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THE SYMBOLISM OF GARDEN AND ORCHARD PLANTS AND THEIR REPRESENTATION IN PAINTINGS (I)

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Abstract: Plant symbols are a part of the cultural treasure of humanity, whether we consider the archaic secular traditions or religion, heraldry etc., throughout history until the present day. To flowers, in particular, there have been attributed particular meanings over thousands of years. Every art form has involved flower symbols at some point, but in painting they have an outstanding presence. Early paintings are rich in philosophical and Christian plant symbolism, while 18th–20th century art movements have added new meanings to vegetal-floral symbolism, through the personal perspective of various artists in depicting plant symbols. This paper focuses on the analysis of the ancient plant significance of the heathen traditions and superstitions but also on their religious sense, throughout the ages and cultures. Emphasis has been placed on plants that were illustrated preferentially by painters in their works on gardens and orchards.

Keywords: Plant symbolism, paintings, gardens, orchards.

Introduction

Plant symbols comprise a code of great richness and variety in the cultural thesaurus of humanity. Even in the archaic traditions, plants were present in the totems of various peoples and families [20]. The object of symbolism may be the plant as such or one or more of its component parts: the flower, fruit, leaf, seed, root, etc.

An important part of plant symbolism originates from their connection/parallelism with people, reflected in the imaginary world through the countless metamorphoses of people into plants and in the miraculous births of certain heroes out of plants.

Romanian toponymy excels in its „vegetal" nature. Plant names are the origin of many place names (Brad, Făget, Nucet, Plopeni, Salcia etc.), first names (Violet, Lily, Iris, Narcissus etc.), or serve as names for traditional holidays (Dumineca Floriilor, Sânzienele, Rusaliile, etc.).

Particular meanings have been attributed to flowers for thousands of years. An ancient form of floriography was practiced in the traditional cultures of Europe, Asia and the Middle East. Every art form has involved flower symbols at some point: painting, sculpture, literature, music, ceramics, home design and others. Plants and their blossoms are used as symbols in the Hebrew Bible or Old Testament, in Song of Songs [2:1-3] [53], as a symbol for the people of Israel [Psalm 80:10-16] [53], and for the coming of the Messiah [Isaiah 11:1] [53]. During the Middle Ages and Renaissance, plant symbolism developed as a means to convey religious truths

to the people. In western culture, Shakespeare attributed emblematic meanings to flowers, being passionately adept at using the rose as symbol of love (mentioned 70 times in his writings). For example, in *The Tragedy of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark*, Ophelia associates rosemary with memories and pansies with thoughts [19].

Joseph Hammer-Purgstall's *Dictionnaire du language des fleurs* [25] appears to be the first published list associating flowers with symbols. The first complex floriography dictionary appears in 1819, when Louise Cortambert, under the *nom de plume* "Madame Charlotte de la Tour" publishes *La langage des Fleurs* [14]. After this start, many floral dictionaries were published both in Europe and the United States [9, 10, 11, 23, 24, 26, 29, 40, 42, 43, 44, 48, 50].

In France, in Victorian England and in the U.S.A., the 19th century saw a growing interest in flower symbolism. Specific flowers were sent as presents in order to convey coded messages, allowing the sender to express their feelings in a private manner [1, 23]. The flowers offered to the departed also carried a particular meaning. Within the cult of the dead, flowers have been part of the funeral rites for most peoples, facilitating the passing of the soul to the other world [16].

Plant motifs were also used in heraldry [15], many countries or regions considering specific plants as national symbols (on emblems and flags).

Plants and their blossoms have fascinated painters across time. Early painters have chosen certain flowers to convey very specific messages to their subjects. Unfortunately today, a large part of the symbolism associated with them is lost. The meaning of a certain flower differs across time periods and cultures.

