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LINGUISTIC TABOO IN ROMANIAN POETRY. TRAUMA, DEPRESSION AND ADDICTIONS

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Abstract: This paper aims to analyse the linguistic taboo in contemporary Romanian poetry, interpreting the euphemisms and dysphemisms related to traumatic experiences, depression and addictions, which function as tabooed realities at the level of the poetic discourse.

Keywords: linguistic taboo, dysphemism, euphemism, poetry, discourse

INTRODUCTION

In a 2017 interview with Andra Rotaru for *Bookaholic*, Medeea Iancu raises the issue of the forms of manifestation of shame in Romania, targeting both the psychological and sociological components, as well as language:

Being yourself is shameful. Questioning authority, being poor, talking about diseases, menstruation, abuse, divorcing, being a single mother, leaving the country, being a victim, raising the flag, using the simple perfect tense, having your tampon visible in your hand, crying, going to church with your hair down, saying penis, vagina, being a feminist, being gay, being Roma, etc. Taboo gives way to shame, whispering, ban, and censorship, regardless of its subject. Shame about one’s body, identity, or identification. And when shame is the foundation, your language adjusts to this censorship: you speak about yourself and others according to this pattern, and your language is what you have inherited from others, in various ways. [1]¹

The poet’s observations are valid in the present socio-political context, in which individuals are forced to conform to moral norms and to (self-)censor their thinking and expression.

¹ All translations in the text are ours.

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The choice to analyse the linguistic taboo in contemporary poetry is driven by the awareness of the importance and the frequency of dysphemisms and euphemisms in everyday language and beyond, implicitly in new literature, which aims to discuss any subject transparently, disregarding moral validation.

Taboos are prohibitions in the spirit of the community, which concern various aspects: space, time, religion, politics, moral precepts and conduct, superstitions, rituals, status, sex, gender, body, nudity, family, profession and language. In effect, society has constructed fences and placed prohibitions on many areas, beliefs, and activities.

A THEORY OF TABOO

Tatiana Potîng considers that “perceived at the time of its discovery as an exotic phenomenon, the exclusive manifestation of primitive communities, the concept of taboo has come to be considered a universal cultural constant, indispensable to any civilization” [2, p. 135]. Taboo has been studied by anthropologists such as James Frazer (*The Golden Bough*) and Franz Steiner (*Taboo*); originally, in ancient communities, all manifestations that were at odds with religious, ritualistic ideas and practices were taboo (for example, magic and witchcraft were taboo). The concept of what is and what is not taboo thus varies according to people, culture, society, and specific beliefs. James Frazer turns taboo (analysed on four levels: people, actions, words, objects) into a category of magic. Franz Steiner explains the term “taboo” and relates it to the sacred and the profane, to the impure, ending by assimilating it to the idea of danger [2, pp. 135-142].

Another significant work is Sigmund Freud’s *Totem and Taboo* [3], which analyses, from a psychoanalytical perspective the taboo formation, the affective ambivalence, incest, neuroses, the Oedipus complex, the totems of the first forms of social organization.

Linguistic taboo is, according to Gheorghe Constantinescu-Dobridor “a vocabulary prohibition leading to the replacement of one word by another or by a metaphorical periphrasis or by a formal variant due to mystic-religious or modesty reasons” [4, p. 318]. Eugen Coşeriu states that “the linguistic taboo is only one aspect of the much broader phenomenon called vocabulary prohibition, which is due not only to superstitions but also to emotional or

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social reasons, education, politeness, good manners, decency, kindness, etc.” [5, p. 190].

Taboos, as “negative rites, fulfil a major social function: maintaining cohesion and a sense of belonging to a group” [6, p. 8].

In contemporary poetry, one finds themes based on traumatic experiences, from depression to illness, from abortion to domestic violence. The poems of young writers thus become spaces for the afflicted to find themselves, to identify with what they read. The corpus of texts analysed consists of 12 volumes of poetry published between 2017 and 2022, which address themes such as cancer, depression, domestic violence, divorce, drugs, and death.

