

EMINESCU AND KABBALAH

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Abstract

In the pages of this article, we will bring together a series of interpretations of Eminescu's writings that prove the influence of the mysticism of Kabbalah on the great Romanian author. The understanding of Eminescu's poems through the lens of Kabbalah is a perspective adopted by several scholars. For example, starting with G. Călinescu, Hyperion (from the poem "Luceafărul") was compared to a sefirah. Since the influences of the Far East seem to be much more significant in the literary context in question, we will start from them and, later, correlate them with elements from the ideological background of Near Eastern mysticism. We will also point out certain aspects of the symbolism of the elements and, above all, of water – which is, ultimately, an emblem of the primordial space from which existence is born. Thus, starting from the perspective of Gaston Bachelard's poetics of the elements, we will investigate the correlation with the mysterious Ain Soph of Kabbalah.

Keywords: Kabbalah; Archaeus; symbol; reverie; the journey of initiation.

Introduction

Divinity reflects itself in the field of existence – and appears as a Universal Being (called, in Hinduism, *Brahma Saguna*). On the other hand, the Universal Non-Being (*Brahma Nirguna*) encompasses, in a potential state, all that exists – without being able to compare with any of the attributes of things, beings, or manifested phenomena. And yet, because everything returns, at the end of the Great Cosmic Day (*Mahamanvantara*), to the source of primordial unity, *Brahma Saguna* and *Brahma Nirguna* are to be understood only as two hypostases of Being (*Brahma*). The sum of the higher immanent forces must assume a form to exist on lower levels of existence, and the way genesis unfolds differs only formally from one mythological tradition to another. All cosmogonic texts are based on the same principles: there is an initial state of primordial time set in motion by the creative impulse. The initial void is inherent in creation, it is as such *par excellence*, not needing anything outside itself to be and, at the same time, sustaining the existence of the cosmos that lives within it.

The same principles are found, under various names, in all essential philosophical-religious contexts. In Christianity, they are called "Uncreated Light" (not embodied in any form) and "Light of the world". In Jewish mysticism the concepts of "Aelohim" and "Elohim"¹ propose a similar perspective. In its turn, the Sephirotic Tree merely presents a more detailed expression of the connection of the two major hypostases of the Being. In Mihai Eminescu's texts, the concepts considered are often associated with a reverie of the primordial rest.

¹ Being analyzed from a grammatical point of view, the word "Elohim" cannot be translated as masculine singular – due to the ending specific to plural forms, in Hebrew: namely the letters *Iod* and *Mem* (-im). *Aelohim* or *Ain-Elohim* is the unmanifest divinity from which Elohim emerges.

That reverie starts from a “decorative” appearance of a harmonious natural setting and reaches up to the unfathomable heights of the infinite sky. It can be easily observed that the poetic images in Eminescu’s lyric involve a continuous harmonization of the elements. The fire of titanic revolt is always covered by the earth; and the earth is, in its turn, covered with the fire of the stars reflected in its waters. Breezes cross the entire nature, and the woods and the lake vibrate, listening to the whispers of the wind. However, this constant activity would become monotonous if there were not something beyond the appearance of the simple mutual play. The reverie cultivated by Eminescu seems to be directed towards “beyond”, towards a “something else” in which the only melody is that of silence – a melody that combines light and life and then melts them into non-existence, eternal repose.

2. The connection between water symbolism and primordial repose

The exegetes of Eminescu’s work (G. Călinescu, E. Papu, Ioana Em. Petrescu, I. Negoïtescu, Rosa del Conte) analyzed, from various perspectives, the primary elements that appear in Eminescu’s verses, emphasizing their symbolic polyvalence. Among the four elements, water is predominant and, more than that, all the major symbolic aspects of the aquatic element can be found in Eminescu’s poetry. Also, interesting to watch is the perspective from which water, as an undifferentiated mass, is associated with the image of primordial rest, giving birth to an unusual reverie, correlated – in turn – with sleep and the image of the beloved.

Framed in such a symbolic background, water is much more than an ornament of the landscapes described by the poet. It constitutes, in fact, the “substance” of some of the most sublime reveries. From the point of view of the poetics of the elements, water is, equally, a mirror of the world, a representation of motherhood, of life, and of death (Bachelard, 1997, p. 84). The play of water seems infinite: water is born from the springs of the earth, and the thirsty waters of the sky rise to the clouds, then descend again to the earth. However, in these images there is a natural tendency to harmonize and integrate into the cosmos: the water is sometimes static, sometimes dynamic, suggesting, paradoxically, both the idea of peace and rest, as well as the idea of an unsettling transition. Starting from this perspective, we will analyze the connection between sleep and water in Eminescu’s verses.