The earlier paintings – Byzantine, Gothic, Renaissance, Baroque, Classical and Romantic – are rich in philosophical and Christian plant symbolism. Among the exponents of these periods who were attached to such symbols, we can mention Fra Angelico, Masaccio, Botticelli, Hieronymus Bosch, Bellini, Mantegna, Dürer, Cranach the Elder, Titian, Raphael, Tintoretto, Pieter Brueghel the Younger (Renaissance), Jan Brueghel the Elder, Rubens, Poussin, Velázquez, Jan Brueghel the Younger and Rembrandt (Baroque). As representative of the Romantic period we can name Goya, Blake, Constable, Vernet, Delacroix, Cole, while David and Ingres preferred the neoclassical style.

The next period is marked by an effervescence of artistic styles and currents/trends, in the 18th and 19th century, followed by the painters of the 20th century, whose exponents have added new meanings to vegetal-floral symbolism.

The Realists (Millet, Courbet), Pre-Raphaelites (Rossetti), Impressionists (Manet, Pissarro, Sisley, Monet, Renoir, Cassatt, Hamilton, Caillebotte, Hassam, Breck, Butler, Reid, Hale, Buehr, Frieseke, Miller, Greacen, Cucuel), Post-Impressionists (Cezanne, Rousseau, Gauguin, Van Gogh, Martin, Lebasque, Bonnard), Symbolists (Klimt, Casorati), Modernists (Matisse, Saryan, Leger, Picasso), Cubists (Klee, Leger, Picasso, Chagall), Expressionists (Kandinsky, Klee, Marc, Schiele), the Art Nouveau painters (Klimt, Schiele), Surrealists (Klee, Picasso, Chagall, Ernst, Magritte, Dali, Kahlo) and others, have expressed their particular perspective in conveying plant symbolism.

Material and Methods

Our approach has followed two directions of research. The first targeted the study of bibliographic resources in order to compile data on plant symbolism. The archaic meaning of plants was analysed in the heathen traditions and superstitions as well as in religion, across the different time periods and cultures. Nevertheless, the main focus was on certain herbs, shrubs and trees that were depicted preferrentially by painters in their works.

The second direction of research was focused on reviewing the artworks of certain classical great painting masters, as well as present day painters, foreign or Romanian, in order to select the most representative paintings for our subject.

Given the extraordinary diversity and richness of these works, we have omitted from our approach the paintings representing still life, flower vases, floral arrangements, etc., but also the landscapes with flowers that are so numerous. We have included gardens and fruit orchards, selecting from these works the plants that were more frequently represented by painters: roses, lilies, poppies, sunflowers, and water lilies. Our work is focused on presenting the symbolism of these plants in different traditions and cultures.

The scientific names of genera and species follow *Flora Europaea* [55].

Results and Discussion

Since ancient times, people have attributed specific meanings to plants. Thus, archaeologists have discovered in Iraq, in a tomb from the cave-dwelling age, bunches of flower buried by Neanderthals; the remaining pollen revealed the multitude of plant species that were used in the burial ritual [32, 45]. Many cultures (ancient Egyptians, Greeks, Celts, Native Americans, Japanese, Chinese and others) have developed and still preserve a specific flower language.

Plant symbolism is frequent in the writings of Antiquity, where plants are mentioned in metaphors, allegories or stories about virtues and vices. The story of the young Narcissus, son of king Cephisus and the nymph Liriope, who fell in love with his own reflection in water, is well-known. After death, he was turned into the flower that bears his name, ***narcissus*** [3]. Cato the Elder (Marcus Porcius Cato) in „*De Agri Cultura”,* in 160 BC [12], Lucretius (Titus Lucretius Carus) in „*De Rerum Natura”,* at about 50–55 BC [33], and Pliny the Elder (Gaius Plinius Secundus) in „*Naturalis Historia”,* of 77–79 AD [41], along with other writers and philosophers of Antiquity, recorded the traditional meanings of plants [12, 33, 49].