TRANSITION, DISEASES, DEPRESSION

The trauma of being a generation of transition is captured by Anda Vahnovan:

la întoarcere, dirigințele/ ne-a forțat să dansăm pe marginea drumului// nu o horă sau o sârbă,/ o lambada, pe lângă noi treceau autobuzele grele de patriotism,// nu înțeleg nici astăzi logica aceluia gest, unul dintre multele cu care îi plăcea să ne umilească, am dansat de frică.// eram o/ generație de tranziție.// toți cei care până mai ieri erau pedepsiți pentru cravata de pionier necălcată/ deveniseră eroi pentru că s-au pișat pe ea.

on our way back, the teacher/ forced us to dance on the side of the road// not a hora or a folk dance,/ a lambada, buses heavy with patriotism were passing by, I still don't understand the logic of that gesture, one of the many with which he liked to humiliate us, we danced out of fear.// we were a/ generation of transition.// those who used to be punished for having the pioneer tie unironed/ had become heroes because they pissed on it.

(Podul de flori/The Flower Bridge) [7, p. 12].

The changes brought about by the establishment of the democratic regime are felt in the rebellion and the way of relating to the old totalitarian regime: the metaphor *buses heavy with patriotism* hyperbolizes the love for the country, which has suddenly taken off, while the horas have already been replaced by western dances. The dysphemism *they pissed on it* vulgarises the literal act of urinating and the figurative, metaphorical act of “rebellious”.

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Another mark of transition is the emigration of Romanians to other countries with high economic potential: “*în războiul neamurilor:/ lauda casnică și viziunea politică,/ banii verișorilor din Austria*” [in the war of the nations:/ domestic praise and political vision,/ money from cousins in Austria] (Bogdan Tiutiu, *strategii de victimizare/ victimization strategies*) [8, p. 8]; migration feels like a war, because of different mentalities, because of different financial possibilities (in some poems, one notices, paradoxically, the guilt, the humiliation of having money while others do not have: “*mi-e rușine că am bani în buzunar*” [I’m ashamed I’ve got money in my pocket] – Ana Goia, *too much empathy will kill you*) [9, p. 29].

Diseases and cancer, are also taboo topics in contemporary poetry, as these kinds of realities are uncomfortable and breed anxiety. Ana Goia moves quickly from her thoughts about a cyst to cancer and death:

mi-am făcut niște analize și un ecograf/ mic chist cortical renal drept/ mi-a zis doctorul să nu fac o obsesie din el, mulți oameni pățesc,/ trebuie doar să îl verific în fiecare an/ mulți oameni mor de cancer m-am gândit.

I had some tests and an ultrasound/a small right cortical kidney cyst/ the doctor told me not to obsess about it, lots of people get it, / I just have to check it every year/ lots of people die of cancer I thought.

(*andrei bolkonski și despre skinoren/ andrei bolkonski and about skinoren*) [9, p. 33].

Other poems tackle the transformations of the body when it fights severe diseases such as cancer:

femeia din poza cu panglică neagră/ (...) nu seamănă cu bătrâna din sicriu,/ cheală, acoperită cu batic,/ împuținată,/ (...)// «ce este cancerul, mamă, și de ce îți fură părul?»

the woman in the picture with a black ribbon/ (...) does not resemble the old woman in the coffin/ bald, with a headscarf/ shrunk, // ‘what is cancer, mother, and why does it steal your hair?’

(*Anda Vahnovan – Descântec/ Spell*) [7, p. 22].

In this excerpt, cancer is personified, having the ability to steal one’s hair and even one’s life. *Shrunk* is a euphemism for “cadaverous”, “thin”, being a good example of a pragmatically motivated euphemism (as classified by Wanzeck²),

² Wanzeck believes that we can speak of “conventional euphemisms” (referring to taboo words based on religious prohibitions or superstitions) and “pragmatically motivated euphemisms” (when unpleasant truths are hidden). For example, *Lucifer*, *Nichipercea*, *Michiduță* are conventional euphemisms, used to

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that hides a painful truth. In another text, also by Anda Vahnovan, cancer is a disease that won't cure, suffering being enhanced by the Chernobyl nuclear explosion:

*peste un an mama s-a operat de cancer// cât de grav a fost ne-a zis după 25 de ani/
medicul de la oncologie./ azi la Cernobîl se duc turiști./ orașul-fantomă e zonă de
agrement/ (...) // atunci, însă, reprezenta tifoanele pline de sânge/ de pe cicatricea
purulentă a mamei/ care nu se prindea/ nicidecum.*

a year later, my mother had cancer surgery/ how serious it was we were told only 25
years later/ by the oncologist. / Today, tourists visit Chernobyl/ the ghost-town is a
leisure area/ (...)// back then, it was the blood-stained gauze/ on my mother's purulent
scar/ which wouldn't heal/ for the life of it.