G. Călinescu noted that drowsiness is the most persistent state of mind in Eminescu’s lyric (Călinescu, 1985, p. 188). Of course, the previous observation must be completed by the contextual definition of “sleepiness”. Transcending its biological functions and addressing the desire to overcome the constraining boundaries of form, sleep is the first step through which the thirst for primordial repose manifests. This is because perception during sleep is more comprehensive than when awake. It is not a coincidence that, in Greek mythology, Hypnos and Thanatos are brothers because, like death, sleep allows the soul to overcome both the boundaries of space and time, as well as those of logical reason. Consequently, during dreams, experiences and phenomena are accepted which, in the waking state, would be considered absurd or impossible.

2.1 Dream and reverie

Although there is an obvious connection between reverie and night dreaming, there must be a clear distinction between the two (Bachelard, 2005, p. 70). If, in the nocturnal dream, a male element of the being (“animus”) is rather active, in the reverie we find a dominant female counterpart of the being (“anima”). The reverie can give rise to creative understanding but when the rays of consciousness no longer illuminate the dreamer, his reverie falls apart (p. 155). In addition, reverie is a generative spiritual phenomenon (it generates a symbolic world) and regenerator (since, through reverie, the psychic faculties of

man are vitalized by a deep inner experience). Far from being a “loss” through chaotic images, reverie can only exist in harmony, and harmony implies harmonization of all the elements that tend towards dispersion. Thus, the images are not only mechanically received, but actively internalized and experienced at an intimate level of being, the subject of the reverie being penetrated and traversed by the chromatic and musical vitality of the world. Moreover, it is well known that, within romantic literature, reverie is one of the most accessible methods for overcoming rationalization and even spatiotemporal limits.

In Eminescu’s imaginary, death and sleep are – often – inseparable, being understood only through correlation with the symbolism of water. To paraphrase one of G. Călinescu’s ideas regarding the poem *Mai am un singur dor*, we emphasise that, in his opinion (Călinescu, 1985, p. 212), the poet views nature as having a cosmogonic meaning, highlighting the primacy of water as an emblem of Chaos. In order to deepen our understanding of the connection between death (or sleep) and water, as well as to capture a certain particularity of the element that inspires the eminence reveries, it is necessary to analyze some passages from variants of the previously mentioned poem: “Mai am un singur dor: / În liniștea serii / Să mă lăsați să mor / La marginea mării; / Să-mi fie somnul lin / Și codrul aproape, / Pe ’ntinsele ape / Să am un cer senin”² (Eminescu, 1994, p. 216); “Să-mi fie somnul lin / Și codrul aproape, / Luceasc’ un cer senin / Pe-adâncile ape,” (p. 219); “Să-mi fie somnul lin / Și codrul aproape, / Lucească cer senin/ Eternelor ape,” (p. 221). There is no adjective comprehensive enough to describe these waters; they are equally: “vast”, “deep” and “eternal”. Through these descriptions, their mystery becomes even deeper, and the consciousness that penetrates it deepens increasingly and discovers new abysses, which are, in fact, facets of the same abyss. To understand this element loaded with such rich symbolism, we could make a parallel between the image of water and the image of the lover from Eminescu’s poetry.

2.2 Love, beloved and reverie of repose

The reveries of the meeting with the beloved one often end in sleep, being accompanied by a distinct feeling of bliss, indescribable in its fullness. Usually, the poet uses the word “farmec” – ‘charm’ (Călinescu, 1985, p. 245) to suggest this state: “Să plutim cuprinși de farmec / Sub lumina blândeii lune – / Vântu ’n trestii să foșnească, / Unduioasa apă sune!”³ (Eminescu, 1994, p. 74). ‘Charm’ appears as a natural result of (re)union with the beloved one, representing the peak of earthly love and, at the same time, the first step of cosmic love. To continue the interpretation, a parallel between love and sleep is needed: if sleep is abandonment, love is rediscovery.

Under certain circumstances, the beloved can be an anthropomorphic representation of the original water, embracing the lover with a rather motherly love. Then, the beloved becomes the symbol of quiet eternity, on whose chest the lover rests, adhering, at the same time, to the rest of the world. The lover longs to be enveloped by the perfume of that Eternal Feminine that has fascinated poets throughout time; because, in the last resort, the lover wants to merge with love itself.

