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Symbolist concept of the Monument to Vojislav Ilić in the Kalemegdan park

Abstract: *The Monument to Vojislav Ilić in the Kalemegdan Park, made by sculptor Jovan Pešić, was created thanks to the commitment of the Committee of Belgrade Young Women and was formally revealed in 1904, finding its place in the alley of important individuals from the cultural life. The monument to the famous poet consists of a bust with his image and a pedestal in which there is an emblem-like relief depicting complementing the memory of the poet. The relief composition without any narrative function, consisting of individual symbols made of personifications in the shape of female figures, the sphinxes, as well as depictions of masks, with its conceptual structure is positioned within the framework of the art of symbolism, a modern outlook in the Serbian society at the time. Joined together in the idea of out-of-time poetry and a poet as a visionary, the depicted figures visualise the general expression of the poetic spirit, thus surpassing the exclusively national character of the monument, defined by the purpose and the position within the national memorial. In this way, the monument becomes a testimony to the presence of Symbolist tendencies in the Serbian sculpture at the beginning of the 20th century, as well as in the Serbian society at large, thus establishing a link with the subsequent poetic opus of Vojislav Ilić in which the first traces of Symbolism in the Serbian literature could be discerned.*

Key words: symbolism, monument, Vojislav Ilić, Kalemegdan Park, poet, sculpture, Jovan Pešić

Апстракт: Споменик Војиславу Илићу на Калемегдану, рад вајара Јована Пешића, реализован је залагањем Одбора београдских девојака и свечано откритивен 1904. године, наставши своје место у алеји знамених људи из културног живота. Споменик славном песнику чини биста са његовим ликом и споменик, на коме се налази амблематска рељефна представа, која концептуално уједињује меморију на песника. Рељефна композиција, без нарајивне функције, састављена од јединичних симбола, које чине персонификације у виду женских фигура, сфинга, као и представа маски, својом идејном структуром смешта се у оквире уметности симболизма, тада модерног тока у српској средини. Сједињене у идеји о ванвременској поезији и песнику као визионару, представљене фигуре визуализују њихов израз песничког духа, чиме се надлази искључиво национални карактер споменика, дефинисан наменом и положајем у оквиру националног меморијала. Споменик на тај начин постаје сведочанство о присуству симболичких тенденција у српској скулптури на почетку XX века, као и у српској средини уопште, корелацирајући са каснијим песничким Војислава Илића, у коме су препознатливи први трагови симболизма у српској књижевности.

Кључне речи: симболизам, споменик, Војислав Илић, Калемегдан, песник, скулптура, Јован Пешић

The constituting of the national idea in the Serbian society during the 19th century led to the creation of a national pantheon including different individuals who obligated the nation through their work. In the last decades of the 19th century, the heroes of the

¹ On the introduction of the individuals from cultural life into the circle of heroes: Тимотијевић 2000–2001: 187–188, Макуљевић 2006: 110, 275.

² See more: Тимотијевић 2000–2001: 191–201.

³ Тимотијевић 2000–2001: 199–200.

⁴ Павловић 1963: 64–66.

⁵ Палавестра 1985: 8.

⁶ Станишић 2013: 140.

⁷ Павловић 1963: 66.

nation who acted in the fields of culture and language¹ stood out in particular among them. The monument to a Serbian poet, Vojislav Ilić, made by sculptor Jovan Pešić, was erected in line with this idea and was placed within the Kalemegdan Park's alley of the greats, set up as an open-air national pantheon. While finding its place among the other monuments dedicated to prominent cultural creators, this monument differed with its conceptual idea that suggested influxes of modernism into the Serbian sculpture.

After the first initiative for the erection of a monument to Vojislav Ilić, instigated by the Literary and Artistic Community at the beginning of the last decade of the 19th century, had not been successfully carried out, the monument was made in 1903 and was formally revealed only in April 1904, thanks to the endeavours of the *Committee of Belgrade Young Women*, a circle of younger female intelligentsia and admirers of the poet's creative opus.² Because of the changes of the members of the commission and the polemics within the commission, the outcome of the competition for the monument to Vojislav Ilić, which at first saw the works of numerous artists including Petar Ubavkić, Đoka Jovanović, as well as Simeon Roksandić, was the decision not to award the first prize. Eventually, the Committee of Belgrade Young Women ordered the monument from sculptor Jovan Pešić, which stirred discontent among Belgrade's artistic circles of the time since Pešić was not academically educated sculptor.³

