ASPECTS OF THE MINULESCIAN LYRICAL SPEECH

Andreea- Iuliana DAMIAN*

Abstract: *Starting from considering Ion Minulescu a symbolist, the present study describes the fundamental aspects of his lyrical speech, being mostly focused on his poetry, underlaining the modern poetic language. The relation between the symbolism features and his poetry, also other influences on his creation depending on the period of his writing. Approaching the most relevant poems emphasizing his contribution to the development of the symbolism in Romania.*

Keywords: *Minulescu, lyrical, speech.*

In the period of his beginning, tributary to the sources of his poetic culture, which dominated his sensibility, Minulescu practices a polymorphous mimesis: he learnt from Macedonski how to overcome the eminescian romanticism, and also the parnasianism through the symbolist sensibility. Maybe without the direct experiment of the French symbolist school and of a pseudo-hellenism that he had lived at the sea shore, his creative availabilities would not have succeded, in his disposition to overcome the dimensions of the autochthonous limits, which were so divers starting from semănătorism to vanguardism.

Even through his apparent instability is marked by his first creations, he managed to orient himself, in bursts, on a prolific direction of his originality.

After the Parisian period where he gets direct contact with the symbolism, he changes decisively his style, proving a great ability of understanding and adjusting the themes and motifs that were present in the Romanian symbolist lyrical poetry, which lead to being categorized by T. Vianu as an *"urban poet"(apud* Manu, 1981: 64*)*

Minulescu creates a true lyrical dialog with himself from where it emerges a creative tension, keeping a very well established equilibrium between creation and reproduction. In this way, the minulescian lyric will always have a mimesis character, becoming a cantabile pseudo-creation, that does not possess an exhaustive character, leaving the impression of an unexplored theme, that is waiting for numberless interpretations.

There have been many doubts on the symbolist character of Ion Minulescu's writings. Still, the mimesis of his writings represent an important feature of the symbolism, because all symbolist writers revive the themes and complete them in a personal style. Even the symbolists themselves affirm that they are not looking for novelties, but they only desire to give a new form, a distinct one to the old things.

The Romanian poet like the French writers of the literary trend, creates some romances under the mark of the lyrics of his predecessors. It is emphasized the distich from the sonnet La Beaute written by Baudelaire, because it can be considered a true motto for his entire volume *Romanțe pentru mai târziu: Je hais le mouvement qui deplace les lignes:/ Et jamais je me pleure et jamais je ne vis*.

Even from the beginning, the symbolism has remarked itself through finesse and sensibility, and on the contrary to the French symbolism, which refuses parnasianism, the Romanian symbolism takes over some features of this literary trend.

* University of Pitești, damiandreea@yahoo.com

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To I. Minulescu this influence has had beneficial effects and it has also been very prolific. The features specific to the French poetry can easily be found in Minulescu's writings especially in its structure level.

Life in Paris represented everything that the young poet could have hopped, being a young man who started an open journey with all the enthusiasm. Here, Minulescu concluded that the symbolism those not represent a list of characteristics but it is *"a synthesis of influences and atmospheres"* (Manu, 1981:51).

The Minulescian lyric is full of influences: he takes from Jules Laforgue the mistery and grace, from Tristan Corbiere the indifference and the defying spirit specific to the western culture, but the most important influence upon his writings belongs to Charles Baudelaire whose sensibility impresses Minulescu.

Charles Baudelaire's poem *Moarte a amanților* inspires Minulescu, leading to the creation of a poem with the same title, but with a very different structure: Baudelaire: *Mai târziu un înger pe uși strecurat/ Va reînsufleți, fidel ca un mire,/ Apele și focul curat*: Minulescu: *Trei gropare; azi noapte, au săpat trei gropi…/ Una pentru mine,/ Una pentru tine/ Și alta pentru cine nu se știe încă…*

The Minulescian vision closes up the Baudelairian dreaming state through an abrupt revealing of the image belonging to the prepared tomb.

The emotional receptivity and the cognitive side of the Minulescian lyricism prove the readings and the profound studying of other poets like Emile Verhaeren, Maurice Maeterlinck or Charles van Lerberghe.

The themes that Verhaeren approaches can also be found in Minulescu's romances, but with a different vision, that is why the critics have been justified to say that the poet gives a Romanian form to the writings and puts them in connection with the local details to cast away the French ones.

He gets in contact with Jean Moréas, whom Minulescu will remember for the fact that in the period of his debut, Moréas advised him to write, even though he did not know French so well.

