

SACRED SIGHTS IN B. FUNDOIANU'S POETRY

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Abstract: In an original tone, the poet's cosmogony highlights the feeling of consubstantiality and becomes part of a renewal ritual through its immersion into the primeval nature. The poet's peace of mind evokes primordial times and he perceives himself as connubial to the prime matter, gaining identity through divine will while being fascinated by the sacred forces of nature. On the whole, B. Fundoianu's poetry speaks of the believer's confession before the altar, who, through admission of all his known sins, asks forgiveness for the unknown ones, hinting at a postulate about the human nature with its imperfection, which he does not call down to the Creator, but keeps confined to himself as an archetype of the existential tragic. With a tempestuous soul, typical of his generation, Fundoianu remains captive to a universe which is constantly threatened by the terror of war. The return to God – seen as a place of exile for all tormented souls – is the only way to regain hope, through detachment from the tragic existential condition. The evolution of the sacred feeling, recalls memories of northern Moldavian homeland, which are articulated on the archetype of universal values to which he permanently relates.

Keywords: consubstantiality, confession, prime matter, resacralization, creation, tragic feeling.

Călinescu enclosed Fundoianu, next to Ion Pillat, Ilarie Voronca, Radu Gyr, D. Ciurezu, Zaharia Stancu and Teodor Murășanu in the chapter **The Traditionalists**, within the **History of the Romanian literature**, concluding that “traditionalism is a form of modernism”¹. Even though he had affinities with modernism, the poet's inspiration appears to Lovinescu as “traditional, rural (...) where the only modern elements are the accent and the exciting notations, slightly influenced by Arghezi.”² Ov. S. Crohmălniceanu enframes him within the chapter **Avanguardistic lyric**, next to his friend, Tristan Tzara, in his book **Romanian literature between the two world wars**.

Both traditionalist and modernist, the poet of Herța is included by Constantin Ciopraga in the chapter **Interfering reliefs**, being described as an artistic personality defined by a “tragic anxiety.”³ Thus, without imposing a unanimous opinion as far as his place within the Interbelic literature is concerned, Fundoianu is one of the controversial personalities, having one of the most shocking human and artistic destinies. In this existential context, the feeling of the sacred becomes obvious, comparing the human being to his own destiny.

His cultural journey in the magazines of those times, **Viața nouă**, **Cronica**, **Adevărul literar**, **Rampa**, but especially his training at the Lovinescu's **Sburătorul literar** pushes him into the literary universe of his times as a “genius of the paradox”, as Lovinescu used to name him. Recognising his bright intelligence and his refined culture, the critic – born in Iași – writes about him in the rubric “The Chronicle of the ideas”, where Fundoianu shines. This

¹ G. Călinescu, *The history of the Romanian literature*, Minerva Publishing House, Bucarest, 1985, p. 864

² E. Lovinescu, *The history of the contemporary Romanian literature*, Minerva Publishing House, Bucarest, 1978, vol. 2, p. 320

³ Constantin Ciopraga, *The poets' amphitheatre*, Junimea Publishing House, Iași, 1995, p. 288

position allowed him to express what Lovinescu called “spiritual arrogance” and “ostentatious independence”; his opinions on the value of the Romanian literature are related to Eminescu’s complex cultural personality. Fundoianu is the first which states that Arghezi descends directly from the genius of Ipotești. This opinion, made public in January 1923, appears in the 29th number of **Contimporanul**.

In the same year, a special event takes place in the poet’s life – his leaving to Paris, an expatriation which will eat up his soul; this is the point where he starts to write poetry and essays in French, but he will never abandon the Romanian spaces, especially the north Moldavian spaces, where he lived as a child and then as a teenager. The French environment is fit for his spirit, bringing into the light, in the same time, the souvenirs of Herța.

Complex personality, anchored in the modern spirit, but also loyal to the traditionalist values, where ever he went he aimed at “capturing and re-dimensioning the archaic impulses”, which explains “a quasi-religious feeling of the existence” at Fundoiaia estate, where he identifies “biblical reverberations”.⁴ Deeply introvert, tormented by the historic times of the First World War, he writes in 1917 a meditation about the man involved in the torrent of events, regardless of his will. It is in fact a kind of response to the well-known text written by Arghezi, *Evening prayer: The cosmogony is poetry / I would throw into the fire the entire universe / If only he could find another / In order to eternally sculpt my thinking, / I am the goal and the end of the earth; the millennium/ He sees his goal through me ... (Philosophy)*.