Concerning the **symbolism of trees and shrubs**, in the Herder Symbol Dictionary [34, 56] it is specified that “*psychoanalysis sees in the tree a symbolic reference to the mother, to spiritual and intellectual development, or to death and rebirth*”. Carl Jung was stating in 1961 that trees appear frequently in dreams and have a multitude of meanings [27].

From ancient times up until the present, trees and shrubs have been granted multiple meanings. Thus, ***almond*** (*Prunus dulcis*) symbolises prosperity, wisdom, money, a promise; ***apple*** (*Malus domestica*): love, healing, immortality, preference; ***apricot*** (*Prunus armeniaca*): love; ***birch*** (*Betula* sp.): protection, purification, exorcism; ***camellia*** (*Camellia japonica*): richness, excellency; ***cherry*** (*Prunus avium*): kindness, beauty, love, divinisation; ***elm*** (*Ulmus* sp.): love; ***fig tree*** (*Ficus carica*): divinisation, fertility, love; ***gardenia*** (*Gardenia jasminoides*): secret love, joy, good luck, peace, spirituality; ***grapevine*** (*Vitis* sp.): fertility, money, mental

powers; ***hazelnut*** (*Corylus avellana*): good luck, fertility, protection, desires; ***ivy*** (*Hedera helix*): protection, healing; ***jasmine*** (*Jasminum* sp.): love, money, prophetic dreams; ***lilac*** (*Syringa vulgaris*): first love, innocence, memories, protection; ***linden*** (*Tilia* sp.): protection, immortality, immortality, good luck, love, sleep; ***magnolia*** (*Magnolia* sp.): love of nature, faithfulness; ***maple*** (*Acer* sp.): love, longevity, money; ***myrtle*** (*Myrtus communis*): love, fertility, youth, peace, money; ***oak*** (*Quercus* sp.): resistance, durability, immortality, force, power, vigour, courage, protection, healing, money, health, fertility, good luck; ***olive tree*** (*Olea europaea*): peace, healing, fertility, protection, desire; ***peach tree*** (*Prunus persica*): generosity, hope, longevity, love, fertility; ***pear tree*** (*Pyrus* sp.): lasting friendship, desire, love; ***plum tree*** (*Prunus domestica*): healing, beauty and longevity; ***walnut*** (*Juglans regia*): health, mind power, desires; ***willow*** (*Salix* sp.): love, divinisation, protection, health; ***wisteria*** (*Wisteria* sp.): welcome [59, 60].

Tree symbolism was frequently used in Antiquity. ***Olive*** (*Olea europaea*) was considered a symbol of eternal life because of its evergreen leaves [4], while ***beech*** (*Fagus sylvatica*) was Jove's sacred tree [38]; ***oak*** (*Quercus* sp.) was used by the Romans as an item of scenery for nuptial ceremonies or for a wreath or crown that was awarded to winners [16]. ***Laurel*** (*Laurus nobilis*) was a symbol of Apollo, who pursued the nymph Daphne until she was turned into a laurel [31]. A laurel crown was awarded to poets but also to winners and champions [13], as well as to the graduates of medical schools, on whom were conferred the laurel branch with fruits ("*bacca laurea*", hence the term baccalaureate).

For the Celts [35], ***apple*** (*Malus domestica*) symbolised love, truth, peace, beauty, fertility, while ***elder*** (*Sambucus* sp.) symbolised death, rebirth, creativity, regeneration, transformation; ***oak*** (*Quercus* sp.) was one of the sacred trees of the god Donar, granting protection and symbolising beauty and fertility, while ***ash*** (*Fraxinus* sp.) protected against sorcery and fires; ***hazelnut*** (*Corylus avellana*) signified unfulfilled love, but it was also the insignia of vaunt-couriers or heralds, while ***yew*** (*Taxus baccata*) stood for immortality.

