# *FRENCH INFLUENCE IN GRIGORE ALEXANDRESCU'S WORK*

**Elena -Andreea POPA***

***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 XIX$^{th}$ 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 Călinescu, who affirmed that: "In a part of it, the poetry of Grigore Alexandrescu is the strongest expression of lamartinismului." (Călinescu 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 idel of a perfect morality, as the critic sustains: "Noboby 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,

* University of Piteşti, dina.andreea55@yahoo.com



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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. Calinescu, 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*, Voltaine with his *La Henriade*, etc.

This is also the case of Grigore Alexandrescu's poetry *Răsăritul lunii. La Tismana:* "Apoi glob rubinos, nopţii dând mişcare şi viaţă,/Se-nalţă şi, dimprejuru-i dese umbre depărtând,/Pe-ale stejarilor vârfuri, piramide de verdeaţă,/Se opri; apoi privirea-i peste lume aruncând,/Lumină adânci prăpăstii, mănăstirea învechită,/Feudală cetăţuie, ce de turnuri ocolită,/Ce de lună colorată şi privită de departe /Părea unul din acele osianice palate(…) Niciodată astă lună ce înoată în tărie,/ Ca fanal purtat de valuri pe a mărilor câmpie."( *Răsăritul 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 Targoviste; all that's left of the old glow of the city, *Adio la Târgovişte* , which then evolves within the meaning of a Lamartinian meditation: "Culcat pe-aste ruine, sub care adâncită/E gloria străbună şi umbra de eroi,/În linişte, tăcere, văd lumea adormită/Ce uită-n timpul nopţii necazuri şi nevoi./Dar cine se aude şi ce este ăst sunet?/Ce oameni sau ce armii şi ce repede pas?/Pământul îl clăteşte războinicescul tunet,/Zgomot de taberi, şoapte, trece, vâjâie-un glas...//Dar unde sunt acestea? S-au dus! Au fost părere./Căci armele, vitejii şi toate au tăcut/Aşa orice mărire nemicnicită piere!/A noastră, a Palmirei şi-a Romei a trecut." ( *Adio la Târgovişte*).

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



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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 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*: cadenţă, luptător, orizont, a repeta, rezultat, egoism, varietate, nobil, generaţie, glorios* and some French words which were excluded from the Romanian lexicon as *suje*t 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: "(…) Puţine-aş vrea, iubite, din zilele-mi pierdute,/Zile ce-n veşnicie şi-iau repedele zbor;/Puţine suvenire din ele am plăcute:/A fost numai-n durere varietatea lor!/Dar pe tine, an tânăr, te văz cu mulţumire!/Pe tine te doreşte tot neamul omenesc!/Şi eu sunt mic[ parte din trista omenire,/Şi eu a ta sosire cu lumea o slăvesc!/Când se născu copilul ce s-aştepta să vie,/Ca să ridice iară şi pe omul cel căzut,/Un bătrân îl luă în braţe, strigând cu bucurie:/"Sloboade-m[, st[pâne, fiindcă l-am văzut."/Astfel drepţii ar zice, de ar vedea-mplinite/Câte într-al t[u nume ne sunt făgăduite./O, an prezis atâta, măreţ reformator!/Începi, prefă, răstoarnă şi îmbunătăţează,/Arată semn acelor ce nu voiesc să crează;/Adu fără zăbavă o turmă ş-un păstor./A lumii temelie se mişcă, se clăteşte,/Vechile-i instituţii se şterg, s-au ruginit;/(…)Oricare sentimente înalte, generoase,/Ne par ca nişte basne de povestit, frumoase,/Şi tot entuziasmul izvor de idei mici./Politica adâncă stă în fanfaronadă,/Şi ştiinţa vieţii în egoism cumplit;/De-a omului m[rire nimic nu dă dovadă,/Şi numai despotismul e bine întărit./An nou! Aştept minunea-ţi ca o cerească lege;/Dacă însă păstorul ce tu ni l-ai allege/Va fi tot ca păstorii de care-avem destui,/Atunci... lasă în starea-i bătrâna tiranie,/(…)Şi ce mai rău ar face o stea, un comet mare,/Care să arză globul ş-ai lui locuitori?/(…)Şi trăiesc 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; ştiinţă>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 modernizeation of the Romanian language, where French influence played a decisive role.



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