Sometimes the beloved is “too far away”, appearing and disappearing like a vaporuous form, an air nymph that the lover can only dream of. As the (intangible) feminine ideal

² Meaning: ‘I have only one more wish: / In the evening’s calm, / Let me be left to rest / By the edge of the sea / May my sleep be peaceful / And the forest close by, / Over the vast waters, / May I have a clear sky’. (The English translation of the verses throughout this article belongs to us. Its sole purpose is to help readers who do not speak Romanian understand their basic meaning).

³ ‘Let us float, enchanted, / Under the gentle moonlight’s grace – / Let the wind rustle in the reeds, / And the rippling water sings!’

crystallizes into a tangible feminine form, the lovers draw closer to each other, and the flame of passionate eros is subdued by the earth element (the meadow or the woods). The couple's union is outlined, in Eminescu's verses, as a harmonious fusion of the two principles (masculine and feminine) with nature. Following an overall analysis of Eminescu's lyric, we can distinguish five aspects of the beloved being:

- 1) the beloved as "form", with a beautiful body, warm and close;
- 2) the beloved as "form", with a beautiful body, but cold and distant;
- 3) the beloved as a delightful but intangible form;
- 4) the beloved as an ideal that transcends form;
- 5) the beloved as Eternal Feminine who perfects the ideal, source of love, and emblem of repose.

This last aspect is of particular interest to us, and to analyze it, we will start from the premise that the lover's disappointments occur when he is limited to the "beautiful form" (tangible lover), desired (intangible lover) and even idealized (beloved as ideal). Bewitched by the image of his beloved, he seems to forget that beauty appears to the eyes through form but far exceeds its limits. Overcome by melancholy or sadness, he intuitively understands why the form is beautiful. Let us remember that when harmony is broken by suffering, the beloved is no more a very beautiful girl ("o prea frumoasă fată"), but a simple 'clay face' ("chip de lut"). Therefore, beauty does not reflect itself in the absence of love.

Lacking this harmonizing principle, the form loses its magic, ceasing to be a mirror for beauty. When the spell of form disappears, existence is seen as a transitory state, in which the common ground is clothed by multiple identities that gravitate around its source, being constantly set in motion by the need to become and aspire, at the same time, towards the eternal return. In the last instance, the beloved is only an "icon", an idealized image, but without independent value, being only a pale reflection of the beauty that sustains the charm of love.

The connection between repose (symbolized by the image of primordial water) and the beloved as the Eternal Feminine can be summarized by stating that although both can take any form, they are not subject to the constraint of form. The contour of water is limitlessness, and the contour of the beloved is love. At the same time, love gives birth to harmony, harmony gives birth to reverie, and reverie is the means to transcend the passage of time.

If there is a principle that directs and harmonizes the fluid substance of the dream universe, sleep exceeds the limit of necessity and carries the dreamer through his reverie. Love is the harmonizing principle and, at the same time, it is also *a call of the absolute* (del Conte, 1990, p. 210). This call is aimed at extinguishing the consuming existence and melting the being into the repose of non-being. Therefore, the most intimate "dream" of the poet, the deepest of his reveries is the reverie of rest in the kingdom of primordial repose where that eternal and immutable "being" reigns. However, there is a long way to get there, and such a path is proposed to us by the poem around which the next section revolves.

3. The initiatory journey and symbolism of the Sephirotic Tree in a poem by Eminescu

In this case, we are dealing with an unfinished poem known under two titles proposed by those who edited the text. In G. Călinescu's version, the title focuses on the figure of the magician (*Povestea magului călător în stele* [The tale of the wizard traveling among the stars]), whereas D. Murărașu believes that a more appropriate title would be *Feciorul de împărat fără stea* [The emperor's son without a star] (Murărașu, 1967, p. 17). Whether the emphasis falls on the mage or the emperor's son in those titles is of considerable relevance given that in the first part of the poem, it is the emperor's son who walks the path of initiation,

setting out in search of the mage, and, in the third part, the magician is the one who travels, and the emperor's son becomes the wanted one. This reversal of the roles of the seeker and the sought deserves special attention.

Although, inevitably, *Povestea magului călător în stele* has been the subject of some specialized articles and books, there are still insufficiently explored details regarding its symbolic implications. Among the many possibilities of interpretation, a particularly interesting one is the association of the characters with the Sephirothic Tree of Kabbalah. This kind of approach can provide a much deeper understanding of the journey of the emperor's son.