Mistletoe (*Viscum album*) was the source of many superstitions and myths. The title of the book *"The Golden Bough"* [20], written by ethnologist James Fraser, has mistletoe at its origin; in many traditions mistletoe is a symbol of eternal life. Its leaves and fruits were considered to have magic properties. Pliny the Elder describes the veneration of Celtic Druids for this plant, gathering it within a sacred ritual [20]. The mistletoe was cut with a golden sickle by priests dressed in white, on a night of full moon, along with the sacrifice of two white bulls [7]. The Latin poet Virgil (Publius Vergilius Maro), in the poem „*Aeneid*", at 19 BC [49], depicts the descent of Aeneas, carrying a mistletoe branch, into the underworld, in order to meet the shadow of his father [33, 49]. Thus, the mistletoe branch became both a symbol of life, stronger than death, and of light, able to overcome darkness [20].

Many trees were symbolic in the culture of Native American tribes. ***Ash*** (*Fraxinus* sp.) symbolised calmness, sacrifice, sensibility; ***beech*** (*Fagus* sp.): tolerance, knowledge and criticism; ***elm*** (*Ulmus* sp.): wisdom, willpower, intuition; ***oak tree*** (*Quercus* sp.): character and courage; ***pine*** (*Pinus* sp.): creativity, peace and harmony; ***birch*** (*Betula* sp.): tolerance, knowledge of the past; ***maple*** (*Acer* sp.): generosity, balance, promise; ***cherry*** (*Prunus avium*): expressivity, rebirth, compassion [57].

Ivy (*Hedera helix*), ***fig tree*** (*Ficus carica*) and ***grapevine*** (*Vitis* sp.) carried, in their turn, numerous meaning in the old heathen traditions (permanence, sexuality, virility).

Religious writings have also provided a multitude of plant symbolisms. Many plants that were previously associated with gods, in heathen traditions, have subsequently been adapted to become Christian symbols. The Bible and the Apocrypha include many parables that refer to trees and flowers. Christian writers from the early Middle Age and Renaissance made use of symbols to explain the religious beliefs.

Olive tree (*Olea europaea*) leaves meant peace and good news: "*The dove came to him toward evening, and behold, in her beak was a freshly picked olive leaf. So Noah knew that the water was abated from the earth*" [Genesis 8, 11] [53]. The olive branch replaces the palm tree leaf that was carried by the people that greeted Jesus Christ at his entry into Jerusalem, within the Palm Sunday holiday. In iconography, the olive tree branch symbolises the Holy Spirit (Holy Ghost). Pentecost and Easter are the oldest Christian holidays, celebrated since the time of the Holy Apostles. Fresh ***linden*** (*Tilia* sp.) and ***walnut*** (*Juglans regia*) leaves are brought to church by the believers, symbolising the tongues of fire of the Holy Ghost's power that descended on the Holy Apostles [20].

Grapevine (*Vitis* sp.) used, for the ancient Hebrews, to be the symbol of all that is beautiful, strong and useful. Yahweh was seen as a grapevine grower, while Israel was considered His vineyard. Jesus states: "*I am the true grapevine, and my Father is the gardener*" [John, 15:1] [53]. The grapevine symbolised immortality and thus it was included in the iconography of different peoples.

Romanian folklore confers on grapevine a sacred origin, the legends mentioning it in connection with the blood that dripped from the wounds of the Divine Redeemer. In Moldavia it is said that if you work the vineyard for 7 years and you don't get angry or curse even if you hurt or cut yourself: "*Then God shall forgive your sins and you shall go straight to heaven*" [20]. Many holidays are consecrated to the grapevine: St. Trif (February 1st, when grapevine branches are pruned), the "Arminden" holiday (1st May, when the barrels of wine are first opened), the "Sânzienele" holiday (24th June, when people go out in the vineyards with food and drinks), and the "Cristov of the vineyards" holiday (14th September, marking the beginning of the grape harvest) [20].