(*Cernobîl/ Chernobyl*) [7, p. 10].

The *purulent scar* is an oxymoron that emphasises the scale of unfortunate events. Scarring signifies that the wound is almost healed, due to time, while pus suggests disease, a festering infection.

As already stated, the poems are also a space for self-searching and finding, becoming a welcoming topos for those who are lost and want to find themselves. Depression and anxiety are either particularly serious and overwhelming (“*lumea crede că am intrat în depresie./ (...)/ senzația că sunt bolnavă nu mă părăsește niciodată*” [people think I'm depressed,/ (...)/ the feeling that I'm sick never leaves me] – Ana Goia, *magnerot*) [9, p. 36], or a teenage motivation for moodiness (“*tocmai am avut o cădere nervoasă și mi-am tăiat părul într-un mod stupid*” [I've just had a nervous breakdown and cut my hair stupidly] – Elena Boldor, *being dead sounds magnificent*) [11, p. 59], or a banality due to frequent occurrence (“*Chiar nu poate să vină la întâlnire/ trebuie să stea cu adicțiile/ cu depresia/ cu alea alea fricile care am auzit că se divizează de la o anumită oră*” [She really can't come to the date/ she must stay with her additions/ with her depression/ with her whatever – I've heard fears are divided from a certain point on] – Vlad Moldovan, *Caz/ Case*) [12, p. 48].

Ileana Negrea writes a disturbing poem about mental health:

*Eu sunt Săpoca/ Sunt Bălăceanca./ Voila./ Sunt numărul 9./ Nebuna din pod./ Femeia
care vorbește prea mult./ Revoluționara/ (...)/ Sunt Silvia./ Ana./ Virginia./ Sunt
psihiatrui mei./ Sunt orele de terapie./ (...)/ Sunt isterica nefutută.*

substitute the notion of the *devil*, and *movable teeth*, *false teeth* are pragmatically motivated euphemisms that have the meaning of *prosthesis*. [10, pp. 42-44]

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I am Săpoca/ I am Bălăceanca, / Voila/ I am No. 9/ The madwoman in the attic/ the woman who speaks too much/ The revolutionary/ (...) I am Sylvia/ Anne/ Virginia/ I am my shrinks/ I am my therapy sessions. / (...) / I am the hysterical woman who has not been fucked.

(Eu sunt Săpoca/ I am Săpoca) [13, pp. 11-12].

Very interesting is the identification of the patient with mental problems with the hospitals where she is admitted, with psychiatrists and therapists. Also noteworthy is the identification of the lyrical voice with the most famous women writers who struggled with depression: Sylvia Plath, Anne Sexton and Virginia Woolf. The reasons that led to depression and anxiety are mentioned in another poem:

Pentru că teama de abandon/ Pentru că mecanisme de autosabotare/ (...)/ Pentru că codepenență/ Pentru că abuz și șoc posttraumatic

For fear of abandonment/ because of self-sabotaging mechanisms/ (...)/ because of co-dependency/ because of abuse and posttraumatic shock.

(Inventar:/ Inventory:) [13, p. 33].

As with sexuality, society prefers not to directly mention words related to mental illness:

Lumea bună nu zice poponar sau țigan,/ Curvă, sărăntoc, pârniaș, retardat./ (...)/ Lumea trage linia la ne-bună./ (...)/ Un dezaxat, doi dezaxați.../ Ce, ești nebun?/ Diliu. Zănatec./ Bolnav mintal./ N-are toți boii acasă./ E dusă. (Cu pluta.)/ Sărit de pe fix. Îi filează o lampă.

Decent people don't say fag or gypsy/ Whore, beggar, jailbird, retarded./ (...) People are drawing the line at in-sane./ (...) One deranged, two deranged.../ What, are you crazy?/ Nuts./ Loony./ Mentally ill./She's off her rocker/ She's out/ (to lunch)/Round the bend.

(Nebună/Madwoman) [13, p. 14]

One can see that preferred words are derivatives (*deranged*), compounds (*jailbird*), synonyms (*nuts*, *loony*), syntagms (*mentally ill*), phrases or idioms (*off the rocker*, *out to lunch*, *round the bend*).