His lyricism also has goliardic features, the poetry representative for the praise brought to the joy of living is *Romanța albastră,* which the Parisian youngsters associated with the music of the époque, becoming in this way a refrain easily to hum: *Dacă v-a plăcut/ Cânțoneta mea improvizată,/ Dacă v-a plăcut/ Hai, s-o luăm cu toți de la-nceput.*

In Paris he lives this goliardic spirit, through the temptations that this city offers, and the poetic act takes a cartharsis function, the poet confesing himself the change of his life in a different style: *Eu sunt ce n-a fost încă nimeni din toate câte-au fost/ Și sunt…/ Sunt prada bestiei,/ Himera netălmăcitului poet,/ Sunt spasmul…/ Al nimănui/ Și-al tuturor!.../ m-a coborât pe bulevarde,/ M-a exilat prin cafenele/ și prin modestele mansarde…*

It can be considered that this goliardic atitude represent the debut period of the Minulescianism itself. The lyrical ego creates an apparent happines to mask the interior uproar and to minimalise the pain provoked by an exagerated sensibility that resonate to the impact of the time with the reality, leading to a continuas distruction of the great expectations.

Romanța albastră represents the synthesized essences of the goliardic experiences from the Parisian period. It is remarked a thin line between contrary notions that are in a remarkable equilibrium. The communication levels suggest an unique frame with a harmony generated by the adjective *blue* that becomes a binder between the lyric syncretism and the description like a photography.

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The attraction of the contraries is a frequently met motif in the Minulescian lyric. The writings from the period lived in Paris, but also the poems before 1906 represent his true lyric debut.

The central theme of these poems is the faith of the poet and of his creations.

The poem *Unui cântăreț* is emblematic for the easiness with which the poet knits the contraries, the negation and the affirmation, the notions totally opposed, the theatricality and the authenticity: *„Cântai odată mult mai bine/ Dar astăzi tot ce cânți e rău/… Nu simți cum cântecu-i sfârșit/ Și-n țitera dezacordată / Zac moarte pentru lumea toată/ Tot ce-ai cântat, tot ce-ai iubit?”*. An existence lived in a song becomes a living of the poetry itself, but the despair of the death kills the song and the last sparkle of life is the love for creation, the theatricality begings to be emphaised in this post Parisian period and is remarked in the lyrics that suggest a scenic presence:*…Bătrânul-și pleacă fruntea/ și sub braț vioara-și strânge*. The atmosphere full of afection it is kept no matter of the lyric register and the image described.

The show takes place in front of the eyes of the reader discovering the shiny and full of illusion reflection of a language which seems to be invented for the new poetry world. Even through now it is developed the drama of a force according to the perception of the time, of the transiency of the experiences, of the permanent oscillation between success and failure; attraction negation; progress and regression. The essence of his perception upon the entire human existence is synthesized in the poem *Cântecul unui om* and this becomes also an anticipation of his future romances: *Și n-am nimic în lume sfânt./ Când am urât am fost iubit…/ Când am iubit am fost urât (…)/ Și-am dobândit ce n-am visat (…)/ Un dor dar veșnic neîmplinit…*

His previous relations with Ovid Densușianu changed after his arrival from Paris, because now Minulescu's style is different. Like the minulescian lyric bends to symbolism, so his publication in *Viață nouă* are intensified, what makes Minulescu to consider that his relation with Ovid Densușianu suffered an *ovidian metaphor*, when in fact the poet was the one transformed.

In a period in which the symbolist doctrine in Bucharest had a part of ambiguity, Minulescu created his own lyrical way, but also his professional way. Established in Constanța, he will meet the sea with all its nostalgia, and from here he will inspire his debut volume, *Romanțe pentru mai târziu*.

He will gain the power to communicate in a Hellenistic way with the marine universe, being declared a *poet of the sea* or *urban poet, a species very rare in the literary ambience*: *„Minulescu saw the sea in Constanța, and through his lyrics it is approached the thematic cycle of our poetry Marea Neagră and the first harbor of the country*” (Vianu, 1974: 252-253).

The Minulescian lyric describes the interior uproar provoked by missing the ships, hardened in the storm, and the hope of seeing the harbor, of approaching the land. These themes and motifs make possible the integration of the Romanian lyric in an universal dimension.

Ion Minulescu is known to the public through his romances, that were inspired by the atmosphere from the shores of the Black Sea.

For Minulescu the place becomes sacred, his descriptions are simple, but the epithets in a Minulescian style surprise with the unordinary lexical linkings and through their impressive musicality.

The most important point of the creation is touching the *Mistery Island*, which represents a true symbolist metaphor. So his romances become *„a simple game cynical, easy and deliberately prosaic.* (Manu, 1981: 252-253).