The first lines describe a genesis during which the stars descend their 'land of mysteries' on a ray: "În vremi de mult trecute, când stelele din ceriuri/ Erau copile albe cu părul blond și des/ Și coborînd pe rază țara lor de misteruri/ În marea cea albastră se cufundau ades"⁴ (Eminescu, 1990, p. 339). From a certain symbolic point of view, the stars are Elohim, and the ray is how the "uncreated light" (*Ain Soph*) of Aelohim becomes a "limitless light" (*Ain Soph Aur*), which descends into the realm of creation.

The kingdom from which the emperor's son starts to climb the mountain of the magician can be identified with the *sefirah Malkuth* (which, in literal translation, means "kingdom"). And if the emperor's son is understood as a symbol of the "human soul" (*Tiphareth*), the emperor can be an allegory of the "spirit" (*Chesed*) that leads to knowledge. Let us not forget that the purpose of the journey is to prepare the emperor's son to become emperor, to become like his own "archetypal father". The path he takes to climb the mountain is made up of the spheres *Yesod* (meaning "foundation" or "base"), *Hod*, and *Netzach* (symbolizing, on a microcosmic level, emotions, and thoughts).

The reference to a higher type of understanding ("gândurilor mele aripe să le pui") is detailed by the words of the "great seraph" that provides an answer to the problems troubling the emperor's son (when he stops in the rosy marble hall to understand his fate⁵). It is also particularly relevant that the protagonist decides to travel at night, a fact that reminds us of the "dark night of the soul" (*la noche oscura del alma*) that Saint John of the Cross spoke of.

Mount Pion – a place where the earth merges with the sky and which exceeds any kind of concrete geographical limits – represents an *axis mundi* (Petrescu, 1978, p. 52). At the same time, the mountain is also an allegorical image of the initiatory journey, which can be correlated with the representation of the Sephirothic Tree. Therefore, the symbolism of the mountain includes numerous levels of interpretation that are not mutually exclusive but complementary. The journey to this (inner) mountain is both an ascent (overcoming the clouds and approaching the sun) and a descent into the depths of one's being (entering the mage's cave).

After climbing the mountain (to understand the 'enigma of life'), the emperor's son will learn that he has 'no angel' or 'no star' (Eminescu, 1990, p. 348). The lack of the star is explained by the fact that he belongs to that category of people to whom 'God in the world holds the place of a father'⁶ (p. 349). The "father" appears in two hypostases: on the one

⁴ 'In times long past, / when the stars in the heavens / Were fair children with blonde and flowing hair / And, descending on a ray their land of mysteries, / They would often immerse themselves in the deep blue sea'.

⁵ "Când mintea va cuprinde viața ta lumească, / Când corpul tău cădea-va de vreme risipit, / Vei coborî tu singur în viața-ți sufletească / Și vei dura în spațiu-i stelos nemărginit; / Cum Dumnezeu cuprinde cu viața lui cerească / Lumi, stele, timp și spațiu ș-atomul nezărit, / Cum toate-s el și dânsul în toate e cuprins / Astfel tu vei fi mare ca gândul tău întins" (Eminescu, 1994, p. 350). Meaning: 'When the mind comprehends your earthly life, / When your body, over time, falls apart, / You will descend into your soul's existence, / And endure in its boundless, starry space, / Just as God encompasses the celestial life, / Worlds, stars, time, and unperceived atoms, / How everything is Him, and He is in all, / So, you will be vast as your extended thought'.

⁶ "Dumnezeu în lume le ține loc de tată".

hand, as an emperor and, on the other, as a magician (both being called “părinte” by the emperor’s son).

The magician lives ‘above the world’ (p. 344), situating himself in a higher plane of existence, and, by reference to the “profane world” he is *Das Ganz Andere* (Otto, 1996, p. 34). Contrary to the symbolic atmospheric elements evoked by the terms “iarnă, ploaie, zăpadă, fiori” (meaning ‘winter, rain, snow, chills’) in a lower realm, the ‘cherished sunbeam’ represents an allegory for enlightenment, illuminating the journey of the individual ascending the mountain. Initially, the magician dwells in an intermediate space, understood as a path to another subtle reality. Beyond the sun is the pinnacle of all creation, the ‘fathomless abyss’ (Eminescu, 1990, p. 358), described during the journey of the magician in the third part of the poem. It is essential to note that this abstract space exceeds “created light”; and to enter it, the magician ‘releases the star’ that had carried him there.

The total darkness in that abyss appears as an “uncreated light” (or “extinction”) surrounded by stars (“deasupra vedea stele și dedesuptu-i stele”). As we already know, this principle of “unmanifest limitlessness” is called *Ain Soph* in Kabbalah. It is interesting to note that each being has its primordial essence (*Ain Soph*), which is symbolized by a star. Following this interpretation, we must not lose sight of the fact that the first time the emperor’s son meets the magician, he sits on a fallen star (p. 351).