Jovan Pešić (1866–1936) was a self-taught sculptor, who acquired first lessons by learning photographic craft in Novi Sad, as well as during a brief stay at the atelier of sculptor Đoka Jovanović in Belgrade at the end of the 19th century, where he worked as his apprentice and associate.⁴ He was also interested in the issues of fine arts, which is why he was delegated for a while to lead the fine art column in the *Serbian Literary Herald* (*Српску књижевни гласник*) which was a very important element in the Serbian society at the beginning of the 20th century for the promotion of new trends and the modernism of the western world.⁵ In addition to his sculpting activities, Pešić has also been remembered as a war photographer, earning credits in the liberation wars, while his interest in social and political problems in the Serbian society was accompanied by the caricatures published in different newspapers.⁶ Frequent criticism and mistrust in his work on account of the lack of his academic education, that led to an insufficient number of orders for sculptures, forced him to dedicate himself to other activities as well. As he states himself in a letter from 1907, addressed to the Serbian Academy of Sciences, with a request for them to buy his busts in order for him to pay for his education with this income, without the knowledge of the sculpting work, he executes his pieces *at his will and according to his idea*.⁷

Pešić's knowledge of modern artistic trends may explain their impact onto the conceptual idea behind the monument to Vojislav Ilić. Greater freedom in the expression and the composition that modernism brought, as well as the distance from the strict adhering to the academic principles that were a consequence

1. *Monument to Vojislav Ilić in the Kalemegdan park, sculptor Jovan Pešić*

1. *Споменик Војиславу Илићу на Калемегдану, вајар Јован Пешић*



⁸ Борозан 2006: 28.

of the lack of formal education, inspired Pešić to create a sculptural piece that differed with its concept from the usual manner of shaping monuments in this period. The freer expression was also permitted by the topic – depiction of a poet. As opposed to the other monuments from this period, of predominantly political or didactic content, aspiring to make the monument's presentation clear and recognisable in order to speak to the viewer and convince him of the power of its ideological message,⁸ the depiction of the poetic spirit allowed for the introduction of an enigmatic allegoric expression.

The monument to Vojislav Ilić, made of a bust with the poet's image placed on a pedestal, constituted a solution usual at the time for the monuments of this type. However, the relief subsequently

⁹ Ehrhardt 2000 : 9.¹⁰ Hofstätter 2000: 19.¹¹ Ehrhardt 2000: 9.¹² Losse 2000: 109.

added onto the monument's pedestal, the composition of which complements the memory of the poet, may be placed with its conceptual structure into the framework of the art of symbolism, a modern outlook in the Serbian society at the time. By keeping the function of the glorification of a national hero, that stands in the original intent of the monument, the allegoric and the symbolic character of the relief makes it possible to interpret the piece also within the scope of a broader picture of the universal poetic spirit.

BASES OF SYMBOLISM

The onset of Symbolism in the second half of the 19th century, manifested primarily in poetry and literature, and only then in the visual arts as well, was a kind of reaction to the material, calculated reality created during the period of the accelerated industrial progress. Based on speculative aspects, intertwining with the philosophical and psychological constructs and looking up to the phenomena in the field of music, the art of Symbolism saw its goal in the suggestive presentation of the impulse from the interior and soulful world, as the universal truth on the other side of the reality. As a stylistically uneven movement that rejected a primary focus on the representation of the visible worlds, such as the predominant academic Naturalism, as well as the then modern Impressionism had, Symbolism was turned towards the kingdom of imagination and the unconscious.⁹

The visual expression of Symbolism was characterised by an absence of a unique style, which allowed for the use of different visual forms, as well as the combining of figures and objects that is not possible in the reality.¹⁰ The visual symbols that had been present in almost every style period became ambiguous in Symbolism and they appeared in a new, until then unknown context, thus freeing themselves of a definite, final meaning.¹¹ In this way, the motifs from the classic repertoire of legends, with a particular relation towards the Antiquity and the mythology as a source of inspiration, were used as signs that should point at emotional states or that had been reshaped as images of other transcendental experiences.¹² A symbolistic piece was thus liberated from the narration and a clearly defined theme, focusing instead towards the visualisation of a spiritual idea suggested by the hidden meanings of the symbols. Stepping away from the functions determined by social requirements, a piece of art executed in the spirit of Symbolism turns towards a metaphysical reality, defined by the cosmological and universal constants, rather than by the spatial and temporal ones.