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He succeeds in building prosaic in the lyric of his romances, giving up the poetic which was suffocating him. Like all the symbolists he feels the need to go beyond the traditional tools protesting against these through the non-poetical sense given to his writings.

In the poem *Sosesc corăbiile* it can be found the debut of the symbolist madrigals written by Ion Minulescu.

Later, he will analyze his own work feeling somehow dissatisfied by these early romance creations that have a tomitan inspiration: *Îți mai aduci aminte mare, de Argonautul epigon/ Ce-ți fragmenta imensitatea/ Într-un caiet de versuri șchioape… (Epilog).*

The first poem that truly respects the features imposed by the symbolism is *Romanța celor trei corăbii*, the main idea of the unknown remoteness to which the three ships sail is put in the mirror with the static image of an albatross, that is suffering solitary looking to the horizon to a purple sunset: *Porniră cele trei corăbii/ Și abia se mai zăresc/ Se-ngroapă/ În golul zărilor pătate de violetul înserării/… Și-n urma lor/ Un singur albatros rănit/ Mai stă, de pază,/ Ca Maria/ Venită să-și vegheze mortul….*

Still, on the contrary to the other symbolists (Rolliant, Bacovia, Baudelaire) Minulescu turns the sinister, the macabre into picturesque, plasticizing it.

His writtings from the sea side were an important stage of his creation because the marine landscape leads to the affirmation of a symbolist lyric, typically minulescian, which the poet would have never achieved just by singing the seas about he had read.

Minulescu's romances were very easily assimilated by the public, because they are not addressing an exclusivist group, but they are pure feelings that adhere directly to any soul. G. Călinescu admits the power of the feelings transmitted by Minulescu through the romances and supports the fact that the verses of the poems have no connection with the attraction felt by the public, because the readers are sensible to vibrant emotions and not to the form of the poem: *„if it was liked by the common people…the explanation cannot be in the field of the verses, because common people do not have the feeling of the form."(*Călinescu, 1982: 613*)*

Minulescu's lyric is criticized by Lovinescu, who does not consider him a symbolist, but more a romantic poet who tries to write in a Budelaire's style.

Still, his writings are symbolist even by their musicality, fact that arises the desire of the musician and composers to interpret his poems.

Minulescu does not promote a comic poetry, he does not have this purpose, but G. Călinescu puts him next to Caragiale naming him a *„tireless producer of fads".(*Călinescu, 1982: 615)

Adrian Marino does not accept for Minulescu the association with the name of humorist: *„We do not contest the fact that the joke, the antinomy, the little buffooneries are very frequent in his poetry, which is most agreeable when reading. But if these points were predominant, the lyricism would seize to exist, because the humor is coming from the intellect and intelligence, these make the poetry prosaic."(*Marino, 1981: 157).

There are emphasized two types of comic: the one deliberated and the other unintentionally. The deliberated comic is more a self-irony practiced by the majority of the symbolists from the époque, but for Minulescu the poetry becomes a show of life, what leads to the impossibility of associating it with persiflage.

Categorizing Minulescu as a modern poet is a fact linked to his ironic attitude, the modern poets practice in their poems a profound persiflage of the important things. This direction was successfully followed in the rural register, by Marin Sorescu.

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In the minulescian writings the persiflage appears in relation with the lyric, providing a double, making two creative poses: poet-actor.

For Minulescu, the comic passes the condition of an artistic phenomenon, but becomes an internal element of the poet ritual, this status gives it features that complicate the essence.

Showing the technical mechanism of creation from the minulescian poetry, creates the impression of a *„gear functioning open sight, like a watch with sumptuously decorated dial, would leave to transpire the harmonious movement of all the mechanisms”. (*Pop, 1981: 7).

The minulescian lyric has a different character, his poetry has an original touch, an easily recognizable musicality, that creates true choruses which the reader keeps in mind humming them unwillingly, what leads to a stronger lyric.

Minulescu imposes an new immaterial blast, he cultivates a vivid proclivity to poetry, the preference for modernity comes from his lexicon, a vocabulary that passes over the zone of his predecessors going to urban, a *dialect of urban*. His lyric gives a distinguish tone to the emotions that the symbolist poets of the époque were generally cultivating, so Minulescu manages to attract readers through the state that his poetry provides, the reader identifies, and is overwhelmed by the sound of his lyric.

So, it can be affirmed that Minulescu gives to his poetry sentimental valences which lead to a state of knowingly assumed lyricism.

The minulescian symbolism regarding the chromatic has a maeterlinckian inspiration, so the white cup holds the green wine of death.

