

STYLE MARKERS IN ION SIMIONESCU'S WRITING

IOAN MILICĂ

Associate Professor, PhD
Faculty of Letters, "Alexandru Ioan Cuza" University of Iași
"Mihai Eminescu" Central University Library
mioan@uaic.ro

The scientific work of Ion Simionescu, one of the most important Romanian naturalists, outlines the development of natural sciences prior to the Second World War. The present paper aims at revealing some of the dominant stylistic markers to be found in Ion Simionescu's writings, with special focus on his editorial contribution to popular science. At the same time, elements of stylistic continuity that can be established between the works of the Romanian naturalist and the works of great European scientists are highlighted.

Keywords: natural sciences, botany, zoology, scientific style, style markers

1. THE STARS ON THE SKY OF SCIENCE

Like the brightest star on the night sky, the work of a great scientist casts a beacon of light that shines in the darkness of oblivion which usually shrouds people's lives. This beautiful image opens the eulogy [1] that Ion Th. Simionescu (1873–1944) dedicated over a century ago to the memory of his doctoral advisor, Eduard Suess (1831–1914). It was a moving tribute on the death of a scholar and a statesman who created a masterful synthesis on the geological evolution of the Earth. Years later, after Professor Ion Simionescu passed away, the loyal disciples would mourn the loss of a "star of the Romanian culture" shining in the spiritual constellation of such great personalities like Mihai Eminescu, the greatest Romanian writer of the 19th century, and Nicolae Iorga, the foremost Romanian historian from the first half of the 20th century [2].

Apart from the solemn rhetoric of eulogy, a bridge seems to be stretching across time to unite the gap between kindred minds. It was as if the titans of science who worked at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries shared similar personality traits: amazing intellectual prowess, pedagogical grace, wisdom and farsightedness, honesty, kindness, modesty and, last but not least, the unyielding

faith in the power of knowledge to improve people's lives. Projected in this radiant and noble frame, the personality of Ion Simionescu unveils the portrait of a tireless and diligent scientist: "a scholar in the highest sense of the word, a rigorously scientific spirit, precise, restrained, honest, methodical and clear" [3]. This masterly intellectual profile is complemented by the sensitivity of an artist: "[i]n Simionescu's personality, two identities lived and communicated in harmony: that of the scholar who carefully analyzes things in order to grasp their meaning, and that of the artist who enjoys the beauty of landscapes and who knows how to render them in unmatched words" [3].

The dignity of the moral portrait stems from the appearance and manners of the punctual professor with rosy face, keen eyes and captivating discourse: "At the appointed hour, a not so tall but well built man, with a rosy face, brown beard, aquiline nose of irreproachable somatic correctness, wide forehead and bright, vulture-like eyes, entered the lecture hall. As a student of natural science, I had often seen him, only in passing, but now I looked at him closely and admired his manly demeanor. As he began to speak in a sonorous voice, with a Moldavian accent and such skilfully crafted words that carried us from the inanimate rocks to the various aspects of civilization and art, I felt that this man was deeply touching my soul." [2].

For his contemporaries, be they disciples, collaborators or casual observers, the scholar's prestige inspired emotion and respect. Distinguished and competent, wise and diligent, rigorous and charming, honest and restrained, energetic and patriotic, Ion Simionescu created a consistent and rich, original and monumental work, in which erudition and elegance harmoniously complement each other. Contemplating this imposing and noble profile, one may wonder what traditions of writing might have forged the pen that offered us an unmatched legacy for the love of nature?

Professor Ion Simionescu was a man of science and letters. A glance at his work reveals the impressive richness of the repertoire of styles, genres and species adopted and adapted to his creative personality. First of all, mention should be made of the plethora of scientific writings: articles, conferences, introductory works, summaries and treatises. At the border between science and publishing we find his great popular literature, whose encyclopaedic contours encompass multiple fields: botany, zoology, palaeontology, geography and geology, anthropology and ethnology, ecology, tourism, etc. The confluence with artistic literature was maintained through translations and calendars, biographical medallions and moral writings with epistolary support. Administrative memoirs and didactic writings are not absent from the panoply: manuals, reports, pedagogical meditations. Published in three languages, Romanian, French and German, this important work increased the international fame of the Romanian research in natural sciences and enriched the national culture.