On St. George's day (23rd April), the houses and courtyards are decorated with plant symbols marking the rebirth of nature: in Muntenia, branches of ***downy oak*** (*Quercus pubescens*) or ***pear tree*** (*Pyrus* sp.) are used; in Banat and Transylvania ***blackberry*** (*Rubus* sp.) or ***beech leaves*** (*Fagus* sp.) or ***sessile oak*** (*Quercus petraea*), etc.

One of the best-known vegetal symbols, also used preferrentially by artists, is the ***rose*** (*Rosa* sp.). It represents, for different traditions and cultures, love, honour, hope, belief, balance, passion, wisdom, devotion, sensuality. Rose crowns were discovered in ancient Egyptian tombs [47]. Persia is supposed to be its country of origin. From Asia, through the Greek colonies in Asia Minor, the rose reaches Europe, where its symbolism is enriched with new meanings [20]. The ancient Greeks decorated their houses, temples and dining rooms with rose garlands during holidays. In Greece and ancient Rome, the rose was the sacred flower of Aphrodite (Venus), symbolising beauty and love. Dionysus wore rose garlands to help him sober up. Harpocrates was secretly bribed with a white rose by Eros and has become the god of silence. The cult of the

rose is also present in Rome. Nero, the famous Roman emperor, used tons of rose petals to impress his guests, while after victories the Roman army was "bathed" in rose petals [58]. The Romans also spread rose petals at funerals. Pink roses were particularly dedicated to the dead and used in their commemoration ("*Rosalia*").

For the Celts, a white rose planted on the grave of loved ones symbolised peace and happiness in the afterworld, while in modern times such roses are sometimes planted on the grave of deceased children [16].

By the Middle Ages, the rose has become a key-symbol in poetry, in the Christian mysticism and in heraldry: symbol of burning love, the red rose, or pure and elevated love, the white. As a solar symbol, it stands for the beauty and harmony of the light and the wisdom and creative impulse [20]. In alchemy, a rose with 7 petals represented wisdom and perfection, while in the art of Renaissance, a rose with 8 petals symbolised rebirth and renewal. In Freemasonry, three roses symbolise light, love and life, while the cross with a rose is the emblem of the conspirationist society [2]. After England's thirty year Wars of the Roses (1455–1485), it has become a symbol of unity („the Tudor rose" – a superposition of a white rose over a red), whereas today it has become the symbol of various political parties [16].

The Christian Church was at first reluctant to accept the rose among its symbols, because of its widespread use in heathen rituals. Nevertheless, today roses are frequent in the iconography of both Catholic and Orthodox churches [16], being considered a symbol of the Virgin Mary and Jesus Christ [20]. In the Christian tradition it is said that the rose from the Paradise was thorn-free, and the thorns are a reminder of the Lost Paradise [51]. A rose bush is told to have grown on the location of the Redeemer's sacrifice, the red roses being associated with the spilled blood, and their thorns with the crown of Jesus, thus symbolising the supreme sacrifice. There are many religious symbols of this plant: pain, funeral symbol, martyrdom, charity, belief, the Immaculate Conception, the purity of the Virgin, the crowning of the Virgin, the Rosary of the Holy Virgin Mary, an attribute of the angels, Christ's Passion, Christ's blood, attribute of the Virgin Mary, attribute of Christ, the patience of Christ, the blessing of the Catholic Pope [46] etc.

A rose is often sculpted in the confessionary or on the ceiling of conference rooms as a reminder that the discussions are confidential ("*Sub Rosa*"), or secret. As the Pope's emblem, it symbolises blessing. In Islam, the rose symbolises masculine beauty and Muhammad, and his two sons respectively. The Rose of Baghdad represents the law, the way and the knowledge, symbolising Allah and the truth [2].

Nowadays, the symbolism of the rose is varied and differs according to its colour. A yellow rose means rejection and jealousy. In rose bunches, yellow stands for happiness, joy, satisfaction and freedom but under Islam it means deceit, betrayal or adultery; white is for purity, mysticism, holiness, secret admiration, respect, modesty, silence ; red for sacrifice, burning and immortal love, passion, health ; pink for first love, innocence, admiration, thankfulness, healing etc. For the Hindus, the rose symbolises perfection, completeness, the soul, love, etc. [16].