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DOMESTIC VIOLENCE, ABORTION, DIVORCE

Domestic violence is another taboo topic in poetry – from verbal violence (“vreau să urlu la mine și eu să urlu înapoi și amândoi să ne amintim/ că am avut cândva o relație pentru care merită să urlu” [I want you to yell at me and me to yell back and both to remember that we once had a relationship that is worth yelling for] – Elena Boldor, *THIS USER ACTUALLY LIKES HAVING HER HEART BROKEN*) [11, p. 43]) to physical aggression (“îmi imaginez palmele lor transpirate lovindu-mă cu putere” [I imagine their sweaty palms hitting me hard] – Elena Boldor, *this is all meaningless & death grips were right*) [11, p. 35].

Truly terrifying experiences are recounted in Victoria Tatarin’s poems:

Mi-ai distrus fața/ Pentru asta cred că trebuie să-ți fiu recunoscătoare/ Căci de atâtea ori te-am rugat să mă lovești în față/ Coasta ruptă și carnea sfâșiată din carnea ta nu le pot vedea în oglindă/ Să mă lovești cu pumnii să spargi să zgârii fața neatinsă.

You’ve ruined my face/ And I think I must be grateful for that/ Because I have been asking you to punch me in the face for so long/ The broken rib and torn flesh of your flesh I cannot see in the mirror/To punch, to break, to scratch my unscathed face. (???) [14, p. 35].

The victim masochistically accepts punches, even asks for more, in visible areas – the face – it actually seems that she doubles the aggressor, she is at the same time victim and abuser because of the mirror (*the broken rib and the torn flesh of your flesh I cannot see in the mirror*).

In the following poem, the victim (*with a bruised back head*) compares herself with a *broken* mannequin whose head falls off and with a *defective* puppet. Both adjectives highlight the undervaluation of the self and inner desolation. “The most typical and expressive attribute of the noun is undoubtedly the adjectival one”, considers Ladislau Gáldi [15, p. 96]. The verb *to beat* is presented both using euphemisms (*you feel like you need to vent*), and especially dysphemisms (*kicking my belly like a football*):

Lovește-mă atât de tare încât să-mi zboare capul ca al unui manechin stricat/ Să mă lovesc de un dulap/ Oricum toată ceafa e în semne// Nu-ți place să mă bați știu/ Nu sunt bună de nimic știu// Picioare în burtă ca unei mingi de fotbal care are înăuntru o minge de tenis// Când simți că ai nevoie să te descarci/ Dă în mine// Aștept momentul când mă vei scoate din casă într-un pachet negru ca în filmele despre ucigași/ Măinile

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și picioarele mele se vor desprinde ca ale unei păpuși de teatru defectă/ Măcar atunci pe jos în portbagajul mașinii mă voi simți și eu tubită.

Hit me so hard that my head flies off like a broken mannequin's/ Hit me against the locker/ The back of my head is bruised anyway./ You don't like to beat me, I know./ I am good for nothing, I know./ Kick me in the belly like it's a football with a tennis ball inside./ When you need to vent/ hit me./ I am waiting for the moment when you take me out of the house in a black bag like in the killer movies./ My arms and legs will fall off like those of a defective puppet/ At least then, on the floor of your car's trunk, I'll feel loved.

(???) [14, p. 48].

Going to the gynaecologist is another trauma captured by contemporary poets. Even a routine check-up becomes an unbearable event because of the fear and discomfort caused by the instruments used by the doctor:

o unealtă din aia care e mereu rece/ nu-mi amintesc niciodată cum se chemă/ valve, speculum, tot ce te face să tremuri fără oprire

one of those instruments that are always cold/ I can never remember what it's called/ a valve, a speculum, anything that makes you shiver incessantly

(Cătălina Stanislav – *Normal to dry hair*) [16, p. 27].

Much more complicated is the discussion about abortion. Contemporary poetry is sympathetic to young people's fears of bringing children into the world: "presupun că mereu am avut această instabilitate emoțională/ și frică de a mă reproduce" [I guess I've always had this emotional instability/ and fear of breeding] (Elena Boldor, *singurul lucru care-mi amintește de tine e posterul cu kate moss/ the only thing that reminds me of you is the kate moss poster*) [11, p. 28]; women thus resort to the most effective means of contraception: "*trupul steriletul cu/ levonogestrel*" [body contraceptive coil/ with Levonorgestrel] (Gabriela Feceoru, *delirul astrogramic/ astrograph delirium*) [17, p. 117]. If these methods fail, there are two possibilities: "life is allowed to ripen within us" (a splendid euphemism for pregnancy):