The symbol (that of the magician, in this case) is the only possible description of divinity because we have access to God only through symbols (Kant, 1981, p. 247). From this perspective, we can understand why the darkness (“marmură neagră”, “negre oglinde”, “adânc întuneric”, “E peștera neagră zăhastrului mag” etc.) appears as a constant attribute of the place where the mage resides. But there are two types of darkness: a “lower” one (meaning the absence of light or the “night of the soul”) and a “higher” one (meaning “potential light” or “uncreated light” which exceeds common perception). Being able to follow the magician inside the mountain indicates that the emperor’s son can overcome the “lower darkness” and enter the “upper darkness” (Davy, 1998, p. 347).

Considering that the destiny of the emperor’s son is not written in the *Book of the World* (Cifor, 2000, p. 92), to decipher his fate (different from that of most mortals), the magician leads him to a series of rooms inside the mountain. The initiatory journey necessarily involves an initiatory death through which the mystery of Eros merges with that of Hypnos and Thanatos. The hero’s journey will continue beyond the limits of the physical body after he is offered a cup that brings him sleep. This element allows the emperor’s son to access much more profound levels of his being, culminating in the finding of the star at the end of the second part of the poem (Eminescu, 1990, p. 357).

Later, the prince is transposed into another existence and knows the life of the hermit. On the one hand, we can understand that the emperor’s son, under the guidance of the magician, arrives at the place where the hermit leads his existence; on the other hand, we can understand that the emperor’s son becomes an ascetic himself (understanding his condition through direct experience). We will continue to focus on the second perspective.

In the third (and last) part of the text, the magician’s journey is described (p. 358) and thus, there is a reversal of the roles of seeker and sought: the magician becomes the seeker, and the prince becomes the sought. The magician appears as an omnipotent personification of wisdom, which can be identified with the Ancient of Days or with the Trinity within the Kabbalah: *Keter*, *Chokmah*, *Binah* (which, in translation, means: “crown”, “wisdom” and “understanding”). It should also be emphasized that the emperor (*Chesed*) is the one who makes the connection between the “human soul” (his son – *Tiphareth*) and the magician (*Keter*, *Chokmah*, *Binah*) possible.

Another significant detail is that the magician never descends from his mountain (p. 342) but ascends to heaven. From this point of view, he does not make another journey but continues the journey of the emperor's son. If in the first stanza of the poem we are dealing with a description of the macrocosmic genesis, in the third part we can see the symbolic description of a microcosmic genesis. Thus, it is not the 'stars from the heavens' that descend into creation, but the magician himself descends from 'chaos' or 'from the top of the mountain' to the star where he finds the monk.

If in the first part of the poem the magician is described as a 'hermit', now the emperor's son appears as a hermit. Among the many details that can be commented on during their last meeting, we will only focus on the image of the ideal beloved being that the ascetic talks about.

By reference to the Sephirothic Tree, this ideal beloved – who appears as a beautiful and youthful angel (p. 365) – is *Geburah* (or "divine soul"). As a symbol of the human soul (*Tiphareth*), the ascetic prince aspires to union with the divine soul. To understand this perspective of interpretation, we can remember the journey in *The Divine Comedy*, during which Dante (as a symbol of the human soul) aspires to (re)unite with Beatrice (who is, in turn, the representation of the "divine soul"). Only through the mediation and guidance of the "divine soul" does it become possible to contemplate the spheres that exceed the perceptive capacity of the human soul. Moreover, within the structure of the Sephirothic Tree, *Geburah* acts as a mediator between the "human soul" and the "Heavenly Father".

The initiatory journey of Eminescu's poem does not end with the last stanza but continues in a world where the emperor's son and the 'etheric-ideal' of the beloved can coexist 'in the form of clay' of a body. In other words, to reach their full potential, the two souls are meant to merge into the same physical body (p. 369).

Finally, this subchapter represents only a possibility of interpretation that cannot claim to be exhaustive. Although only a few passages of the text were discussed, we hope that they were relevant enough to highlight the fact that we are dealing with an *archetypal scheme of an initiatory journey* (Petrescu, 1978, p. 44) and, therefore, the stages of the path are intended, rather, for a symbolic reception. Beyond the appearance of the outer adventure, the journey of the emperor's son (as well as the journey of the magician) is an inner journey.

