet./Zgomot de taberi, oapte, trece, vâjâie-un glas...//Dar unde sunt acestea? S-audus! Au fost prăpăstii./Căci armele, vitejii și toate au tăcut/Așa orice mârșă nemicnică pierde!/A noastră, a Palmirei și-a Romei a trecut.” (*Adio la Târgoviște*).

Regarding the letter, Grigore Alexandrescu was influenced by Boileau and Voltaire’s poetry, without excluding Romanian poet authenticity in support of ideas and especially in presenting morals of life.

Grigore Alexandrescu’s letters, written in a classicizing manner, contain elements of the poetic arts that are staging truthful images of the era mores, from a satirical and critical point of view; the goal of the epistles are to demystify the world, but also the illusions that literature can correct manners.

French influence has played a major role in the modernization of the Romanian literary language; one reason being given for the common origin of the two

civilizations, Stefan Munteanu adding the prestige reason given by the French civilization in the early nineteenth century.

Grigore Alexandrescu was not one of the theoreticians of establishing the rules of the Romanian language, but his work is an illustration of the modernization process of the Romanian language.

The variety of his work involved the use of various stylistics; he chooses to use spoken language, in order to be closer to the people, and many terms that are used have French origin, although some words were not completely adapted to Romanian language.

In his historical poems, Grigore Alexandrescu uses a superior language, by using neologisms such as: *caden*, *lupt tor*, *orizont*, *a repeta*, *rezultat*, *egoism*, *varietate*, *nobil*, *genera ie*, *glorios* and some French words which were excluded from the Romanian lexicon as *sujet* has become.

In order to emphasize the numerous words of French origin, an example of poem can be *Anul 1840*; in writing this poem Grigore Alexandrescu used various words of Latin and also Slavic origin, but those of French origin emphasize the high character of the vocabulary. In verses such as: “(...) Pu ine-a vrea, iubite, din zilele-mi pierdute,/Zile ce-n ve nicie i-iau repede le zbor;/Pu ine suvenire din ele am pl cute:/A fost numai-n durere varietatea lor!/Dar pe tine, an tân r, te v z cu mul umire!/Pe tine te dore te tot neamul omenesc!/ i eu sunt mic[parte din trista omenire,/ i eu a ta sosire cu lumea o sl vesc!/Când se n scu copilul ce s-a tepta s vie,/Ca s ridice iar i pe omul cel c zut,/Un b trân îl lu în bra e, strigând cu bucurie:“Sloboade-m[, st[pâne, fiindc l-am v zut.”/Astfel drep ii ar zice, de ar vedea-mplinite/Câte într-al t[u nume ne sunt f g duite./O, an prezis atât a, m re reformator!/Începi, pref , r stoarn i îmbun t eaz /Arat semn acelor ce nu voiesc s creaz ;/Adu f r z bav o turm -un p stor./A lumii temelie se mi c , se cl te te,/Vechile-i institu ii se terg, s-au ruginit;/(...)Oricare sentimente înalte, generoase,/Ne par ca ni te basne de povestit, frumoase,/ i tot entuziasmul izvor de idei mici./Politica adânc st în fanfaronad / i tiin a vie ii în egoism cumplit;/De-a omului m[r ire nimic nu d dovad / i numai despotismul e bine înt rit./An nou! A tept minunea- i ca o cereasc lege;/Dac îns p storul ce tu ni l-ai allege/Va fi tot ca p storii de care-avem destui,/Atunci... las în starea-i b trâna tiranie,/(...) i ce mai r u ar face o stea, un comet mare,/Care s arz globul -ai lui locuitori?/(...) i tr iesc în durere ca-n elementul meu.(...)” (*Anul 1840*)

Words such as: *drept*>*fr. droit*; *a prezice*>*fr. predire*; *varietate*>*fr.variete*; *sentiment*; *generoase*>*fr. genereux*; *entuziasm*>*fr. enthousiasme*; *tiin* >*fr. science*; *egoism*>*fr. egoism*; *tiranie*>*fr. tyrannie*; *comet*>*fr. comete*; *glob*>*fr. globe*; *element*>*fr. element*, are some of the words that Alexandrescu chooses in order to create his poem.

Aurel Nicolescu, in the work *Observations on language of the Romanian writers*, analyzing a fragment of *Journey diary* observed that: “Among the neologisms presented in his writing, most are of French origin (...). In the process of adapting the lexical system, meaning to frame the words available in the language, most of its neologisms have been used with a form identical to the current one, from this category are the following: expression, figure, shape, imagination, invented, poets, visit.” (Nicolescu, 1971 , 93).

Like his contemporaries, Grigore Alexandrescu belongs to the Romanian writers of the nineteenth century that have actively contributed through their work to the modernization of the Romanian language, where French influence played a decisive role.

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