If the scientific writings contain, according to custom, detailed information about the reference works that shaped the evolutionary conception of the specialist considered today one of the leading scientists of the Romanian nation, the mosaic of texts that make up the popular literature only offers clues designed to enhance the pleasure and joy of reading. Noting the fusion between the precise, meticulous and sober expression typical of scientific language and “the artist’s bold, vibrant, warm, colourful style” [3], the admirers of Ion Simionescu’s work praise the author’s creativity, yet without revealing the strands of scientific erudition and humanistic culture that ensure the consistency and finesse of texts that combine scientific truth and fictional beauty.

In order to highlight the style markers of Ion Simionescu’s writings, a few cultural-historical clarifications are necessary.

The course of the Romanian scientific tradition was shaped by factors that determined the connection to the European landmarks of scientific thought. First through translations and then through original contributions, the lights of science were not lit more brightly in the historical regions inhabited by Romanians until the second half of the 17th century, as secular culture grew from the shadow of ecclesiastical culture. The period between the printing of the Bible in Romanian (1688) and the dawn of newspaper civilisation (1829) illustrates the efforts of daring intellectual elites, such as the representatives of the Transylvanian School, to increase the wealth of secular culture.

In other words, although the earliest Romanian scientific or technical writings date from the 1520–1640s [4], one can speak of a proper scientific style only in the mid-seventeenth century, the increasing spread of technical-scientific knowledge being achieved as late as the nineteenth century: “the [s]cientific style in the modern sense of the word is, for Romanian, a creation of the nineteenth century, more precisely, of the literary language after 1840” [5]. Outlined in various syntheses on the history of standard Romanian [5], in stylistic studies [4,6] and in works dedicated to scientific terminologies [7], this complex process of communicating scholarly knowledge has been analysed more in terms of functional standardisation than in terms of the dominant compositional patterns of the European tradition. In other words, Romanian specialists have been interested mainly in the aspects that reveal the unity of communication in sciences, leaving in the background the need to highlight, from a stylistic angle, the prestige and influence of some masterpieces of scholarly writing. On the contrary, if the cultural history of major texts becomes the evolutionary frame of specialised language, then the scientific tradition can be conceived as a series of original and innovative models to be imitated and developed. In this respect, Ion Simionescu’s work should be analysed in relation to three aspects: the rhetorical foundations of the scientific

communication, the texts that the author considered worthy of admiration and the fictional works that inspired his fantasy.

2. THE STYLE IS THE MAN HIMSELF

On the 25th of August 1753, Baron Georges-Louis Leclerc de Buffon (1707–1788), a man of classical culture [8], gave his acceptance speech at the French Academy. Known to posterity as the *Discourse on Style*, the memorable address brought to the attention of the intellectual elite of the time the relationship between knowledge and language, considered within the privileged horizon of sciences and arts.

Unlike the natural ability to speak, moved by the thalassies of inner experience, authentic eloquence is built, in Buffon's view, by the power of reason and the culture of the spirit. Knowledge, born of experience and meditation, shines only when it forms a whole, a system of correlations that reflects the perfection that only nature reveals. Through the union and action of the intellectual forces, style orders thought, sharpens the finesse of the spirit and enhances the acuity of observation. In resonance with the classical virtues of elocution, correctness, clarity, dignity and appropriateness, the immortal naturalist attributes to style such qualities as precision and simplicity, clarity and balance, vitality and flow. Thus, "in asserting that style is the man himself, Buffon had in mind not man as an individual, but precisely the opposite, namely, the typical man, the classical ideal of man, the man above contingencies, the balanced, rational man, deprived of individual asperities" [8]. Without neglecting that the style of the *Discourse on Style* bears the hallmarks of academic eloquence, it can be added that the vast project of the *Natural History* (36 volumes), "the first synthesis of knowledge about nature" [9], embodied the rhetorical precepts advocated by Buffon, so that, towards the end of the 18th century, the stylistic tradition of the Enlightenment became the standard in scientific writing. Conceived as a mirror of the world, the encyclopaedic synthesis requires a composition governed by accuracy, systematic ordering and exhaustiveness. The essentialist frame of the articles included in the encyclopaedias of the Enlightenment ensured the balance between reasoning and ornament, *i.e.* between notions and images. Thus, the academic eloquence is characterised by rigour and plasticity. In natural sciences, the rationally organised discourse blends argument, description and narrative with the discreet but vivid nuances of fantasy that colour it. This tradition, which is still in use in the writings on popular science, can be found both in the pages of Buffon's *Natural History* published in the 18th century and in the Ion Simionescu's texts:

