

AN ETHNOBOTANICAL STUDY REGARDING PLANT NAMES IN ROMANIAN FOLK POETRY

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Abstract: Romanian folklore may be regarded as a consistent source of data about the role and importance of plants in day by day life of Romanian people. The folk poetry is an apparent "database" of uncensored elements formed through the cultural evolution and emerging from the collective unconscious. Within these elements, plants represent a constant and strong part, occurring as a pivotal component of the vision about life. In this study, plant names extracted from a collection of Romanian folk poetry were analyzed from several points of view; their relevance in respect with frequency, botanical diversity and their multiple implications in everyday life are also discussed. Several subtle aspects derived from the use of plants are also given. The study reveals that plant names can contribute to further elucidation of issues related to Romanian ethnogenesis, psychology and history.

Keywords: plant names, folk poetry, ethnobotany.

Introduction

From an anthropological perspective, vegetation may be regarded as the first categorical human contact with the land, a direct mediator between human and nature, respectively, the environment that defines, in a certain extent, the historical and spatial dimension of a stable community (Grigore, 2009).

Folklore is traditionally defined as “people’ creation, consisting of an unified, organic and dynamic system of superstitions, believes, magical practices, empirical knowledge, myths, proverbs, songs and dances preserved in spiritual life of an ethnic unit (group, people, nation)” (Vulcănescu, 1979). Folklore represents the depositary of a long and complex historical, psychological, and spiritual evolution of a people; in this way, it considerably contributes to the nature of spiritual profile of a considered people. It stores different elements that refine the conception about life, objects, creatures and various relationships established between them (Grigore, 2009).

Plants, whether they were used as food, raw materials, herbal medicines, as magic instrument for solving problems - in a quick and supernatural manner - has deeply influenced Romanian people’s vision about life, since ancient time. Folk poems, by their collective character, transmitted most often by oral tradition, have a strong preserving component, as they not have been deeply altered by further generations. Plant names have a constant frequency in folk poetry, expressing most often well-defined situations and relationships, but also subtle and debatable derived issues. In this respect, perhaps plants mentioned in Romanian folklore and elsewhere could be linked to the experience of collective unconscious, as it has been largely described by C. G. Jung (1970). Subsequently, plants may act as archetypes or consisting parts of them. According to Jung (1947), “the psyche possesses a common substratum transcending all differences in culture and consciousness. This

unconscious psyche, common to all mankind, does not consist merely of contents capable of becoming conscious, but of latent dispositions towards certain identical reactions. Thus the fact of the collective unconscious is simply the psychic expression of the identity of brain-structure irrespective of all racial differences. This explains the analogy, sometimes even identity, between various myth-motifs, and symbols, and the possibility of human beings making themselves mutually understood". For instance, a typical example of such analogy has been discussed by Grigore and Toma (2010), when describing bladder epidermal cells of *Mesembryanthemum crystallinum*; the Romanian plant name is 'gheață (ghiață)' and it has semantic equivalent in English and French: 'ice-plant' and 'plante glaciale', respectively.

There are many studies focused on the survey of plant species used as traditional herbs in different countries and cultures; however, very few works deal with plants names as emerging from folklore, in his broader sense. This paper aims to bring together elements of folklore, botany and aspects of Romanian psychology, derived from the study of the relationships between plants and people.

Material and methods

This study is focused on the folk poems collection *Poezii populare române*, edited and published by G. Dem. Teodorescu (1985), a prominent Romanian folklorist and literary historian (1849-1900). The text comprises about 800 pages with lyrics. A documentary research (text analysis) has been conducted as follow: Romanian plant names were identified while reading the text, written and introduced in an Excel sheet. Then, the occurrence number for each plant name has been recorded and finally, the frequency (occurrence number) for each species has been calculated. When relevant, the contextual frame in which plants names played a special function has been identified and further discussed. From a historical point of view, it was also agreed to include mushrooms in the list of names, because until the middle of the 20th century they belonged to the kingdom Plantae, and only later was a separate kingdom created – Fungi (Whittaker, 1969). The scientific names for plant names were established using the major Latin correspondent, as indicated in Borza's ethnobotanical dictionary (1968); the nomenclature has been subsequently revised according to Sârbu *et al.* (2013). Correspondent English names were selected based on several dictionaries, and mainly Martin's work (1976). However, when English names were not found here, additional sources have been used: Miller (1884), van Wijk (1911 and 1916). Limitations of this study are related to several aspects. First, it well known that a plant species has, in a great extent, many parallel vernacular names; the opposite is also true. Second, this implies inherent difficulties in finding correct correspondents between different languages, as between Romanian and English. English language has also many parallel plant names for the same species; in this study, when available, all vernacular names from English are given in the table, as they have been found.