Symbolism in sculpture

Defining of a Symbolist sculpture constituted a problem since the aspirations of Symbolism and its associative, psychological character, as well as the proneness to present unclear and

¹³ Maaz 2000: 179.

¹⁴ Maaz 2000: 180.

¹⁵ Борозан 2012: 35.

¹⁶ Deseyve 2020: 92–99.

enigmatic forms, could not be translated into sculpture in the same way. The predominant Rationalism of the 19th century, which impacted all social and artistic spheres, made the sculpture remain to a large degree tied to the traditional ideas, to the representation of the physical and the real, with the idea of translating ethical norms and models.¹³ The complex concept of Symbolism applied in sculpture faced limitations which this visual medium imposed. As opposed to the fine arts which allowed for a greater freedom of experimenting and creating within oneself, the sculpture required more distinct and clearer representation, focused on a smaller number of figures, while partially remaining dependent on the real space in which it was placed.

In the European sculpture of the second half of the 19th century there was moving away from the formal tasks of the sculpture and it gained more thematic and artistic freedom. Although it had nothing in common with Symbolism, the monumental and classic form of Adolf von Hildebrand's sculpture that combined metaphoric content with a clear form made it possible for sculptors to move away from the official tasks and the narrative functions attributed to the sculpture and to dedicate themselves to aesthetic issues and the representation of personal emotions and sensations. On the other hand, the sculptural work of Auguste Rodin, closer to the Impressionism, characterised by surfaces that leave the impression of not being completed and by new expressive intensity of the human gesture, made it possible for this medium to become an artistically autonomous form.¹⁴ Parallel to these new modernistic tendencies, the Symbolist form striving for allegory and decorativeness manifested itself in the sculpture through complex compositions and through symbolistic view at the sculpture coming from the decorative approach to the medium, which made the Symbolist sculpture more reminiscent of reliefs.¹⁵

The Symbolist sculpture departs from formal functions, common for this medium in the 19th century, so that the traditional form of sculpture gets reshaped in line with the conceptual idea, placed into the sphere of the metaphysical. In conformity with the main ideas of Symbolism, turned away from the visible reality towards abstract entities, moved away from the categories of the outside world and the traditional forms of academic conventions, the Symbolist sculpture was characterised by fundamental ambiguity, associative openness and, concurrently, by stylistic diversity. Although the Classicistic stylist norms were still the thing in the sculpture, the sculptors inclined towards Symbolist ideas were no longer interested in the normative and traditional contents, focusing rather on the ideas of the inner world. In this way, what the Symbolists brought as new in their work was primarily the twist in terms of the theme.¹⁶ Introduction of polychromia into the finishing, together with the specific meanings which colours had in Symbolism, making the composition more complex and the addition of allegories or symbols as elements that should point at the primary idea, constituted the characteristics of the Symbolist sculpture. Synesthesia was especially prominent within the sys-

¹⁷ Meschede 2013: 246.¹⁸ Борозан 2018: 87.¹⁹ Амброзић 1985: 658.²⁰ Догга (ed.) 1994: 151.²¹ Facos 2009: 30.²² Николић 2014: 224.²³ Борозан 2018: 22.

tem of Symbolism, that is, the search for the overall artistic work in the most diverse forms, which led to a situation where there was no clear distinction between the genres, where each one could be understood as the synesthetic form of expression with different sensual perceptions, revealing possibilities that got intertwined all over again. The individual element of the work thus became only a reference to the entire whole, created in accordance with the artist's conception.¹⁷

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The cultural, scientific and artistic scenes in the Serbian society started to develop in the last decades of the 19th century, after the promulgation of the Kingdom, which created a favourable situation for accepting the current themes from the European conceptual systems, enabling also the accepting and receiving of the Symbolist trends.¹⁸ The presence of Symbolism in the Serbian society was confirmed from the last decade of the 19th century by some of the Serbian artists who in different phases of their work and development exhibited their adherence to the spirit and the understanding of Symbolism, dealing with its themes in the stylistically heterogeneous forms and with uneven plastic value.¹⁹