<p>“The fox is famous for his craft, and he partly merits the reputation he has acquired. What the wolf executes by superior strength, the fox accomplishes by cunning. Without attacking the shepherd, his dog or even his flock, he finds a more certain way to subsist. Patient and prudent he waits the opportunity for depredation, varying his conduct according to circumstances always reserving some arts for unforeseen events. Self-preservation is his grand object, and though indefatigable, and more nimble than the wolf, he never trusts entirely to the swiftness of his course, but contrives himself an asylum, where he retires in cases of necessity, and in which he dwells and brings up his young.” [10]</p>	<p>The fox “[is] endowed with so many attributes that he can cope with anything. He climbs trees with ease; he crawls on his its belly like a snake; he leaps as easily as a cat; only in swimming he is not so daring. But on top of all that he is so clever that it makes him stronger; he is so cunning that he shortens his path; he is so brave at times that you would think he was unaware of danger, and so patient that he will venture anywhere and anyway.” [11]</p>
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Therefore, the differences between the two pictures are of nuance, not of essence. Whether captured in descriptive or narrative frames, the fox's attributes, wit, cunning, agility, courage or ingenuity, remain steadfastly portrayed in the colouring of the personification. In the history of scientific writing, the humanisation of nature is an ancient and enduring stylistic recipe, and the role of this process is mainly to plasticise the exposition of a particular reality by analogy with what we know about ourselves. By looking at the world through the lens of our view of reality, we more easily cross the path from what is known to what appears unknown to us.

3. ELEATIC AND HERACLITEAN

Over the rhetorical foundations of the Enlightenment, 19th century scholarship built up the first monuments of the modern spirit. In the civilization of the newspaper, the semiotic architecture of the scientific discourse was enriched by the proliferation of specialised periodicals and popular publications (pamphlets, journals, extracts). At the same time, the complexity of evidence in support of new ideas quickly increased and, as printing technology and the art of illustration became more advanced, authors of scientific texts resorted to a growing range of resources designed to arouse curiosity, explain, educate, facilitate understanding, increase knowledge and persuade: drawings, graphs, diagrams, schemes, tables, plates, photographs, maps, etc. The documentary component of academic writing awakened the general public's taste for travel literature, memoirs, diaries and correspondence. The major newspapers of the time published popular scientific

literature in feuilleton, announced the spectacular experiments and discoveries of the day and published book reviews. In short, in this era, great scientists became heroes whose international fame spread through a dense network of press agencies, publications and cultural-scientific institutions (academies, universities, museums, libraries).

Masterpieces such as Alexander von Humboldt's *Cosmos* and Charles Darwin's *Origin of Species* become prototypes of argument and style admired by generations of naturalists. The success of these written landmarks of science was no doubt due to their skill in setting out new concepts of life. Such works were distinguished by the panoramic style of scholarly discourse. For the first time, the spectacle of science took place globally. Significant amounts of information, data, observations and measurements gathered from different regions of the world were brought to the fore to set the stage for demonstration. Then, observations, examples, descriptions, references, arguments and counter-arguments were organised like force couples, so that the dialectics of the opposites gave the reader the opportunity to make judgments whether the author's masterfully orchestrated exposition was convincing or not.

In Alexander von Humboldt's view, the ever-changing spectacle of the world reflects the unity and orderliness of nature as it presents itself objectively, *i.e.* in the external data, and subjectively, *i.e.* "as the reflection of the image impressed by the senses upon the inner man, that is upon his ideas and feelings" [12]. The ideal of the balance between nature (the real, external world) and spirit (the ideal, internal world) brings Alexander von Humboldt closer to the Enlightenment aspiration of reconciling the penetrating power of the intellect with the creative power of fantasy.

The great explanatory force of the scientific models based on the study of correlations and conditionings between various phenomena relied on the projection of generalization as the outcome of the analysis and interpretation of particular facts. Darwin often imagined examples, case studies and analogies through which he invited his readers to adhere to his scientific theses [13]. Thus, in cooperation with reason-guided exposition, the deductive nature of imagination facilitates access to the laboratory of scientific demonstration. The connective and inferential style of the nineteenth-century scientific writing encouraged debate, participatory reading and critical thinking.