Finally, it should be emphasized that Teodorescu collected folk poems in an unaltered state; the genuine form was kept and he was only involved in inserting several comments and discussions, without modifying the gathered text. This fact may be considered a real advantage, since the direct access of readers is being assured for a realistic analysis.

Results and discussions

Results are summarized in Table 1, and the popular names of plants have been listed in a descending order, according to their occurrence. In addition to proper plant names, other

generic vegetal elements, such as: flowers, grass, hay have been selected and included due to their relatively high frequency.

Table 1. Distribution of Romanian plant names in analyzed folk poetry

Plant name in Romanian	Scientific name	English correspondent	Occurrence number/ plant name
Lalele	<i>Tulipa gesneriana</i> L.	Common garden tulip	105
Măr	<i>Malus pumila</i> Mill. <i>Malus domestica</i> Borkh.	Cultivated apple	81
Grâu (grâne)	<i>Triticum aestivum</i> L.	Spring or summer wheat	55
Brad	<i>Abies alba</i> Mill.	White spruce	47
Fag	<i>Fagus sylvatica</i> L.	Beech	42
Pelin	<i>Artemisia absinthium</i> L.	Wormwood	34
Vie	<i>Vitis vinifera</i> L.	Cultivated grape-vine	31
Busuioc	<i>Ocimum basilicum</i> L.	Sweet basil	30
Tei	<i>Tilia platyphyllos</i> Scop. <i>T. tomentosa</i> Moench	Broad-leaved Lime	29
Nucă	<i>Juglans regia</i> L.	Ban-nut-tree, Common Walnut-tree, French Nut, Welsh Nut	26
Garoafe	<i>Dianthus caryophyllus</i> L.	Wild carnation	25
Mărăcine	<i>Crataegus monogyna</i> Jacq.	Common hawthorn, One-seed hawthorn, Single-seeded hawthorn	24
Salcie	<i>Salix alba</i> L.	White Willow	22
Mac	<i>Papaver somniferum</i> L.	Opium poppy	20
Alun	<i>Corylus avellana</i> L.	Hazel	20
Păr	<i>Pyrus communis</i> L. (syn. <i>Pyrus sativa</i> DC.)	Pear	17
Trandafir	<i>Rosa centifolia</i> L.	Cabbage rose (hundred-leaved rose)	16
Năut	<i>Cicer arietinum</i> L.	Calavanche (Chick-pea, "Chola" of India, Egyptian Pea, Gram, Garavance)	16
Trestie	<i>Phragmites australis</i> (Cav.) Trin. ex Steud. (syn. <i>Phragmites communis</i> Trin.)	Common Reed	15
Paltin	<i>Acer pseudoplatanus</i> L.	Sycamore	12
Usturoi	<i>Allium sativum</i> L.	Common garlic	12
Cicoare	<i>Cichorium intybus</i> L.	Chicory	12
Secară	<i>Secale cereale</i> L.	Common rye	12
Cafea	<i>Coffea arabica</i> L.	Arabian coffee tree	11
Gutui	<i>Cydonia oblonga</i> Mill.	Common Quince-tree	11
Micșunele	<i>Erysimum x cheiri</i> (L.) Crantz (syn. <i>Cheiranthus x cheiri</i> L.)	Wallflower	10