SYMBOLISM AND POETRY: POET AS A VISIONARY

Poetry held a prominent place and had a particular significance in the structure of Symbolism, in line with the fact that as the movement Symbolism primarily appeared in poetry, accompanied by the manifests of the European poets who represented its features and aspirations. The manifest of French poet Jean Moréas, published in the *Le Figaro* in 1886, stands out in particular and in it the author describes Symbolism as the art that through the use of a rational form creates only a sensitive depiction of the unspeakable, primal idea.²⁰ The quest for such an expression that would present the primal idea made the Symbolist artist often gain the status of a visionary or a genius, the one who had the capability to interpret the every-day objects as signs of the otherworldly ideas, avoiding at the same time the limitations of the superficial materialistic existence, while risking to be misunderstood and rejected.²¹ In the period dominated by the feeling that there was no solid foundation any longer and that everything was prone to vanishing, the artists, that is, the poets became those who could give shape to the collective aspirations for they could see the truth that eluded others.²²

The understanding of poetry as the universal language, capable of communicating emotionally with the reader was not new, but in Symbolism it acquired a special emphasis on account of its cognation with music, the most direct expression of the inner, which with its synthesis of the word and the tone had a major impact on the Symbolists.²³ In a similar manner, poetry offered a possibility to use words and verses, as a rational form, to translate

²⁴ Ekerman 1976: 35.

²⁵ Тимотијевић 2000–2001: 187.

²⁶ Палавестра 1985: 12.

²⁷ Павић 1971: 339–344.

²⁸ Дучић (without the year): 239–246.

dreams, urges, feelings and other impulses of the unconscious and inner world. In this context, transferred to all the aspects of the artistic expression, one constructs an idea that represents the Symbolist artist as the one who aspires to use their autonomous world, their feelings and moods, applying suggestive methods and using the symbols and codes of manifold meaning, in order to reflect the universal, general, primordial feeling so that the final expression is not explicitly subjective, but rather allows for a possibility of free interpretation. Thus, the poet becomes the one, as Johann Wolfgang von Goethe put it, who manages to adopt the world and to express it.²⁴

Parallel to the seeing of the poet as the national hero of the modern times,²⁵ there was also a Symbolist idea of the poet placed into the mythological, Orpheus-like narrative that surpassed the exclusively national framework and that made the poet a preacher of the universal and out-of-time truth.

In the later-date poetic opus of Vojislav Ilić, that stepped out from the realistic unambiguousness towards the expansion of the visual values of poetic images and metaphors, one can recognise the first traces of Symbolism in the Serbian literature.²⁶ The Symbolism sensed through the contents in the later-date work of Vojislav Ilić, can be noticed in his reorientation of poetry towards the musical phenomena, so that the music and sounds start to reveal the unconscious expanses of the inner being, as well as in the manner in which he subjectivised the landscape in the Symbolist direction where the object of the description becomes subjected to the inner world of the poet which was all in conformity with the basic aspirations of the Symbolists.²⁷ Although he did not recognise Symbolism in the work of Vojislav Ilić at the time, in his essay *Spomenik Vojislavu (Monument to Vojislav)* poet Jovan Dučić pointed out that Vojislav was not a *popular poet* like the poets before him, stating that *he sang what he dreamt*.²⁸ The new poetic orientation in the spirit of Symbolism to which Ilić turned during the last years of his life led him to change his perception of the world, which made it possible to sense in his image those visionary features aspired to by the Symbolists.

Memory of the Poet

In the visual culture of the 19th century, the image of poets was depicted in different ways which among others also included painted portraits and other compositions with the poet's image, photographs reproduced in books or in newspapers, as well as on postcards, and also for the making of a public monument as a durable type of memory. According to the familiar practice, the depictions of poets were accompanied with personifications and allegories that complemented the image of the poet's spirit and the eternity of poetry, often contributing to the mythologisation of the poet's personality. The national character shaped up a large number of poets' depictions in the Serbian visual culture of the

2. Marko Murat, "Vojislavljeva spomenica," front page, (University Library, Belgrade)
2. Марко Мураћ, Војислављева споменница, насловна страна (Универзитетска библиотека, Београд)



²⁹ Мишић 2009: 89–96.

³⁰ Тимотијевић 2000–2001: 193–194.