To **herbs**, in particular those with showy flowers, have been attributed, as well as trees and shrubs, various meanings. Thus, ***calla lily*** (*Zantedeschia* sp.) symbolizes purity, nuanced love, marriage; ***carnation*** (*Dianthus caryophyllus*) love, protection, power, healing, passion, caprice, dreaming, remembering; ***chrysanthemums*** (*Chrysanthemum* sp.): longevity,

immortality, protection, love, good luck, daintiness; ***dahlia*** (*Dahlia* sp.): elegance, dignity; ***tansies*** (*Leucanthemum* sp., *Tanacetum* sp.): desire, luck, innocence, purity, simplicity; ***gerbera*** (*Gerbera* sp.): innocence, modesty, purity, joy; ***gladiolus*** (*Gladiolus* sp.): strength of character, honour, certainty, moral integrity, generosity, love at first sight, infatuation; ***lavender*** (*Lavandula* sp.): devotion, love, protection, sleep, chastity, longevity, purification, happiness, peace; ***lily-o-the-valley*** *(Convallaria majalis*): mental powers, happiness, humbleness; ***mint*** (*Mentha* sp.): money, love, desire, healing, exorcism, travel, protection; ***narcissus*** (*Narcissus* sp.): selfishness, unshared love, but also good luck and wealth; ***orchids*** (various genera): love, beauty, durability, elegance; ***peony*** (*Paeonia officinalis*): beauty, protection, prosperity, honour, bravery, virility, exorcism; ***rice*** (*Oryza* sp.): protection, rain, fertility, money; ***tulip*** (*Tulipa* sp.): eternal love, hopeless love, richness, beauty, symbol of the divinity; ***violet*** (*Viola* sp.): protection, good luck, love, desires, peace, healing, belief, modesty, abidance; ***wheat*** (*Triticum* sp.): fertility, money [59, 60].

Among the plant species preferred by painters, besides roses – the favourite subject – are lilies, iris, waterlilies, poppies and sunflowers, whose symbolic meanings are detailed below.

Originating in Asia, the ***lily*** (*Lilium* sp.) is distributed and cultivated in most of the world. The Chinese and Greeks have considered it a symbol of purity. For the Chinese, the lily represents abundance in summertime, while in China and Japan the yellow lily was supposed to have healing powers and to appease cravings [16]. The Romans associated this plant with the goddesses Venus and Juno, while Greeks considered that it originated from the breast milk of the latter (Hera in their culture).

In mythology, it was also connected with death and the underworld. Persephone was abducted by Hades and taken to the underworld while she was gathering lilies and daffodils. Because of its protruding style, the lily also had a male symbolism for the Greeks, suggesting virility and fertility, conferring it androgynous connotations [20].

The Madonna lily is an important flower for Christians. According to the Bible, its white tepals are a symbol for the Virgin Mary's chastity, purity and radiant soul; its erect stem signifies religiosity (the true faith), the small and inconspicuous leaves of the flower stem are a symbol of humbleness, the white tepals stand for purity and chastity while its permeating perfume represents the Divinity. It is associated too with St. Anthony, but also with Archangel Gabriel [2] and the Annunciation; and it appears as originating from Eve's tears, at the casting out from Eden [16]. In time, the meanings of this plant have multiplied, representing hope, belief, birth, renewal, mercy, majesty, promise, passion, chastity, maternity, perfection, memories, protection, high spirituality, union and partnership.

The ***Iris*** (*Iris* sp.) originates in Ancient Greece, where it personified the rainbow, connecting the heaven and the earth. The flower was named after Iris, the Greek goddess of the rainbow and perfumes, and it may signify the bridge between God and humans [46]. Irises were planted on graves so that the goddess Iris would take the souls of the dead to heaven [49]. The association of the rainbow with the iris derives from the multitude of colours of this flower [36].