The minulescian macabre romances keep the lyrical style of the other poems, being distinguished by them only by the theme. So, the bacovian symbolist lugubrious it is transformed in picturesque by Minulescu, and the grotesque takes a decorative aspect, being drained by its malefic essence.

Minulescu's dead people are detached, ironic, and mocking, caring great symbolism: *Și-am rămas să-mi plimb scheletul, pe potecile pustii/ Și pe crucile de piatră să citesc ce-au scris cei vii* (*Romanțe mortului*).

The minulescian macabre represent a defining and distinct feature of the minulescian lyric, that gives originality to his poetic discourse. So, the reader should read the macabre romances *always with quatation marks*.

The romanticism that seemed old, takes a new form at Minulescu, he passes the limits imposed by Bacovia regarding the sonorous features of love, imposing a lyrical discource full of feelings and sensibility: *În cinstea ta-/ cea mai frumoasă și mai nebună dintre fete,/ Voi scrie trei ode,/ trei romanțe,/ trei elegii și trei sonete*.

His lyrical discourse is full of maeterlinckian symbols that release a subtle theatricality, rendering a landscape that is gradually blurring at the sight of an uproar of feelings coming from a excruciating wisdom of the love retrieved through death.

The symbolism of the middle of the night takes distinct valences from the romantics, for Minulescu this is not the time for seeing each other under the moon, but it is the time for lust and sensorial happiness of rational pleasures: *Eu știu c-ai să mă-nșeli chiar mâine/ Dar fiindcă azi mi te dai toată,/ Am să te iert/ E vechi păcatul/ Și nu ești prima vinovată…*

I. Minulescu has a major influence on the poetic language of his epoque, reinventing it in a personal style that synchronises the Romanian symbolism with the French one, pinching the entire esthetic of the word by modernizing the poetical lexicon: the neologisms, he replaces the archaisms and the regionalisms, the adjective is articulated becoming a noun. He is looking for a innovative spirit leaving aside the

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traditionalist one imposed by his semănătorist predecessors. The minulescian stylistics is characterized by N. Davidescu as having a predilection for sumptuousness, to finding an exterior musicality, but this is stifled by the interior sonority.

The impact of the minulescian poetry in the Romanian literary life was considerable, the unequal value of his volumes lead to receiving divers appreciations from Romanien critics and writers: G. Călinescu, Perpessicius, T. Arghezi, A. Marino, Ov. Densușianu…

During the epoque the literary critique established connections at a formal level between Minulescu's poetry and other poets' writings belonging to the universal literature: Emile Varhaeren in the romance *Cu toamna în odaie*.

Les trains by Henry Bataille is approached by the minulescian romance *Prin gările cu firme albastre*; and the most obvious example is *Pastel de toamnă*, which opens with the nearly identical to Haralam S. Lecca's verses: *Toamnă, noapte, ploaie, vânt*.

These associations do not do anything else but to resize the minulescian horizon, because his creations surpass the formal and semantic mimesis, proving a continuous adaptation to the major themes in the universal lyric.

Books like *Strofe pentru mai târziu* or *De vorbă cu mine însumi* do not constitute a progress from the first book, the poet is only facily versifying in a known manner.

His last volume of poems *Nu sunt ce par a fi* becomes a lyrical retrospective of his entire cicle of publications.

The volume *Romanțe pentru mai târziu* was depicting a young man looking for honest feelings, creating a musical poetry, that is able to transpose the unattainable. His poetic message is somehow transformed from a volume to another, reaching from a metaphorical sentimentalism, to the picture like descriptions of some trivial urban landscape.

Considering these, in the year of his first publication *Romanțe pentru mai târziu*, Minulescu was considered to be a vanguardist, but soon his vanguardism would be obsolete due to the arrival of some new magazines and new authors: *„Maybe during 1936 he was accused of not being vanguardist, but the fact that he had been varguandist and that he had promoted this trend was not to ignore". (Manu, 1981: 109)*

Also, some critics affirm that he would be the first symbolist poet, his lyrical discourse belonging to a modernist programme.

Indeed, his brutal style, and the aquarelle technique make from his lyric an important landmark in the beginning of the romanian symbolism.

But still, a great poet will mainly bring forward the limits of the literary trends, even of those that have made them known.

Decanting in the retors of his creative genius by the all sort of irony (Caragiale), by the bombast of the images (Goga), by a postromantic theatrical melancholy, with the existential thrill played on a roullette by a tramp spirit; I. Minulescu frames in the evolution of the Romanian symbolist lyric, the value of a poetic formula based self-negation and nonconformity.

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