19th century, where their personality developed up to the level of a cult, such as for instance the cult of Branko Radičević, accompanied by a large number allegoric representations.²⁹

The allegoric representation dedicated to Vojislav Ilić in the spirit of Symbolism was created by painter Marko Murat for the front page of *Vojislavljeve spomenice* (*Vojislav's Memorial*), issued by the original Committee for the erecting of the monument to the poet in 1895.³⁰ Created in line with the classic antiquity idea on the glorification of the poet and on the immortality of poetry, this composition shows in the foreground a female figure, the personification of poetry, placing a wreath onto a tombstone with the poet's name written on it with a star added above it. The background is filled with circles in which there are laurel wreaths,

³¹ Тимотијевић 2001: 40.³² Борозан 2006: 26–28.³³ Тимотијевић 2000–2001: 203.³⁴ Павловић 1963: 67.³⁵ Тимотијевић 2000–2001: 203–204.

while the circle in the middle of the upper section was intended for the image of the poet. The composition, filled with familiar allegoric contents used as the poet's apotheosis, does not have clearly emphasised national symbols.

Among different types of poets' memories, the most important was the erection of a monument. The monument with the image of the selected national hero expressed the collective praise for a certain public virtue, with the monument being seen as a tried rhetorical means in the self-confirmation of the community.³¹ In the 19th century monument culture, the monument was seen as a pictorial emblem which did not lose either in the symbolism or in the allegoric incompleteness of the action that would be difficult for the viewer to fathom, but rather it revealed itself to the viewer with a clear message realising its full functionality in the idea as its ultimate goal.³² The monument dedicated to a poet, a carrier of poetry which itself has an allegoric character and which in itself contains the poetic individuality, could allow for a concept that carried the symbolic associative language.

SYMBOLISM IN THE CONCEPT OF THE MONUMENT TO VOJISLAV ILIĆ

The final appearance of the monument to Vojislav Ilić was a bust with the image of the poet placed on a pedestal that carried a relief shaped as an emblem. In order to create public monuments, not always accepting them literally, sculptors used available photographs, often reproduced on postcards that imposed the generally accepted reception of the poet's image.³³ The bust with the image of Vojislav Ilić shows the poet with his head held up high and his gaze looking upwards, while certain dynamism was achieved in the presentation of his hair and his necktie fluttering in the breeze. The movements of the hair and his beard towards his spiritual face created a harmonious whole contrasted by a mild asymmetry of the garment's mass, thus creating a well-balanced dynamics of the overall solution.³⁴ The expression of the poet's face through which his inner being shows may be interpreted as an attempt to present the ephemeral moment of the poet's fervour, pensiveness caused by the poetic vision, contributed to by the accentuated eyes, that is, the gaze looking into the distance. All of this surpasses the real appearance of the poet's face which is, by emphasising certain elements, shaped in such a way that it suggests the idea of spirituality. The torso that narrows down as it descends leaves the impression of elevation, that is, of an apotheosis, which is additionally contributed to by the pedestal of the monument as the general trait of the monument rhetoric provided here in the form of a cylinder consisting of three parts that narrow down upwards, thus symbolically suggesting the ascension into the sphere of the metaphysical reality.³⁵

In the middle part of the pedestal there is a relief depiction which conceptually complements the memory of the poet, as well

- 3 Rudolf Rössler, "Poezija" ("Poesie"); Martin Gerlach, "Allegorien und Embleme," 1882, No. 71b (a detail)
3. Rudolf Rössler, *Poezija (Poesie)*; Martin Gerlach, *Allegorien und Embleme*, 1882, No. 71b (деталь)



³⁶ Тимотијевић 2000–2001: 206.

³⁷ Gerlach (ed.) 1882.

as an inscription with a dedication that clarifies the purpose of the monument: *To Vojislav. Committee of Young Women in Belgrade. 1903*. The relief shows a female figure in antique garment and with a lyre in her hands sitting on a sphinx, while opposite of her, on a pedestal beside which there are masks, there is another naked female figure with an open book in her hands. The two female figures constitute two personifications: the figure with the lyre personifies poetry, while the figure with the book is the personification of reading where her nakedness suggests purity and spirituality.³⁶ The female figure with the lyre represents the well known personification of poetry, often used in the new-age visual culture which could then be found in the well known and at the time influential illustrated handbook *Allegorien und Embleme (Allegory and Emblem)*, published by Martin Gerlach in Vienna in 1882.³⁷ The illustration

4. *Bust, a detail of the monument to Vojislav Ilić, sculptor Jovan Pešić*

4. *Појрсеје, дејтаљ на сјоменику Војиславу Илићу, вајар Јован Пешић*



³⁸ Gerlach (ed.) 1882: T 71b

³⁹ Срејовић, Цермановић 1992: 310–311.

⁴⁰ Павић 1971: 275.