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Bujor	<i>Paeonia officinalis</i> L.	Common garden peony	9
Bumbac	<i>Gossypium</i> sp.	Cotton	9
Calofir	<i>Tanacetum balsamita</i> L.	Ale-cost (Ale-coast, Cost, Costmary)	9
Dudău	<i>Conium maculatum</i> L.	Hemlock (herb benett)	9
Salbă moale	<i>Euonymus europaeus</i> L.	Spindle	9
Sulfină	<i>Melilotus officinalis</i> (L.) Pall.	Ribbed melilot	9
Colilie	<i>Stipa lessingiana</i> Trin. & Rupr.	Needle Grass	8
In	<i>Linum usitatissimum</i> L.	Common Flax (Lin, Line, Lint)	8
Mărgărit	<i>Convallaria majalis</i> L.	Lily of the Valley	8
Orz	<i>Hordeum vulgare</i> L.	Common barley	8
Plop	<i>Populus alba</i> L.	Lobed or white poplar	8
Porumb	<i>Zea mays</i> L.	Common maize	8
Viorele	<i>Scilla bifolia</i> L.	Early Spring Squill	8
Lipan	<i>Arctium lappa</i> L.	Great burdock	7
Siminoc	<i>Gnaphalium uliginosum</i> L. <i>Helichrysum arenarium</i> (L.) Moench	Marsh cudweed	7
Susai	<i>Sonchus arvensis</i> L.	Corn sowthistle	7
Mur	<i>Rubus caesius</i> L.	Blue Bramble (Deio-berry)	7
Arțar	<i>Acer platanoides</i> L.	Norway maple	6
Fasole	<i>Phaseolus vulgaris</i> L.	Common Kidney-bean	6
Izmă creață	<i>Mentha spicata</i> L. (syn. <i>Mentha crispa</i> L.)	Curled (Crisped, or Cross Mint)	6
Măslină	<i>Olea europaea</i> L.	European Olive-tree	6
Răsură	<i>Rosa gallica</i> L.	French rose	6
Rozmarin	<i>Rosmarinus officinalis</i> L.	Common Rosemary	6
Stejar	<i>Quercus robur</i> L.	Pedunculate oak	6
Zorea	<i>Ipomoea nil</i> (L.) Roth (syn. <i>Pharbitis hederacea</i> (L.) Choisy)	Kaladana Resin-plant	6
Granate	<i>Tanacetum parthenium</i> (L.) Sch.Bip. (syn. <i>Chrysanthemum parthenium</i> (L.) Bernh.)	Feverfew (Bachelor's buttons)	6
Soc	<i>Sambucus nigra</i> L.	Elder	6
Ardei	<i>Capsicum annuum</i> L.	Cayenne Pepper (Chillies, Guinea Pepper, Red Pepper)	6
Avrămeasă	<i>Gratiola officinalis</i> L.	Hedge-Hyssop (Poor-man's-herb)	5
Brândușe	<i>Crocus banaticus</i> J. Gay	Crocus	5
Carpen	<i>Carpinus betulus</i> L.	Common Horn-beam (Horn Beech, Horse, Horst, White Beech, Yoke Elm)	5
Costrei	<i>Echinochloa crus-galli</i> (L.) P. Beauv.	Crow's-foot Grass (barnyard grass)	5
Crăiță	<i>Tagetes erecta</i> L.	African Marigold	5
Fragă	<i>Fragaria vesca</i> L.	Wild Strawberry	5
Iarbă neagră	<i>Calluna vulgaris</i> (L.) Hull	Ling	5
Linte	<i>Lens culinaris</i> Medik.	Lentil	5
Mazăre	<i>Pisum sativum</i> L.	Common garden pea	5