If capital works imposed innovative paradigms of thought and language, nineteenth-century scientific popular literature successfully emphasized the idea that "nature is more beautiful than art" [14]. Moreover, the relationship of the great scientific syntheses of the age with these writings was similar to the opposition between Eleatic compositions, dominated by the aspiration of totality and capable of depicting "the icon of an ordered universe" [15], governed by general laws, and the Heraclitean compositions, constructed as fragments cut "into the fabric of reality" in order "to suggest to us the indefinite and constantly unfolding character of reality" [15]. In contrast to the Eleatic style of major syntheses, the Heraclitean

style of scientific popular literature does not enhance panoramic perspectives, but presents scenes with picturesque details of everyday life. For Ion Simionescu, the master of the style which combined meticulous observation with penetrating meditation and intelligently expressed emotion was the French entomologist Jean-Henri Fabre (1823–1915), also known as “The Homer of Insects” [11]:

<p>“When at rest, the trap is folded and pressed back against the chest and looks quite harmless. There you have the insect praying. But, should a victim pass, the attitude of prayer is dropped abruptly. Suddenly unfolded, the three long sections of the machine throw to a distance their terminal grapple, which harpoons the prey and, in returning, draws it back between the two saws. The vice closes with a movement like that of the fore-arm and the upper arm; and all is over: Locusts, Grasshoppers, and others even more powerful, once caught in the mechanism with its four rows of teeth, are irretrievably lost. Neither their desperate fluttering nor their kicking will make the terrible engine release its hold.” [16]</p>	<p>The praying mantis “[has] a long body, with slender yet strong legs, with a narrow chest and long neck, a large head, and two staring eyes.</p> <p>When it stalks, it rests on the last two pairs of long, slender, spindly legs. The body thus takes an oblique position, with the chest and head raised, and the more slender forelegs standing crossed, as nuns are wont to hold their hands in church.</p> <p>The insect is lurking. The head can move in all directions, so the body remains like a pillar of stone, and the insect can see everything around it. Motionless, it gives no hint to the other insects, which fly away without a thought of what lies in wait. As soon as they approach the mantis, it grabs the insect in flight with lightning speed, between the arm and the forearm; these two parts of the forelegs have sharp bristles on the edge like saw teeth and can swiftly close like a knife’s blade. Quickly the mantis takes the prey to its mouth, eats it greedily, cleans its arms of the ringed remains on its sharp bristles, and sets out to stalk again.” [11]</p>
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Fabre taught himself the art of composition as an avid reader of literature. The influence of his work on the popular science writings published by Ion Simionescu was acknowledged with admiration by the Romanian author. His landmark work, *Entomological Souvenirs* (10 volumes, 1879–1907), is the scientific epic of the small and curious universe of insects. Received with interest and respect in the international scholarly community, the series has been considered a pioneering work in ethology, although the public success it has enjoyed was due to its inclusion in the didactic and children’s literature.

The alert style, sprinkled with witty reflections and comments, was kindred to the essays of French moralists. Fabre’s prose was praised by Ion Simionescu for

its qualities of “exquisite literature”, evoking an enchanted world, in which people “with their famous judgement and reasoning, mirror themselves in the world of insects” [17]. In terms of composition, the affinity between the two authors can be seen in their use of the same technique of exposition: narrative enlivened by the present tense of action verbs, with nominal amplification dominated by epithets. However, the differences are more relevant than the similarities. While Fabre writes impetuously (“Behold the insect praying”) and metaphorically (“The three long parts of the gear, stretched out unexpectedly, push away the terminal hooks, which hook, turn back and bring the prey between the saws”), Simionescu prefers a simple, objective narrative, with symmetrically developed sequences through parataxis, following the pattern of Romanian folktales (“Quickly the mantis takes the prey to its mouth, eats it greedily, cleans its arms of the ringed remains on its sharp bristles, and sets out to stalk again.”). At the same time, the Romanian scholar employs a sober ornamentation based on epithet and simile (“As soon as they approach the mantis, it grabs the insect in flight with lightning speed, between the arm and the forearm; these two parts of the forelegs have sharp bristles on the edge like saw teeth and can swiftly close like a knife’s blade”). In antithesis to the lapidary, austere and neologism-based style of geology and palaeontology syntheses [18], the literature of scientific popularization is distinguished by the captivating, luxuriant and harmonious style of nature chronicles.

4. NATURE AND ART

It was not only the monuments of scientific writing that inspired Ion Simionescu, but also the heights of art. An impressive network of references and artistic elements ensures the expressive richness of the great naturalist’s work. The sources of the ornaments adorning the scientific writing highlight the author’s creativity and erudition: ethnography and folklore, mythology, religious beliefs, literature, music and fine arts.