⁴¹ Ниће 1981: 8.

number 71b, made by artist Rudolf Rössler, consisting of two allegoric depictions – poetry and prose, shows the *Poetry* (*Poesie*) as a sitting female figure with one hand placed on a lyre decorated by flowers, while holding a mask by her other hand. This depiction is joined by a Cupid on the left-hand side, while on the top there is a star as a symbol of the glory of poetry.³⁸ The lyre itself used to be a well-known antique symbol of poetry linked to Orpheus, the mythical poet who revealed the divine secrets to the men and whose magical poems prevailed over the forces of darkness and death.³⁹ The appearance of the antique motifs on the monument may at the same time be linked to Ilić's relation towards the antique poetry and the presence of the motifs such as lyre or muse in his poems.⁴⁰

The personification of reading may suggest the knowledge it provides, that is, the recognition of the impulse of the inner life that is encouraged by reading (poetry). At the same time, the nakedness of the figure with the book suggests sincerity, the free and pure poetry that leads to the truth. The belief that poetry opens the roads into the primal chambers of the soul, characteristic of Symbolism, presented poets as those who were capable of transfiguring their mundane feelings into otherworldly experiences, translating the experienced into verses. Because of this the poet is seen as a preacher of the truth or, to put it in Friedrich Nietzsche's words, *the groom of the truth*.⁴¹ The unspeakable primordial idea, the eternal truth, the knowledge of which requires transcendental experience, may be sensed and experienced by reading poetry. At



5. Relief, a detail, Monument to Vojislav Ilić, sculptor Jovan Pešić

5. Релјеф, дејтаљ на сјоменику Војиславу Илићу, вајар Јован Пешић



6. Relief, a detail, Monument to Vojislav Ilić, sculptor Jovan Pešić

6. Релјеф, дејтаљ на сјоменику Војиславу Илићу, вајар Јован Пешић

⁴² Илић (без године): 157–159.

⁴³ Hofstätter 2000: 21–22.

the same time, like *Nuda Veritas*, the nakedness of the depicted figure symbolises the truthfulness of poetry and the purity of its spirit. The recognising of things as the symbols and signs of the inner life, like a *reflection of the truth*, is dealt with by the verses of Vojislav Ilić in his poem *Kleon i njegov učenik* (*Cleon and His Disciple*) from 1892.⁴²

In the structure of Symbolism, the mask appears with a dual meaning. While on the one hand it marks the annulment of humanity to the degree of indifference, it may on the other hand strengthen the expressiveness of a certain emotion or a mental state, while at the same time suggesting the inscrutability.⁴³ Ever since the Antiquity, when it was used in many rituals, the mask has had some kind of magical power to invoke invisible forces, while providing protection against them at the same time. Seen as

7. Relief, a detail, Monument to
Vojislav Ilić, sculptor Jovan Pešić

7. Рељеф, дејтаљ на сјоменику
Војиславу Илићу,
вајар Јован Пешић



⁴⁴ Срејовић, Цермановић 1992: 395.

⁴⁵ Жакић 2019: 140–141.

the mediator, as an object that enables connecting with the spiritual, in pointed in a symbolic way at the distancing from the real *self* and the learning of the inner, while the emotions, the instincts and drives became liberated and brought up to the level of consciousness. Poetry, that is, its reading, wakes the invisible spiritual forces and offers an insight into the inner world, while the masks constitute types of emotional reactions to the stirring up of the senses which poetry causes.

The special relation towards mythology within the system of Symbolism meant the use of mythological figures and legends that were attributed different meanings or they were put into a different context. Taken over from the Ancient Egyptian mythology with her apotropaic power and most often presented as a being with the face of a girl, the body of a lion and the wings of a bird, in the Ancient Greek mythology the sphinx becomes a beast that leads to the death all those who do not know the answer to her puzzle, as accounted by the story of Oedipus and the Sphinx.⁴⁴ As a horrible female monster, the divine being and the demon of death, the sphinx was characterised by sublime wisdom and intelligence, while because of its apotropaic power it used to be positioned in the form of sculpture to guard the entrances into shrines and temples, as a mystic guardian of the secrets.⁴⁵ Because of her inscrutability and enigmatic quality, the sphinx was a frequent motif in the structure of Symbolism, while in the arts from the end of the

⁴⁶ Борозан 2018: 45.