In the culture of ancient Egypt, iris flowers symbolised victory and power. In the 16th century BC, during the reign of Tutmosis I, iris rhizomes were brought from Syria. The sceptre of certain Egyptian pharaohs was shaped like a stylised iris flower [6]. In Antiquity, the blue iris was preferred for planting on graves, a tradition that has persisted in Turkey, during the Ottoman

Empire, until the beginning of the 20th century [28]. For the Chinese, the iris symbolised fondness, grace and solitary beauty. In ancient Japan, the blue iris (*I. ensata*) was a symbol of courage [28].

The symbolism of the divine message has been transferred to Christianity and the iris has become the flower of the Annunciation. Therefore it has also become a symbol of messages, hotness, and eloquence. According to Berchorius [5], iris was a symbol of divinity. Because of its sword-like leaves, iris is also considered the emblem of Virgin Mary's pain [6]. Its three upright petals are said to symbolise belief, bravery and wisdom [37]. Duby [18] states that three petals represent the social classes of the Middle Age: the workers, the warriors and the priests.

Iris was also the emblem of the French kings, being very frequent in Europe as a heraldry mark and symbolising knighthood. Such stylised flowers were present on the emblems of Sicily, Navarre, Hungary and England, between 1340 and 1800. The famous French royal emblem (*Fleur-de-Lys*) originates actually from *I. florentina,* and not from lilies, as the name suggests, and was adopted by Louis VII in 1150, during the second Crusade. In the perspective of Louis VII and his descendants, the three golden stylised irises on a blue background represent faith, wisdom and heroism [6]. Nowadays, the symbol is still in use for heraldry symbols and in modern logos [28].

Irises can also express admiration, purification, good news, light and hope. The yellow iris is a symbol of passion. The blue represents belief and hope, while the purple symbolises wisdom, the white standing for purity.

The ***garden poppy*** (*Papaver somniferum*) and ***field poppy*** (*Papaver sp.*) have different meanings. The garden (opium) poppy has a double symbolism, meaning sleep but also remembrance, both interpretations being in connection with death. Being the source of the narcotic opium, in ancient Greece the poppy was sacred, symbolising Hypnos and Morpheus, the gods of sleep and dreams. Morpheus lived in a world of dreams, fantasy and non-adherence to traditional reality. He was born from "night" - his mother is Nyx, the goddess of night and dark creations. Morpheus' father is Hypnos the governor of sleep. The poppy was the emblem of Aphrodite, but also an attribute of Demeter and Persephone, symbolising both fertility and oblivion and representing the yearly death of nature [2].

In Christian iconography, the red poppy symbolises the passion and death of Christ (the red poppy petals symbolise the blood of Christ). The theme of resurrection and immortality (of the soul) is associated with the poppy flower that "is reborn" every year [22]. In Chinese symbolism, the poppy represents rest, beauty and success. Within many cultures and traditions the poppy also represents fertility, love, money, good luck and invisibility. Nevertheless, its association with the torpidity induced by opium confers upon it negative meanings, associated with laziness, dependency, and lack of practicality.

In Great Britain, since 1920, the poppy has been the symbol of the remembrance of soldiers who have died serving their country, after countless wild poppies sprang up on the disturbed soil of the battlefields of World War I. Paper poppies manufactured by disabled veterans are worn every year on 11th November, Remembrance Day [2].

The **sunflower** (*Helianthus annuus*) symbolism is associated with the sun, as suggested by its name, golden colour and ray flowers, as well as its tilting to face the sun during growth. All these features identify it as a "solar" flower.

In Native American symbolism, the sunflower is used in late summer festivals as a symbol of bounty, harvest and provision. It is a symbol of the sun, and thus likened to the life-giving force of the Great Spirit. It originates in South America, where it was worshipped by the Aztec and Inca cultures. It is considered a magical flower in China, representing longevity, good luck and noblesse [2].