Răchită	<i>Salix x rubra</i> Huds.	Red Osier	5
Sipică	<i>Scabiosa ochroleuca</i> L.	Pale Yellow Scabious	5
Ulm	<i>Ulmus minor</i> Mill. (syn. <i>Ulmus carpinifolia</i> Suckow)	Smooth elm	5
Barlaboi	<i>Anthriscus trichosperma</i> Pers.	Garden chervil	4
Călin	<i>Viburnum opulus</i> L.	Guelder rose	4
Lămâie	<i>Citrus limon</i> (L.) Burm.f.	Lemon tree	4
Lemn câinesc	<i>Ligustrum vulgare</i> L.	Privet	4
Leuștean	<i>Levisticum officinale</i> W. D. J. Koch	Common Lavage (Dalian Lavage, Mountain Hemlock)	4
Mei	<i>Panicum capillare</i> L.	Old-witch Grass	4
Papură	<i>Typha angustifolia</i> L.	Narrow-leaved reedmace	4
Piper	<i>Piper nigrum</i> L.	Common Black Pepper-plant	4
Prun	<i>Prunus domestica</i> L.	Cultivated plum-tree	4
Vișin	<i>Prunus cerasus</i> L. (syn. <i>Cerasus vulgaris</i> Mill.)	Common cherry	4
Bob	<i>Vicia faba</i> L.	Straight bean	3
Aglică	<i>Filipendula vulgaris</i> Moench	Dropwort	3
Cânepă	<i>Cannabis sativa</i> L.	Carl-hemp (Common Hemp, Fimble, Gallow-grass)	3
Crin	<i>Lilium candidum</i> L.	Bourbon Lily (Juno's Rose, Madonna Lily, White Lily)	3
Curechi	<i>Brassica oleracea</i> L.	Wild cabbage	3
Ghizdei	<i>Lotus corniculatus</i> L.	Bird's-foot trefoil	3
Lăptucă	<i>Scorzonera austriaca</i> Willd.	Scorzonera	3
Odolean	<i>Valeriana dioica</i> L. <i>Valeriana officinalis</i> L.	Valerian	3
Pepene	<i>Citrullus lanatus</i> (Thunb.) Matsum. & Nakai (syn. <i>Citrullus vulgaris</i> Schrad.)	Waterlemon	3
Portocală	<i>Citrus x aurantium</i> L.	Common (sweet) orange	3
Rogoz	<i>Carex arenaria</i> L.	Sand sedge	3
Sfeclă	<i>Beta vulgaris</i> L.	Sea beet	3
Trifoi	<i>Trifolium pratense</i> L.	Red clover	3
Urzică	<i>Urtica dioica</i> L.	Stinging nettle	3
Zambilă	<i>Hyacinthus orientalis</i> L.	Common Garden Hyacinth	3
Dafin	<i>Daphne laureola</i> L. <i>Laurus nobilis</i> L.	Bay Laurel (Bay-tree, Poefs or Roman Laurel, Sweet Bay, Victor's Laurel)	3
Brebenea	<i>Corydalis cava</i> (L.) Schweigg. & Körte	Hole-wort (Hollowwort, Hollow Leek)	2
Castravete	<i>Cucumis sativus</i> L.	Common Cucumber	2
Căpșună	<i>Fragaria moschata</i> (Duchesne) Duchesne	Hautbois strawberry	2
Ceapă	<i>Allium cepa</i> L.	Common onion	2
Dovleac	<i>Cucurbita maxima</i> Duchesne	Common Pumpkin	2

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	<i>C. pepo</i> L.	(Summer Squash)	
Flori domnești	<i>Consolida ajacis</i> (L.) Schur	Rocket Larkspur	2
Gherghine	<i>Dahlia cultorum</i> Thorsrud & Reisaeter	Dahlia	2
Ghiocei	<i>Galanthus nivalis</i> L.	Snowdrop	2
Gulie	<i>Brassica oleracea</i> var. <i>gongylodes</i> L.	Turnip-cabbage	2
Iască	<i>Fomes fomentarius</i> (L.) Gillet	Amadou (German or Vegetable Tinder, Moxa, Punk, Spunk, Touchwood)	2
Lemn dulce	<i>Glycyrrhiza echinata</i> L.	Liquorice-plant	2
Liliac	<i>Syringa vulgaris</i> L.	Common Lilac (Pipe-tree)	2
Mătrăgună	<i>Atropa belladonna</i> L.	Deadly nightshade	2
Ovăz	<i>Avena sativa</i> L.	Common Cultivated Oat (Haver, or Havver)	2
Păducel	<i>Crataegus monogyna</i> Jacq.	Common hawthorn	2
Ridiche	<i>Raphanus raphanistrum</i> subsp. <i>sativus</i> (L.) Domin (syn. <i>Raphanus sativus</i> L.)	Radish	2
Sânger	<i>Cornus sanguinea</i> L.	Catteridge-tree (Common Cornel, Common Dogwood, Dog-berry, Dog-cherry, Dog-tree, Gadrise, Gaiter or Gatter-tree, Hound-berry Tree, Pegwood, Prich-mood, Skewerwood)	2
Scorțișoară	<i>Cinnamomum verum</i> J. Presl (syn. <i>Cinnamomum zeylanicum</i> Blume)	Common Cinnamon-tree	2
Stuf	<i>Phragmites australis</i> (Cav.) Trin. ex Steud. (syn. <i>Phragmites communis</i> Trin.)	Common reed	2
Arin	<i>Alnus glutinosa</i> (L.) Gaertn.	Alder	1
Briu	<i>Mercurialis perennis</i> L.	Dog's Mercury	1
Cardama	<i>Isatis tinctoria</i> L.	Woad	1
Cireș	<i>Prunus avium</i> (L.) L. (syn. <i>Cerasus avium</i> (L.) Moench)	Hedge-berry (Wild Qean Cherry)	1
Clocotici	<i>Rhinanthus minor</i> L.	Yellow rattle	1
Corn	<i>Cornus mas</i> L.	White dogwood	1
Cristineasă	<i>Ajuga laxmannii</i> (Murray) Benth.	Hedge hyssop	1
Cruciuliță	<i>Senecio squalidus</i> subsp. <i>rupestris</i> (Waldst. & Kit.) Greuter (syn. <i>Senecio rupestris</i> Waldst. & Kit.) / <i>S. vulgaris</i> L.	Groundsel	1
Dimotin	<i>Ononis spinosa</i> subsp. <i>hircina</i> (Jacq.) Gams (syn. <i>Ononis arvensis</i> L.)	Restharrow	1
Drăgan	<i>Centaurea borysthenea</i> Gruner (syn. <i>Centaurea banatica</i> Hayek)	Centaury	1
Ferigă	<i>Dryopteris filix-mas</i> (L.) Schott	Male Fern (Male Polypody)	1
Feriguță	<i>Asplenium ruta-muraria</i> L.	Tent-Wort	1
Floarea raiului	<i>Allium schoenoprasum</i> L.	Chives	1