From the field of ethnography, figurative matrices such as the arrangement of the dwelling, household activities and rites of passage are mainly processed. The universe of the Romanian traditional civilisation and culture is particularly infused in the exhibits dedicated to the depiction and customs of animals.

The mole, for example, has a kingly household. It has a “large dwelling with well-made walls; the den is lined with soft warm leaves; it has a pantry for food; it even has a separate space for excrements, being as clean as the badger. A system of circular and connecting tunnels completes the labyrinth of the citadel in which it rests, to quietly digest its meals” [11].

The Sisyphus grouse, named “after the legendary name of Sisyphus, son of Aeolus, condemned, after his death, to carry to the top of a hill a large stone that keeps rolling down” [11], work together, like the villagers who give each other a

helping hand: "The man and the wife work together like peasants in the field. Sometimes a neighbour comes to their aid. The man steps forward and holds the manure ball with his hind legs, while the woman pushes it from behind. He lifts it for a while and, behind a bend, the ball accidentally rolls back. There it goes, all over again, like Sisyphus." [11]

The nuptial ceremonies of some of the creatures are described in vivid colours reminiscent of Vasile Alecsandri's pastels: "In spring, the groom's attire is splendid. The scales on the back are like the green grass of the first warm days: brown splashes, black dots, like hieroglyphics, give the skin a velvety appearance; on the belly the scales form a golden armour. The beautiful blue, azure colouring the lower jaw and the neck is his most precious adornment." [11]

From folklore, Simionescu borrows stylistic ornaments whose role is to highlight the manner in which the Romanian popular mind envisages the intimate links between man and nature. In addition to the main works of ethnobiology in which the popular names of plants and animals are meticulously inventoried (Simion Florea Marian, Zaharia Panțu, Mihai Băcescu), Ion Simionescu also includes some of the representative species of the local folklore in his popular literature:

- folk songs: "[The corncockle – n.r.] is often mentioned in songs like a cursed weed: Mother, when you rocked me/ Mother, when you cursed me/ In my cradle you put corncockle/ So that I may never rest" [19];
- proverbs: "Trees are prudent, experienced old men; they seem to know the saying: haste makes waste" [19];
- charms and incantations: "In incantations for snakebite, the hazel is the cure: With the hazel I have enchanted/ The bite was cured. After the charms, the lover comes to his beloved, riding on a hazel branch: The dear one/ Bring back again/ Make him come quick/ On a hazel stick" [19];
- superstitions: About the linden-tree "people commonly believe that 'whoever breaks it, becomes lazy'" [19].

Mythological references, particularly those from Greco-Latin and Romanian mythology, reinforce the encyclopedic component of scholarly writing, plasticise scientific discourse and underline the age-old human belief in the supernatural attributes and powers of plants and animals. On the one hand, mythological references enrich the exposition: "Charms and spells are made with weeds, not only in Romania, but everywhere on Earth. Medea, the daughter of the feared Hecate, and Circe, the great sorceress, used poisonous weeds to turn people into wolves, lions and other beasts" [19]. On the other hand, these references are used to embellish the presentation: "The hop shrubs seem adorned by the forest fairies with beautiful Japanese, paper-made lanterns" [19].

The emblems of Christian life reveal the spiritual purity of the people and the inextricable communion between nature and culture, through scenes that evoke the pious atmosphere of the great celebrations of the year. With Easter flowers, notes

Ion Simionescu, “the Holy Mass on Good Friday is decorated. There is not a Christian who does not bring a small bouquet and place it with piety on the table that represents the tomb of the Saviour on Good Friday” [19]. In resonance with these scenes of spiritual life, the biblical references amplify, in scientific writing, the sacred words of the Scriptures: “The words of the Gospel are also applied to plants. From dust they come, and to dust they will return” [19].

One of the most precious sources of expressiveness is the well of literary mentions, sequences and quotations. The author’s solid humanistic culture enables him to create fascinating constellations of unions between the aspects of the reality he presents in his popular works and the fantasy world drawn from the enchanted pages of famous literary writings. Here is an eloquent example: in depicting the beauty of daisies, Ion Simionescu points out that the flower has “a lot of popularity, especially with townspeople; it points to the beautiful scene in Goethe’s *Faust*, when Mephisto talks to Martha, while Faust wanders through the garden with Margaret. She picks a flower and begins to tear off one white petal after another, murmuring: he loves me, he loves me not; the last petal means he loves me.

It’s a scene of naive tenderness, repeated even by those who have never read *Faust* in their lives”.