In Christianity it signifies the love of God and a faithful soul, being associated, therefore, with prayer and monastic living. The sunflower was a perfect symbol for religious belief, since it always turned towards the light, as the human soul seeks the light of faith and the connection with profound spirituality.

The colour of the sunflower, yellow-orange, suggests vitality and energy, as well as fertility, happiness, health, wisdom, nourishment, light, and warmth. In a negative sense it can stand for frantic love, infatuation, frivolity and phony richness [2].

A frequent symbol, particularly in Asian culture, the **waterlily/lotus** (comprising different genera and species) symbolises birth and rebirth as the petals open when the sun rises and close when it sets. It is also a symbol of creation, fertility, pleasure, optimism, purity, protection, peace and spiritual enlightenment. Its long flower-stalk symbolises the connection with the origins while the flower represents the enlightenment that the human beings seek. It is also a symbol of the spiritual man that remains pure and detached even when living an earthly life, just like the lotus whose flower is clean and fragrant although its roots are deep within the mud.

The Latin name of the waterlily family, *Nymphaeaceae* and of one of the main genera (*Nymphaea*) derives from the old Greek (*nymphaia*) and Latin (*nymphaea*) names, given to nymphs, divine nature spirits who were said to inhabit different environments, including water [8, 21, 30]. In ancient Greece, white waterlilies symbolised modesty. In Roman culture, there was the belief that boys who would drink an extract of *Nymphaea* crushed in vinegar for ten consecutive days, turned into eunuchs [39].

The lotus had an important role in Egyptian religion. It was highly revered in ancient Egypt, where it symbolised the Kingdom of Heaven, the cycle of birth, life, death and rebirth, as well as the sun. There is an Egyptian myth according to which the Sun God, the Creator that chased the darkness, had appeared from a primordial lotus [52]. The ancient priests used the blue lotus to achieve a state of trance as part of their funeral rituals. The Egyptians venerated the *Nymphaea* species of the Nile, known as lotus. The lotus motif of appears frequently in the column capitals in temples. Remains of blue (*Nymphaea caerulea*) and white (*N. lotus*) lotus were discovered in the tomb of Ramses II – symbolising the day and the night because of their complementary period of flowering – diurnal and nocturnal respectively. A Syrian tile of baked clay, from the 14–13th centuries BC, represents the goddess Astarte (Asherah) holding two lotus flowers. An ivory plate from the 9–8th centuries BC represents the god Horus, sat on a lotus flower between two cherubim [17].

A special place among lotus is occupied by the species *Nelumbo nucifera* (Indian lotus), particularly in Buddhism, being not only the flower out of which the Buddha was born but also his favourite offering.

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SIMBOLISTICA PLANTELOR DE GRĂDINĂ ŞI LIVADĂ ŞI REPREZENTAREA LOR ÎN PICTURĂ (I)

(Rezumat)

Simbolurile fitomorfe fac parte din tezaurul cultural al omenirii, fie că ne referim la tradiţiile arhaice laice, fie la religie, heraldică etc., de-a lungul timpului şi până în ziua de azi. Florilor, în special, le-au fost atribuite diferite înţelesuri de mii de ani.

Toate formele de artă au implicat flori la un anumit nivel, dar pictura ocupă un loc aparte. Picturile timpurii sunt bogate în simbolism filozofic şi creştin despre plante, în timp ce curentele secolelor 18-20 au adăugat valenţe noi simbolurilor vegetale-florale, artiştii exprimând propria viziune în redarea plantelor simbolice.

In prezenta lucrare s-a analizat semnificaţia arhaică a plantelor, în tradiţiile şi superstiţiile păgâne, dar şi cea religioasă, de-a lungul diferitelor epoci şi culturi.

S-a pus accent pe anumite plante, care au fost reprezentate preferenţial de către pictori în lucrările lor despre grădini şi livezi.

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