Summarizing, we can observe that the "human soul" (*Tiphareth*) is the one who undertakes the initiatory journey to acquire his "divine soul" (*Geburah*), tending, at the same time, to become like his own "archetypal parent" (*Chesed*) by acquiring "understanding" (*Binah*) and "wisdom" (*Chokmah*) to be worthy of the "crown" (*Keter*) of an emperor. Recalling that, in the initial section of the poem, the prince embarks on a quest to reach his objective by seeking out the magician, we can interpret the connection between the sefirot *Keter*, *Chokmah* and *Binah* with the representation of the old magician. Therefore, both the Pion Mountain, the emperor, the "great seraph", the magician, the ideal lover, the emperor's son, and the star are archetypal elements that can be found in the depths of each of us.

4. Principles of Kabbalah in a fragment of Eminescu's prose

Even after a hasty reading of Eminescu's prose, we cannot fail to notice that it is by no means a simple, marginal addition to poetry, but proposes a well-defined vision of existence. Well, the Empyrean described in *The Divine Comedy* finds its equivalent among the lines of the fragment entitled "Archaeus". The text is unfinished, extracted from a manuscript by Eminescu and published under this title in the edition of I. Scurtu, *Scieri politice și literare* (1905). Beyond the parallels with the thought systems of some European philosophers, the text under discussion may constitute another point of intersection between Eminescu's creation and the principles of Kabbalah.

Before the actual analysis, we should mention a series of data regarding the word “Archaeus” (fr. *archée*, lat. *archeus*, gr. *arkhe*) that represents the primordial chaos, the amorphous matrix on which the entire creation was based. During the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, the term was encountered in alchemical texts, there being, as is natural, certain contextual differences – which, however, do not affect the essential ideational background of the term. In the second case, *archeus* names the vital principle (*anima mundi*) that sustains the existence of all beings and which, like all external elements and phenomena, had an individualized form of expression within each being. So, the existence of both a macrocosmic and a microcosmic *archeus* can be highlighted, correlated with the genesis of the body, but also with that of the soul. In short, the mechanical↔biological and the conscious↔spiritual appear as complementary possibilities through which the *archeus* can act.

The fragment itself begins by emphasizing the contrast between the “all-knowing” clerks and sub-commissioners (who frame existence within the rigid limits of their preoccupations, thus losing its meaning) and the thoughtful man who accepts that he knows nothing, questions, and has more uncertainties than certainties, and thus treads cautiously on the path of knowledge. The former will deal only with the “shells”, and the latter will approach the core of things and be able to understand that ‘Archaeus is the only reality in the world’, compared to which ‘all others are trifles’ – as one of the two characters (that we will mention in the following pages) will state.

Perception is the first of the fundamental issues detailed in the proposed text: “Într’adevăr lumea cum o vedem, nu există decât în crierul nostru. (...) Lumea nu-i cumu-i, ci cum o vedem...”⁷ (Eminescu, 1905, pp. 283-284). Having posed the problem in this way, it is easy to understand that perception is the foundation of knowledge. The mode of existence of each being is directly related to the more or less elevated degree of perception. The wider the perception, the more passivity turns into activity and the deeper the interaction between nature and its observer becomes. Also, the more there is a predisposition to think (about what exceeds the immediate sphere of perception), the more the being has superior means to investigate the external, but also the internal reality.

All the thoughts in the first part revolve around the question ‘What is the truth?’. The answer continues as a rhetorical question, in which Eminescu combines the depth of thought with fine irony (p. 284). Later, two characters are introduced: the poet and the old philosopher. It is relevant to mention that they meet in a pub called “Noah's Ark”. From a symbolic point of view, the pub can be understood as a place where the thirsty for knowledge enters, to take shelter from the deluge of everyday ignorance. In this context, the old philosopher will state: ‘Well, Archaeus is the only reality in the world, all the others are trifles – Archaeus is everything’⁸ (Eminescu, 1905, p. 286) – the reply is addressed to the young poet.

To study this type of reality (*Archaeus*) it is necessary to open the knowing subject towards a new type of understanding of the world and, implicitly, a meditation on the human condition. Precisely for this reason, before listening to the old man, the young poet has the feeling of becoming a child again. But even an innocent mind ready to intuitively receive the master’s teaching can often be “blocked” by reason.

An attempt at a logical explanation of the Archaeus follows, but as expected, the limits of reason cannot encompass, in its entirety, the targeted reality. After the poet confesses to the old philosopher: ‘...I still don't know what Archaeus is’ (p. 292), the latter (after having already offered a series of explanations and illustrative examples) presents, in a

⁷ Meaning: ‘Indeed, the world as we see it exists only in our minds. (...) The world is not as it is but as we perceive it’.