și-mi imaginez cum își zic una alteia/ ai văzut că x e gravidă/ de parcă doar atunci a început să existe x/ de parcă în sarcină putem doar să ne observăm/ una pe cealaltă/ de parcă viața care se coace în tine/ e singurul lucru care te validează

and I imagine how they say to each other/ did you see that x is pregnant/ as if it was only then that x began to exist/ as if in pregnancy we can only observe/ each other/ as if the life that ripens in you/ is the only thing that validates you

(Cătălina Stanislav, *Mă gândesc foarte des la posibilitatea de a fi mamă/ I think a lot about being a mother*) [16, p. 51],

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or, on the contrary, abortion:

Doctorul mă întreabă dacă e prima dată/ După operație mi-a arătat un boț de carne și sânge închegat

The doctor asks if it's my first time/ After the operation, he showed me a lump of flesh and clotted blood
(???) [14, p. 44],

Mi-am străpuns abdomenul/ Am scos de acolo o bucată putredă de carne și am pus-o într-un borcan/ prăfuit în care a murit o broască/ Broasca a înviat și mi-a zis mamă.

I pierced my belly/ I pulled out a rotten piece of meat and put it in a dusty jar/ Where a toad died/ The toad came back to life and called me mother.
(???) [14, p. 45].

The *lump of flesh and clotted blood* and *the rotten piece of meat* are shockingly visual images of the aborted foetus. Also shocking is the lightness of the tone when referring to such serious issues, as Victoria Tatarin discusses abortion in her poems as if it were an everyday activity, adding a fantastic nuance at the end of the second poem.

Gabriela Feceoru concocts a prayer about the shortcomings of childbirth:

Iisuse/ Hristoase,/ mântuiește/ femeile/ care-și/ avortează/ pruncii./ trimite/ însingurare/ hipertensiune/ arterială/ și/ depresie/ peste/ născătoarele/ de/ bebeluși,/ stafidește-le/ trupurile/ ține-le/ treze/ în/ primele/ 90/ de/ nopți/ și/ 90/ de/ zile/ postnatale./ ajută/ nouă/ păcatul/ zămislirii/ să-l/ ocolim.

Jesus/ Christ, / save/ women/ who/ abort/ their/ babies./ send/ loneliness/ high/ blood/ pressure/ and/ depression/ over/ the/ birthing/ mothers/ of/ babies./ dry up/ their/ bodies/ keep/ them/ awake/ during/ the/ first/ 90/ postnatal/ nights/ and/ days./ help/ us/ avoid/ the/ sin/ of/ childbirth. (*Doamne/ Lord*) [18, pp. 34-35].

Feceoru asks that the sin, impiety and blasphemy of women who have abortions be forgiven because the suite of sufferings to which the woman's body is subjected after birth is a heavy burden to bear: drying up of the body (a common euphemism for loss of vigour); loneliness, high blood pressure, depression (orthophemisms).

Parental divorce and the trauma of not having a complete family are themes that run through some poetry volumes:

familia mea/ e-n două familii
my family/ is in two families

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(Gabriela Feceoru, *stau pe scăunel în capătul uliței/ I sit on a stool at the end of the alley*) [18, p. 11];

(...) *perdeaua roșie din camera mea tremura înainte de divorțul părinților. (...) la șase ani am rămas fără figură paternă, dacă dinții lui încap în golul pe care l-a lăsat.*

(...) the red curtain in my room was trembling before my parents' divorce (...) when I was six years old, I was left without a father figure, if his teeth fit in the gap he left (Denisa Ștefan, *când ies cu maică-mea undeva am obiceiul să stau în mașină/ when I go out with my mother I usually sit in the car*) [19, pp. 16-17].

The father is rendered by a *pars pro toto* synecdoche – the teeth replace the person (or substitute the person's absence). A similar situation can be encountered in the following lines:

lasă-mă să conduc roaba ta prăfuită/ nu preda casca și nici boneta de militar cu// ele mă jucam, mă deghizam. îți dai seama, eram/ tatăl meu

let me drive your dusty barrow/ don't hand over the helmet or the military cap/ I used to play with them/ to disguise myself/ don't you realise? I was/ my father

(Gabriela Feceoru, *un bilet/ a note*) [18, p. 15]

The helmet and the military cap substitute the paternal figure up to the point in which the daughter herself compensates for her father's absence, imagining that she has become him by using these things. Another effect of child abandonment is their anger at the parent who left them (the language is very strong, containing dysphemisms):

taică-meu are altă familie/ când mă gândesc la el mi-l imaginez după gratii,/ violat și cărunt/ tras la față și cu o barbă până-n cur

my father has another family/ when I think about him, I imagine he's behind bars/ raped and grey-haired/ with a pale face and a beard up to his ass.