	(syn. <i>Allium montanum</i> Schrank)		
Floarea soarelui	<i>Helianthus annuus</i> L.	Common sun-flower	1
Gheață (rece)	<i>Begonia cucullata</i> Willd. (syn. <i>Begonia semperflorens</i> Link & Otto) / <i>Mesembryanthemum crystallinum</i> L.	Common Ice-plant	1
Iarba ciutei	<i>Doronicum austriacum</i> Jacq.	Austrian Leopard's-bane	1
Iarba fiarelor	<i>Vincetoxicum hircundinaria</i> Medik. (syn. <i>Cynanchum vincetoxicum</i> (L.) Pers.)	Tame poison	1
Iarbă grasă	<i>Portulaca oleracea</i> L.	Garden Purslane	1
Iasomie	<i>Jasminum officinale</i> L.	Common White-flowered Jasmine	1
Izmă	<i>Mentha longifolia</i> (L.) L.	Horse mint	1
Lemn pucios	<i>Cornus sanguinea</i> L. <i>Sorbus aucuparia</i> L.	Catteridge-tree (Common Cornel, Common Dog-wood, Dog-berry, Dog-cherry, Dog-tree, Gadrise, Hound-berry Tree, Peg-wood, Prich-mood, Skewer-wood), Rowan (Mountain Ash)	1
Lobodă	<i>Atriplex hortensis</i> L.	Butter Leaves, Garden Orache, Mountain Spinach	1
Maghiran	<i>Origanum majorana</i> L. (syn. <i>Majorana hortensis</i> Moench)	Marjoran	1
Măceș (măciș)	<i>Rosa canina</i> L.	Dog Rose	1
Mălin	<i>Prunus padus</i> L. (syn. <i>Padus racemosa</i> (Lam.) Gilib.)	Bird Cherry, Black Dog-wood, Eggberry, Hack-berry, Hag-berry, HedgebeiTy, Hog-cherry	1
Măturică	<i>Centaurea diffusa</i> Lam.	Diffuse knapweed	1
Mohor	<i>Pennisetum glaucum</i> (L.) R. Br. (syn. <i>Setaria glauca</i> (L.) P. Beauv.)	Bottle grass, foxtail grass, panic, milky-green bristle grass, pigeon grass	1
Molift	<i>Picea abies</i> (L.) H. Karst.	Norwegian spruce	1
Muma pădurii	<i>Lathraea squamaria</i> L.	Toothwort	1
Norele	<i>Ipomoea purpurea</i> (L.) Roth (syn. <i>Pharbitis purpurea</i> Asch. in Schweinf.)	(common) morning glory, red morning glory	1
Nu-mă-uita	<i>Myosotis alpestris</i> F. W. Schmidt	Alpine Forget-me-not	1
Păiuș	<i>Agrostis capillaris</i> L. (syn. <i>Agrostis tenuis</i> Sibth.) / <i>Deschampsia cespitosa</i> (L.) P. Beauv. / <i>D. flexuosa</i> (L.) Trin. / <i>Festuca ovina</i> L.	Common bent	1
Pălămidă	<i>Cirsium arvense</i> (L.) Scop.	Creeping thistle	1
Păpădie	<i>Taraxacum campylodes</i> G. E. Haglund (syn. <i>Taraxacum officinale</i> (L.) Weber ex F. H. Wigg.)	Dandelion	1