⁸ “Ei bine, Archaeus este singura realitate pe lume, toate celelalte sînt fleacuri – Archaeus este tot”.

very concise manner, the characterization of Archaeus: ‘It is the same *punctum saliens*, which appears in thousands of people stripped of time and space, whole and undivided...’⁹ (p. 292).

In short, the archeus designates the essence and vital force of all phenomena and constitutes the prototype of all beings. Being understood as a world of archetypes from which creation emerges and, at the same time, as a point of continuously becoming an absolute possibility, this space (or way of “being”) is not located in *illo tempore*, but in a continuously (omni)present. This is how the old philosopher describes this fact to the young poet: ‘It is not easy to understand – because it is eternal. And eternal is all that is always present... in this moment. Not what was, because there were states of affairs, not what will be, because there will be states of affairs again. What is’ (p. 291). And beyond the aspect called, by the ancient Greeks, *arkhe*, and, by the Kabbalists, “limitless” (*Ain Soph*) is the “Nothingness” (*Ain*) on which we will focus in the following pages.

5. The Nothingness (*Ain*) or the unknown God in Eminescu’s lyric

References to the “unknown God” or “unnamed” can be seen in several poems, among which we mention: *Luceafărul*, *Scrisoarea I* and *Rugăciunea unui dac*. Of course, the previously mentioned texts have been studied from a multitude of perspectives, and the problem of the unknown God has also been addressed by established eminescologists. Even if we will not bring a new perspective on this issue, we believe that the topic is worth addressing in order to make a synthesis of some already known points of view.

To understand the concept of “Unknown God” in Eminescu’s poems, we must, first, consider the (romantic) perspective from which the poet looks at it. Many times, the romantic writer is characterized by a religious syncretism that shows the desire to understand a reality beyond the conceptual boundaries specific to a canonical religion – without, however, denying these boundaries. What the romantic denies is the possibility of symbolic forms, specific to a religious tradition, to fully encompass the reality to which it refers. Maybe for this reason Eminescu wrote the lyrics: “Eu nu cred nici în Iehova, / Nici în Buddha-Sakya-Muni, / Nici în viață, nici în moarte, / Nici în stingere ca unii”¹⁰ (Eminescu 1994: 115).

In fact, the poet “does not believe” in the possibility of any symbolic form containing the Truth. The previously stated hypothesis is confirmed by the next verse of the poem, which indirectly recalls one of the most famous ideas of Hinduism: “The world is the dream of Brahma”. Entering the sphere of human reason, ‘all these holy mysteries’ become ‘for man fragments of language’ (Cifor, 2000, p. 52) – or, in other words, they become constrained by the conceptual boundaries of language. Simple words cannot contain the Logos, much less the source of this primordial Word, which is the “Unknown God”. The “Unknown God” is neither “this” nor “that”, but “Something else”, which is impossible to name explicitly – representing only a generic name for the deepest aspect of divinity – present, of course, in all philosophical-religious traditions. Well, the concept of Universal Non-Being (*Brahma Nirguna* or *Para-Brahman*) referred to the same ultimate reality.

Given that the romantic writers took up the concepts of microcosm, macrocosm, and archetype developed in the mystical, kabbalistic, and alchemical tradition of the Middle Ages (Huch, 2011, pp. 331-342), the cosmological model proposed by them is, par excellence, a symbolic one (Petrescu, 1978, p. 15). Nature or creation is the mirror of the Creator, reflecting His attributes, without separating them from His ultimate and “uncreated” nature. The divine attributes appear as distorted (on the surface of the “mirror” of existence) either when it moves too far from the One it reflects or when an obstacle appears between the

⁹ “E unul și același punctum saliens, care apare în mii de oameni disbrăcat de timp și spațiu, întreg și nedespărțit...”.

¹⁰ ‘I do not believe in Jehovah, / Nor in Buddha-Sakyamuni, / Neither in life nor in death, / Nor in extinction like some do’.

creation and the Creator that limits or modifies the perception. The essence of the Creator is, therefore, in everything that exists, but not everything that exists faithfully reflects the image of the Creator.

At a microcosmic level, the attributes of the Creator are in a latent and potential state, like seeds. After the fall, man no longer reflects the “image and likeness of God”, but still retains this possibility in the form of an archetypal essence located in the depths of his being. Thus, man can do nothing but a poetic act: *to guess or to feel in nature the great ideal of God* (Béguin, 1970, p. 113). The fulfilment of the poetic act presupposes a micro-genesis through which man becomes a *microtheos*.