Opening the volume *The views* (1930), the poet intends to express a warning, a response to those who said that his poetry is inspired from Francis Jammes: “*These verses were born in 1917, during the war, in the small Moldova, in a fever of growth, of destruction. (...) the description didn’t follow a real pattern, but it was born out of the darkness of the night, as an intimate protest against the mechanic landscape made of bullets, wires and tanks.*”

The return to the worn nature back from the cruel historical time, through the evasion of the technicist age, pushed Călinescu to notice the fact that the poet “*disregards the painting and exalts the senses which bring together man and interior life of Creation, the smell, the touch*”⁵, showing obvious expressionist shades, also identified by Ov. S. Crohmălniceanu.⁶ Nature penetrates his soul, overwhelming him and printing on the retina of his memory only those images which stimulate the senses, being associated to interior experiences. The smell of rain floating in the Moldavian village, “the wind, the sand” provoke a real phenomenon: *The village smells like rain, autumn and hay/ The wind is blowing hot sand into the lungs, / [...]/ Carts driven away by rain passed by, / And silence is molding in things...” (*Herța*)*

Profane space, the village functions in the sacred universe of a “nature in a permanent explosion of elementary and aggressive vitality”⁷. The cows, the pigs, the oxen populate this landscape, evoking, through their presence, the wilderness, far from being cosmic but pure, through its extra-vitality. The expressionist accents do not leave the verses, emphasising the torments of the world, the nature soul, subject to change, just as it happens with the Genesis: *The earth comes forward, snitches,/ Grows in holes, climbs on the wall,/ And fat, it stretches for a second time/ Over the conquered asphalt. (Province III)*

Original, the cosmogony proposed by the poet is not a well-defined one; at any moment, Creation wobbles and the World becomes chaotic, just like in a game, determined maybe by the inspiration of Arghezi, which means recreating everything out “of a little spit

⁴ *ibidem*, pp. 292-293

⁵ G. Călinescu, *op.cit.*, p. 865

⁶ Ov.S.Crohmălniceanu, *Romanian literature and expressionism*, Eminescu Publishing House, Bucarest, 1971, p. 398-399

⁷ *ibidem*, p.398

and earth”: *the road as a sole, is broken by rains / The pigs with flake souls pass through mud, / The ugly pigs go for a sleep in mud/ Letting the chaos get us again. (Herța V) The Universe is not picturesque and the texts are not simple pastels; integrated in the landscape, the poet feels like he is part of it and participates in a true ritual of refreshment.*

In *Simple prayer*, his voice pronounces magic words, as he does in *Paparudele* or in *Caloianu*; his charming begging tone transposes the earth in a superior plan, equal to a tutelary divinity: Rain, wash the earth of good dung, / have mercy of earth, rain, of your hurricane.” (*Simple prayer*) The effect is miraculous; a spectacular transformation of the human being directs the thinking towards the powers of the earth and gives birth to a natural question: “God is, I wonder, the earth-itself?”: *If I did not know that it is autumn, I would believe that I am full / Of pus on my shell. (Romance II) the same atmosphere appears in the verses: Light might as well fall down, / Deep into the lake and on the melons-/ And the light which can fall into you. / If you come tonight, / Ripe me well, God, in the fields, as a melon. / And break me in the coming autumn. (Other views)*

In the poem *How simple...*, the presence of the divinity in every wonder of the nature and especially in the miracle of fertility, is confirmed: *In the season, you feel God’s step/ And he counts his earnings: / Corn-flower for the people and food for the goldfinches. (How simple...)*

If the village is a claustic space, a monotonous and hybrid landscape, the nature offers the chance of total liberty, of nothingness, without giving birth to fears and reluctance. The silence of the soul evokes primordial times, and the poet considers himself part of the original matter, which acquires little by little identity, through the divine will: *In the young spring / My soul is wet with so much sun / Like a virgin summer melon, / Full of seeds and freshness. / I would like to break the windows of my body, / My eyes closed down with a cold look, / Sit into me like in a hive / The blonde sun with the smell of balm. (Other views)*

Fascinated by the sacred powers of nature, he would like to be part of it and, at the end of the volume, he is talking to himself in front of an omnipotent and distant God. Accents of Argezi’s psalms ornate his poetry with the feeling of the creation mood; feeling guilty for daring to praise the divine, unspeakable beauty of nature, Fundoianu confesses: *Maybe I was wrong, Father, when I praised your nature/ Good and clean just like in the old paradise. (Views)*

The escape in the middle of nature and the immersion into the original matter offers him the chance to discover the magical power of water, principle of Genesis; activating it, cosmicisation can be redone. He himself confesses that the war is guilty for his refuge in the original matter; the newly created universe will be capable to invent “the mystic exaltation of death in bread”. (*The psalmist*)