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Peliniță	<i>Artemisia annua</i> L. <i>A. austriaca</i> Jacq. <i>A. pontica</i> L.	Roman Wormwood (Hungarian Wormwood)	1
Piersici	<i>Prunus persica</i> (L.) Batsch (syn. <i>Persica vulgaris</i> Mill.)	Peach	1
Pir	<i>Agropyron brandzae</i> Pantu & Solac. <i>Elymus repens</i> (L.) Gould (syn. <i>Agropyron repens</i> (L.) P. Beauv.)	Creeping twitch, couch	1
Popîlnic	<i>Asarum europaeum</i> L.	Asarabacca	1
Pospai	<i>Buxus sempervirens</i> L.	Box	1
Praz	<i>Allium ampeloprasum</i> L. (syn. <i>Allium porrum</i> L.)	Common leek	1
Rapiță	<i>Brassica rapa</i> L.	Turnip	1
Rodul pământului	<i>Arum maculatum</i> L.	Lords-and-Ladies (cuckoo- plant)	1
Rug	<i>Rosa canina</i> L.	Dog Rose	1
Salcâm	<i>Robinia pseudoacacia</i> L.	Fragrant White-flowered Locust-tree	1
Salomie	<i>Calendula officinalis</i> L.	Gold, Goldins, Mary-bud, Pot-Marigold	1
Samulastră	<i>Allium cepa</i> L. <i>A. vineale</i> L.	Crow garlic	1
Sângerică	<i>Digitaria sanguinalis</i> (L.) Scop.	Red Finger-grass	1
Sânge-de- nouă-frați	<i>Dracaena draco</i> (L.) L.	Dragon's-blood-tree, Dragon-tree, [of the Canary Islands]	1
Smochină	<i>Ficus carica</i> L.	Common Fig-tree	1
Spanac	<i>Spinacia oleracea</i> L.	Garden Spinach	1
Strigoi	<i>Veratrum album</i> L.	Lang-wort or Lyny-wort, Whiteflowered White- Hellebore	1
Tămâioară	<i>Viola hirta</i> L. <i>V. joói</i> Janka	Hairy Violet	1
Troscot	<i>Chenopodium rubrum</i> L. <i>Polygonum arenarium</i> Waldst. & Kit. <i>P. aviculare</i> L.	Red Goose-foot	1
Tufan	<i>Quercus petraea</i> (Matt.) Liebl.	Sessile oak	1
Varză	<i>Brassica oleracea</i> var. <i>capitata</i> L.	Wild cabbage	1
Verbină	<i>Verbena hybrida</i> Groenl. & Rumpfer	Verbena	1
Vinețea/ vinețele	<i>Cyanus triumfettii</i> subsp. <i>axillaris</i> (Čelak.) Štěpánek (syn. <i>Centaurea axillaris</i> Willd.)	Squarrose knapweed	1
Volbură	<i>Convolvulus arvensis</i> L.	Lesser Dodder	1
Flori		Flowers	217
Iarbă		Grasses	65
Fân		Hay	22
TOTAL			1487

As it can be noticed, the higher frequency of occurrences of plant names in the analyzed text can be related to the importance and significance of these plants in the life of Romanian

people. The plants with a higher frequency in folk poems (common garden tulip – 105, cultivated apple – 81, wheat – 55, white spruce – 47, beech – 42, wormwood – 34, cultivated grape vine – 31, sweet basil – 30) generally correspond to plant species well known and with wide use in rural life; they include ornamental, crop, medicinal, magical and sacred-considered plants.

Tulips have a constant occurrence within analyzed verses; they are ornamental plants fairly widespread and common in rural gardens in Romania (Borza, 1944; Drăgulescu, 1992), and represent also a common ornamental motif in Romanian, Hungarian and Saxon art folk, largely used by people (Butură, 1979). However, its distribution and use as an ornamental plant may vary from one region to another or from one period to another, in some cases, being considered as a rare plant in rural Romanian gardens (Borza, 1925). However, it is a plant recorded in ethnobotanical surveys since the early twentieth century (Panțu, 1902; 1929).