19th century her image, as a terrible hermaphroditic monster of female gender, was also linked to the concept of *femme fatale*, the dominant woman as the being of the *otherness* which is at the same time both terrifying and appealing.⁴⁶ The dual and contradicting nature of the sphinx – the animal and the human one, was emphasised in the culture of Symbolism which aspired at shedding light on the instinctual and impulsive side of the man in which rest the unconscious and puzzling forces that govern the emotions. In the relief the sphinx is shown as a hybrid being with the face and bosom of a girl, the body of a lion and the nemesis on the head, thus suggesting more the Ancient Egyptian variant. In the context of highlighting the poet and the poetry as the objective of the entire monument, the sphinx may be interpreted as the guardian of the mystic poetic world which carries the eternal secret within itself. The depicted personification of poetry that is sitting on the sphinx also talks about the eternity of poetry untouched by the earthly transience, for the ideas which poetry carries in itself dwell in the infinite space of the universe and transcend the temporal limitations.

The elements shown in the relief constitute separate symbols not joined in a narrative or in a clearly defined theme, but rather they find their unity in the idea. Each one of the elements, as a symbol of a multi-layer meaning, constitutes a part of the conceptual whole which suggests the timelessness of poetry and the poetic spirit, thus confirming the presence of the ideas of Symbolism.

The concept of the monument seen in this way corroborates the presence of the Symbolist trends in the Serbian society at the beginning of the 20th century and points at the new ways in which a part of the monument culture was shaped. The memory of the poet, which carried the spirit of poetry in itself, allowed for such an expression which differed from the clearly expressed and simplified message present in most of the 19th century monuments. The national character of the monument defined by the original purpose, as well as the space within the Kalemegdan Park's alley of the greats where it is located, was expanded by the addition of the relief with the Symbolist concept thus creating a possibility to view the monument to the famous poet within broader horizons. In line with the main ideas of Symbolism, turned towards abstract entities, the conceptual idea is marked by the associative character that aspires to point at the universal meaning. Thus, the poet is no longer only a national hero, but also a symbolically seen visionary whose poetry surpasses the spatial and temporal horizons.

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СИМБОЛИСТИЧКА КОНЦЕПЦИЈА СПОМЕНИКА ВОЈИСЛАВУ ИЛИЋУ НА КАЛЕМЕГДАНУ

Споменик песнику Војиславу Илићу, дело вајара Јована Пешића, подигнут је у складу са конституисањем националног пантеона, који у српској средини последњих деценија XIX века посебно убраја заслужне појединце чије је рад припадао областима културе и језика. Реализован је залагањем Одбора београдских девојака и свечано откривен 1904. године. Нашавши своје место у оквиру Калемегданске алеје великана, споменик Војиславу Илићу разликовао се својом идејном концепцијом, која се може сместити у оквире уметности симболизма, упућујући уједно и на упливе модернизма у српску скулптуру. Попрсју са песниковим ликом постављеним на постамент, као устаљеном решењу за споменике овог типа, додат је рељеф, чија композиција концептуално употпуњује меморију на песника. Идејна замисао амблематске рељефне представе показује одлике сложене структуре симболистичке уметности. Схваћен више као стање духа него као специфичан уметнички стил, симболизам је настојао да познатим језиком и уз коришћење визуелних симбола са новим значењима и постављеним у другачији контекст, сугерише на унутрашњи, духовни свет. Као уметност која је одбијала примарни фокус на репрезентацији видљивог и материјалног, симболизам пренет у домен скулптуре довео је до напуштања искључиво формалних функција скулптуре, чинећи да дело постане симбол шире, универзалне идеје. Рељефна композиција, коју чине персонификације песништва и читања, приказане у виду женских фигура, садржи и фигуру сфинге, хибридног бића старог света, као и представу маски, познатих мотива коришћених у култури симболизма. Везу са симболистичким изразом потврђује и одсуство наративне функције ове представе, која спаја различите елементе, односно симболе, стварајући јединствену идејну целину. Сједињене у идеји о ванвременској поезији и песнику као визионару, представљене фигуре визуализују општи израз песничког духа, са којим кореспондира и израз његовог лица на бисти, представљен у тренутку визионарског, песничког заноса. Тиме се надилази искључиво национални карактер споменика, дефинисан наменом и положајем у оквиру националног меморијала. Алегоријско-симболични карактер рељефа чини ово дело сведочанством о присуству симболистичких тенденција у српској скулптури на почетку XX века, са којима се поистовећује и касно песништво Војислава Илића, у коме су препознати први наговештаји симболизма у српској књижевности.