(Denisa Ștefan, *taică-meu are altă familie/ my father has another family*) [19, p. 14].

There is also the reverse situation, when the child feels exposed, helpless in the face of danger and devoid of feelings, by association with the mannequin: "*sunt fiica vitregă,/ manechinul de plastic expus, încremenit.*" [I am the step-daughter,/ the plastic mannequin, exposed and petrified] (Gabriela Feceoru, *blister*) [18, p. 9].

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ADDICTIONS, SUICIDE, DEATH

Drugs and alcohol abuse are also present in contemporary poetry:

pasându-mi jointul cu tripuri cât mai/ goale
passing me the joint with trips/ as empty as possible
(Vlad Moldovan, *Şase paşi/ Six steps*) [12, p. 51];

am vrut să scriu/ da' am rămas să trag/ două liniuțe pe cearceaf
I wanted to write/ but I stayed to snort/ two lines on the sheet
(Gabriela Feceoru, *am vrut să scriu/ I wanted to write*) [17, p. 133];

OAMENII SUNT MINUNAȚI CÂND SUNT BEȚI
PEOPLE ARE WONDERFUL WHEN THEY ARE DRUNK
(Elena Boldor, *PETRECEREA DE ASEARĂ A FOST OK/ LAST NIGHT'S PARTY WAS OK*) [11, p. 22].

To conclude:

CELE MAI BUNE LUCRURI ÎN VIAȚĂ SUNT RELE/ PENTRU TINE
THE BEST THINGS IN LIFE ARE BAD/ FOR YOU
(Elena Boldor, *ÎN UNELE NOPTI PLÂNGI MULT PEA MULT/ SOME NIGHTS YOU CRY TOO MUCH*) [11, p. 39].

Death, a taboo topic since ancient times, remains so in contemporary poetry. Elderly people seem to be the only ones who keep their faith in religion:

aseară bunica m-a întrebat de unde venim/ dacă nu de la Dumnezeu/ ea crede că
dumnezeu e singurul mod de a face față/ ideii de a muri
last night, grandma asked me where we came from/ if not from God/ she thinks that
God is the only way to cope/ with the idea of dying
(Elena Boldor, *SHOUT-OUT*) [11, p. 73].

Other poems contain truisms (*it's not nice to die*):

și tot crescând, fata s-a decis totuși să sară/ sărind a observat că nu e frumos să mori
and growing and growing the girl decided to jump/ jumping, she noticed that it's not
nice to die
(Teona Galgoțiu, *în centrul burții o sămânță pe care plantând-o am observat că e rea/*
in the middle of the belly a seed that I noticed was bad when I planted it) [20, p. 16].

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In other texts, there are aspects that refer to death, even suicide – the suicide letter is a euphemistic reference in the original, as in Romanian the phrase literally reads *farewell letter*:

ultimul atac de panică a durat patru ore și o scrisoare de adio/ pe care n-o va citi nimeni

my last panic attack lasted four hours and a suicide letter/ that no one will read
(Denisa Ștefan, *aceste rânduri pot fi umplute cu mizeria omenească sau cu și mai multe găuri/ these lines can be filled with human filth or with even more holes*) [19, p. 30].

Another euphemism for the idea of death is used in the following lines, reminiscent of Sylvia Plath's poetry and also of Virginia Woolf's suicide:

aici vreau să zac. cu capul/ sub apa fierbinte./ treacă mirosul de/ lavandă mai departe și/ toți să vină, toți să vorbească// despre mine bleg

here I want to lie/ with my head/ under hot water/ let the lavender scent pass on and/ all come, all talk/ about me dumb

(Gabriela Feceoru, *asta-s eu/ this is who I am*) [18, p. 23].

CONCLUSIONS

The tabooed realities are reflected in the writing of contemporary Romanian poets; they (boldly) tackle previously ignored topics (especially during the communist dictatorship). Poetry is no longer synonymous with the idea of beauty but has become a means of confessing issues that are eating away at us, a dialogue with the readers who empathise and identify with the poems. Sex, (homo)sexuality, rape, depression, feminism, and suicide are discussed euphemistically or through dysphemisms, creating unusual imagery.

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