From the present analysis, it has been shown that tulips' occurrence cannot be correlated with certain special, symbolic or subtle context; contrarily, it appears often in the text rather as a stereotype (model) used rather to ensure rhyme with the next verse (phrase often used is "foaie verde ș-o lalea" (*a green leaf and a tulip*), ensuring rhyme for words like "mea" (*I, me*), "colea" (*there*), "zicea" (*was saying*), "zărea" (*was seeing*)), being usually the general introductory part of introducing lyrics. Most likely, it has been used in high frequency due to its versatile quality in ensuring the rhyme; many of the rhymed words are verbs in past continuous - therefore easy to find and use - which may suggest the character of fluidity, repeatability of the action to be narrated or performed. This dynamic mechanism favors the flowing character of verse. In addition, it is a perennial species, and this may explain its persistence character restricted to collective mentality.

Cultivated apple also has a high frequency in the analyzed poems. Abundant and various data about his horticultural properties exist and emphasis will not be given in this direction. However, the importance of this tree and its fruits in Romanian people life is underlined by the huge number of its cultivars as registered in Romanian ethnobotany: a number of about 480 (!) cultivars of apple (Borza, 1968). It is not the intention of this study to discuss the scientific accuracy of them; but their records represent a strong evidence to explain the importance of this tree species in the botanical culture of Romanian people.

A special context may be linked to apple's occurrence; in a carol dedicated to The Day, apple appears in the combination of words: "La Mărul rotat, / La Câmpu – rourat" ("At rotated Apple, / At dewed Plain" vol. 1, pp. 50). The Apple written with upper-case later, accompanied by the adjective "rotated" (thus suggesting a strong, impressive appearance) suggests that apple has been linked to an archaic nucleus, a regression to (and of) incipient stages of evolution, a reminiscence of an old myth of cosmogony or even a biblical relationship. Vulcănescu (1985) shows that apple acts in Romanian mythology as a substitute of a cosmic tree, or tree of life and wisdom. It is also a magic - Christian ambivalent symbol. It was the orchard tree for which mankind was punished because of violation of the divine interdiction to eat it; nonetheless, it is considered a tree of divine reward, because the table with paradise goodies is lying under it (under its crown). Therefore, apple reinforces the existence of a myth deeply rooted in the collective unconscious of Romanian people. Two dimensions are being merged: on the one hand, an ancestral (universal) pillar (tree), the *axis mundi* that unifies the Heaven and Earth; on the other hand, the use of the adjective "rotated" refers to the shape of the crown, but has also an esoteric value that reveals only by symbolic means of unconscious structures. This combination of words reveals actually an example of Romanian vision about genesis, about a stage of evolution lost in time and space immemorial.

This only example - not isolated – strongly support the idea that plants have, in the mental collective of Romanian people, a double value: a clear, well defined purpose emerged in the physical space of day by day life and subtle, implicit value that remains, most often, at unconscious level of psyche structure.

High frequency of crop plants such as wheat, apple, grape vine, common walnut-tree can support the ethnogenesis of Romanian people. All these crops suggest the sedentary life-style of Romanian people; of course, this has been linked to specific activities related to agricultural and horticultural profile that can be only defined in stable, well determined physical space. Nomadic peoples “do not have time” to create a vegetal mythology, stable and durable symbols stable; they build rather a warlike mythology, related to gods of war and weapons. However, further and detailed studies of ethnobotany would contribute for supporting the ethnogenesis of Romanian people; in the same time, the value of ethnobotany in this direction will be also tested and verified.

Hazel appears in many incantations (*descântece*, Romanian), especially in those assumed to cure the snakebite. Pure water is exorcized using twigs of hazel; the water is then given to the sick bit by the snake to be drunk. In other situations, this water is being used to wash the snake bite injuries. Interestingly, hazel twigs have, in popular belief, other miraculous properties: they discover the hidden treasures, or neutralize the harmful effects of un-stolen treasures. With hazel twigs enchanted objects were hit three times (notice the magical number) to be charmed or unharmed.

Sweet basil appears in many incantations related to love; it is thus recognized as a magical plant. In specific Romanian diseases and magical associated symptoms (*lipitură*, *zburător*) several identified plant names were used: dragon's-blood-tree, Austrian leopard's-bane and toothwort. They are being collected by those women who will perform the ritual during May, from forests and plains. Pure water where these plants are boiled is then used for baths by sick, affected women on Tuesdays and Fridays; finally, the used water is threw away on **crossroads** (see the magical value of crossroads) from a new (purified, unaltered) clay pot.

As already shown, plants do not necessarily have strictly a magical value, but rather their “efficiency” of their use and obtained results represent a combination of factors - notice the symbolism of the magical numbers, pure water, new clay pots, and crossroads.