“But I will read on petals true/ You love me not, you love me too” (M. Eminescu).

“Flowers sometimes have a more convincing voice than a man’s words” [19].

By combining references from the great universal literature with examples taken from Romanian literature, the author gives the scientific discourse intellectual prestige, expressive elegance and a greater persuasive effect.

On various occasions, the scholar adopts literary techniques that give his scientific prose virtues that never fall short of artistic mastery. Among the most frequently used strategies for literalising scholarly discourse are dramatised prose and amplification through the accumulation of figures of speech.

Dramatised prose allows the reader to become a participant in the scene directed by the writer. The impression that the written sentence seems to be spoken is so intense that readers feel that the author talks to them. Orality thus dramatises the story and captivates the reader in the same way in which the listeners, in the folk ceremony of story-telling around the hearth, vibrate emotionally and react to the events portrayed by the storyteller. The empathetic reading carries the reader along on the wings of the author’s fantasy. The spirited grasshoppers “are hard to be spotted in the grass, where they live, for they have its colour. In the thickets they are particularly active, just like mosquitoes. If you follow one, you can hardly see it, like the rabbit that crouches behind the clods in the furrow. If you have spotted it, it lets you get close and when you think you have got hold of it, whoops, it jumps who knows where” [11].

If the swarming of insects, rendered in the second person, animates the spectacle of nature in reader’s imagination, the flowers usually make a great

impression with their delicate shapes and colours. The lady's slipper is a living jewel: "When you first see it, you stop in front of it, as if in front of a famous painting, which you want to see for yourself. I cannot really tell what it is: is it a jewel of sapphires, rubies and diamonds, with a dewdrop in its corolla? Is it a rare butterfly or a hummingbird wandering in our land? The flower's lower lip is like a swollen, lemon-yellow baloon, but the inside is adorned with purple dots and lines. It has a single wide opening, leading to the holy of holies." [19].

Such examples prove that Ion Simionescu is a skilled artist of words. The most eloquent evidence of this special talent is to be found in the scientific prose in which the author resorts to amplification through a string of figures of speech. The viper, according to the author, is "the most perfect embodiment of stealthy death, of cruel, unforgiving malice, of the poisoned fang, stealthily thrust in. There was no truer representation of the symbolism of evil than the head of the Medusa of Greek mythology, as Titian imagined it, horrible, with eyes all evil, and instead of hairs, coiled vipers.

The viper's head is in truth the sign of cruelty, of hidden evil. Its shining eyes are like opal stones set in golden frames. The pupil, narrow as a thread in daylight, widens in the dark like the cat's. The eye takes on a look of piercing malice, of unforgiving, cold ferocity; because of the protruding bones of the eyebrows, they seem even meaner. The small head, with a truncated, rounded muzzle, has a flattened forehead" [11].

Developed through repetition and enumeration, the syntactic amplification is intensified through epithet ("the most perfect embodiment of the stealthy death") and simile ("Its shining eyes are like opal stones set in golden frames"). Conceived as a literary character, the viper becomes the hyperbolic embodiment of primordial, mythical evil. The amplification of connotations is developed either through contextual synonymy (evil – cruelty – ferocity) or through collocations that deepen the dominant trait of the evil character (cruel evil, hidden evil, penetrating evil).

In tune with the lush imagery, the melody and colour of the prose are supported by musical suggestions: "as it (the snowdrop – ed.) shows itself, the symphony of life begins with the triumphal hymn of the wedding; the orchestra is made up of everything that breathes on earth" [19], or by references from the sphere of plastic arts: "The art of decoration is unmatched in the wide space beneath the ruins. Especially when the dwarf roses with ruby corollas begin to bloom, in the place surrounded by pyramidal poplars and willow trees, there is a painting by Rubens" [19].

The compositional aspects already noted do not exhaust the range of expressive virtues of Ion Simionescu's work. By reference to the most valuable scientific writings of the time, the author created a vast work, conceived as a mirror of the world and as an eulogy to nature. Like his doctoral advisor, the merits of Ion Simionescu's personality and creation were recognised early on by his election to the Romanian Academy (1911), which he also headed between 1940 and 1944. As

a member of the highest scientific forum in Romania, Ion Simionescu enriched Romanian science and culture with a monumental work of over 1,700 titles, whose value posterity has not yet fully acknowledged. For his efforts, Ion Simionescu “occupies a place of honour in the gallery of the great educators of our nation, among those for whom teaching is a high priestly duty born of a mysterious inner calling” [20].

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