As noted by G. Călinescu (1985, p. 8), there are two poems (*Rugăciunea unui dac* and *Scrisoarea I*) in which Eminescu presents the moment of genesis and, implicitly, the first manifestation of the “Unknown God”. To begin with, we will consider the description of the genesis from *Scrisoarea I*, highlighting the following verse: “Când pătruns de sine însuși odihnea cel nepătruns”¹¹ (Eminescu, 1994, p. 132).

Given that, properly speaking, the “Unknown God” cannot be assigned any concrete attribute; his understanding is conditioned by the understanding of the world of archetypes from which creation arises. Existence itself is opposed to that uncreated state of being and, for this reason, existence can be understood as a mirror on the surface on which the attributes of non-existence are reflected. Continuing the analysis of the poem, we discover that the created world is not an independent reality, but only a ‘dream of non-being’.

Constantin Noica observes that there was too much talk about non-being in Eminescu and, at the same time, that no Romanian writer invoked non-being more (Noica, 1992, p. 322). The same principle of “unmanifested limitlessness” (which is also the source of manifested existence) is called the *Ain Soph* in Kabbalah. As we noticed from the prose fragment studied, each being has its primordial essence (*Ain Soph*) which, through the act of creation, can develop its latent possibilities. So, the macrocosmic “limitlessness” (*Ain Soph*) sums up the individual microcosmic essences. Above this principle of limitlessness (*Ain Soph*) is the primordial “Nothingness” (*Ain*), which can be equated with the “Unknown God” of ancient Greece.

The beginning of the poem *Rugăciunea unui dac* is particularly revealing for the study of the unknown God. These verses highlight three essential aspects: the unity of God, the mention of the “kernel” of light as the source of life, and, of course, the unknowable character nature of God. The singularity and unity of the primordial God (‘one was all and all was one’) is clearly stated in the first stanza quoted above. Even though the One has no form, it represents the origin of multiple forms and therefore can appear in any form (‘rising as a new ray from the same water’ – as it is written in *Archaeus*). There, the more something *exists*, the less *it is*, and for something to be it must cease to exist (in the manifested space). The same hypothesis can be found in a comment on the pose of Hyperion in *Luceafărul*: the one who feels his immortality also knows that he ‘wasn’t when he was, he is when he isn’t’ (Marian, 1999, p. 207).

The first recognizable manifestation of the “Unknown God” is represented by the ‘seed of life-giving light’. The primordial “core of light” (*Ain Soph Aur*) can be compared to the star that is born from the immensity (*Ain Soph*) of the primordial “Void” (*Ain*). Because it is absolute fullness, God appears as “Nothing” (*Ain*) to existence, and manifested existence appears as nothing in relation to God – and, despite the apparent contradiction, the two types of being are not mutually exclusive. If “That” (*Agnostos Theos*) enters the realm of

¹¹ ‘When absorbed in oneself, the unpenetrated one was resting’.

manifestation, that nameless reality (which is also the source of all names) becomes “This”, the one that can be looked at and understood.

The fact that God is “unknown” represents an indirect reference to the multitude of names by which God can be called and, at the same time, to the way that none of these names fully reflects the ultimate nature of the divine. In addition, God is unknown because man does not know himself and therefore cannot know what is beyond him. Finally, the unknown God is the primordial source of all creation, standing above all constraints of manifested existence. As long as there is a contextual understanding of the concepts, it can be said that the “Unknown God” is simultaneous “Limitlessness” and “Void”. The concept of Limitlessness (*Ain Soph*) has already been discussed, and that of Void (*Ain* – In Hebrew) should not be understood in the sense of a “lack of something”, but of the presence of an “Other” that seems to be “nothing” by reference to existence.

Conclusions

Considering that fantastic art *remains a way of access to the secrets of creation* (De Solier, 1987, p. 239), its creator must be an initiate capable of perceiving and transmitting those secrets. Such an “instrument” is the genius – representing the humanization of a ‘generative principle of existence’ whose exceptional ability ‘gives rise to a new rule, which could not be deduced from previous principles or examples’ (Kant, 1981, p. 212). Because the genius writer has that ‘innate disposition of the soul’ by which ‘nature prescribes rules to art’ (p. 202), his work is unrepeatable and always retains a mystery that fascinates.

In conclusion, the relationship between Mihai Eminescu’s personality and the study of Kabbalah can be seen as a “kabbalah” in itself. Apart from a few testimonies and notes in his manuscripts, most information on this subject emerges from a thorough study of his work.

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