Therefore, plants were used by their medicinal properties (physical dimension), but this value seems to be amplified and mediated by their magical power (spiritual, supernatural dimension) (Figure 1).

In several situations, there is a tendency of people who created and propagated some lyrics, to provide information about the geographic origin of plants: “(In) Greeks` pepper / (In) Serbians` [cayenne] pepper”.

White spruce has a high preponderance in the analyzed lyrics. It is involved in all stages of human existence: birth, marriage, death (Vulcănescu, 1985). It is a sacred tree and the most related to the pattern of cosmic tree. In the Romanian folk culture is a respected tree; not accidentally, it appears in the lyrics associated with adjective “noble”, in combinations such as “[intensely] leafy white spruce”, “tall white spruce” or symbolic numerical combinations “nine white spruces”.

An interesting match between the two described dimensions (physical, supernatural) occurs in relation to the wormwood plant. It contains bitter compounds (Radu *et al.* 1981; Bodea, 1982; Ybert and de Meux, 2001; Duke *et al.* 2002), and the bitterness and sadness are further associated to the properties of this plant: “[Because] of bitterness and wormwood / My poor soul is full.” This represents a beautiful and logical relationship between (physical) plant and soul (supernatural) disposition of a man.

Some other aspects derived from Romanian plant names are even more subtle and they are connected with a particular logic in choosing names. This is the case with *Lathraea squamaria* L. (toothwort); the etymology of species name is relevant: *squama*, *-ae* (noun) in Latin means *scale of a reptile* (*Oxford Latin Dictionary*, 1968). In addition, *lathraios* in Greek means *secret, covert (hidden)* (Liddell and Scott, 1883; Woodhouse, 1910). The etymology of botanical terms and their evolution is very important from historical and scientific points of view, as previously shown (Toma and Toniuc, 2014; Grigore, 2016). Other plant names for this species refer to snake` appearance: *floarea șarpelui* (*snake`s flower*), *iarba șarpelui* (*snake` grass*), *șerpăriță*, *serpăriță* (Romanian, not available for English translation). It is a parasitic plant with a branched, scaly rhizome; its underground parts occupy large surfaces and only after ten years a shoot emerges in the air and subsequently blooms and produces seeds (Paucă and Nyárády, 1960). Therefore, a consistent part of its life is restricted to subterranean environment, far away from curious eyes. Snake has many associated symbols; it seems simply to emphasize the integration of the symbolism of the unconscious with that of the abyss (Cirlot, 2001). Consequently, the long underground plant life, its general aspect and these vernacular names can be logically correlated; snake and the scaly underground rhizome of toothwort belong mainly to a chthonic life. As a parasitic plant, it lacks green colour – an universal, `normal` character of usual vegetal kingdom; the light, sun, photosynthesis and green colour (associated with chlorophyll) are in contrast to the dark environment, snake-like in plant aspect.

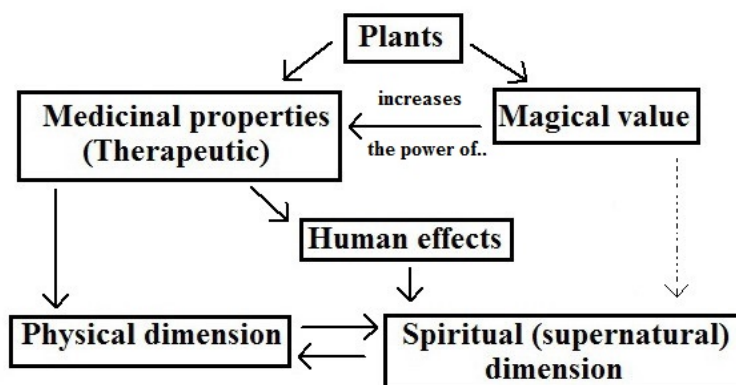


Figure 1. Suggested scheme to show the integrated effects of medicinal and magical properties of plants on the two dimensions of human

Conclusions

All analyzed vernacular plant names reveal, generally, logical relationships between them and Romanian vision about life, believes, superstitions, and psychological disposition. The frequency of the mentioned plants is consistent with their importance in the life of Romanian people; plants with many occurrences are crops and this suggests the sedentary life

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style of people during its ethnogenesis. Plants have a physical, material use and a magical value that seems to be invoked in order to amplify the benefic effects of used plants.

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