A supreme force, overwhelming through **fascinans**, but also through **tremendum**, pushes him towards the dialogue. The words do not have the courage of Argezei’s verses, but they rather have Crainic’s piety. His humble and crying eyes beg, and his words have an imperative tone, just like the one of a prayer: *I did not understand, oh, God, what it was/ The angel wing which above me / At the time when oxen are put to work./ But instead of asking the richness of the rain / In the arid land,/ In order to wash my darkest sins,/ I tell you nonsense, I sin again / And I make you send another storm [...]/ Let us talk for a while. (I didn’t get it, oh, Lord...)* The appreciative tone continues, stating the poet’s position in relation with the divinity; this is fretting attitude, deeply Christian, in the spirit of the mentor of **The thinking**, but also in the spirit of the mystic thrills of Teresa de Avila. The text is as solemn as a true **Te Deum**: *Oh, forget/ And let me clean my harp/ And let me sing a hymn to you, / In which to say that you are great and big/ And I will search for this hymn in the*

temple./ Oh, let me contemplate you./ Let me admire you and your creation/ And let me rise to you like the sea / Rises as a snake to the moon (s.n.). (I didn't get it, oh, Lord...)

Acquiring spiritual elevation, he will not adopt a too daring subterranean attitude towards God; he will not try to race with Him and he will not try to be Him; the comparison of the gesture with the elevation of the snake converts in a subtle way the human being into a possible demonic force which enters in relation with the moon, the fertility tutelary star, a religious symbol of the human existence.⁸ Thus, the gesture acquires the resonances of a ritual of refreshment, aiming at a pious approach to God. The poet imposes to himself a kind of purgatory, a compulsory stage on the way from profane to sacred. **David's unique Psalm** is accompanied by psalmic incantations and appreciative tones. This text has common points with verses from **The hymn - Prayer at the Burning Stake of Mother Mary**, written by Sandu Tudor in 1947, at the Antim Monastery, in Bucarest. The refrain bears aphrodisiac resonances, sign of the wisdom of man convinced of the existence of a tutelary force: *You are, oh God, One and only One ...*

All in all, the poetry is the confession of the believer in front of the altar, who, confessing his known sins, he also asks for forgiveness for his unknown ones. Still, the influence of Arghezi determines the suggestion of an axiom about the human being, about his imperfections, which the poet do not reproaches loudly to the Creator, but he keeps it within himself as an archetype of the existential tragic: *You are the one who makes me ignorant,/ I cannot understand your greatness which can be found / In leaves, in wind, in stars, in eternity,/ You, the one who lets my thoughts, just like e deer,/ Sit still, in the grass,/ You, the one who does not tell me the meaning/ Of the stars. (s.n.)*

Speaking to God, the poet hopes that the monologue will eventually turn into a dialogue and in the same spirit specific to Arghezi, he hopes that the man will understand the materiality of the divinity. In **Adam's Psalm**, the pantheist notes sustain the existence of the supreme power, surprised in the elements of the universe; a sacralisation of the spaces takes place, and the distance from man to God erases little by little, giving the feeling that the dialogue is finally possible: *I know it, God, I know very well that you stayed here/ In a cicada, I know, or maybe in some lavender... (Psalm)* The atmosphere specific to Blaga, in which God is, just like Pan, the god of vegetal and mineral, the superhuman force which, through its power, raises nature to the rank of chthonian divinity.

In 1917, a year rich in psalms, the author of **Views** makes some reproaches concerning his carelessness towards the details of the human life, proposing a human way of looking at the world in the rural space: *It is more beautiful in the countryside, God, the place where you can sit in the sky;/ But me, in your place, God, I look at the red ants/ And I meditate about the dandelion as you meditate about life. (Psalm)* The elements of the decor appear vertically and merge with the cosmic boundlessness; the present time covers the sky, and the meaning of the human being way reconstitutes the ladder which bounds the profane to the sacred ("mediocre life" to "flower petal, polished with smell soul"), the finite to the infinite.

In **Sulamita's Psalm**, the man receives, in his clay pot, the God's spirit, adopting a **teandric** tone, in the Christian manner proposed by Nichifor Crainic⁹: *But you, you know well that this is not a sin / It is not a sin to wash yourself beautifully and often, / As if I wash myself, in fact I wash you, God / And if use chrism, I use it for You, / And if I burn incense, I do it for your soul.*

Being convinced that the work of God is a form of art and God is an artist, the poet dares to join Him, as he sees this common passion which brings them together, human being

⁸ Cf. Alfred Bertholet, *The dictionary of the religions*, Publishing House of the Alexandru Ioan Cuza University, Iași, 1995

⁹ Cf. Nichifor Crainic, *The nostalgia of the paradise*, Moldova Publishing House, Iași, 1994

to human being; the supreme power becomes more human through revelation, without letting go of the divine prerogatives. In the same psalm, the poet concludes: *Loving the beauty, I love you in it.* (s.n.)

Philosophising, in the same 1917, he identifies the existential limits which define him and considers himself a god; apparently, the sacred powers seem to overwhelm him: *I am the aim and the end of the earth; the millennium/ I am the one who helps him see his target and understand his genius/ And often, pensively, I wonder deeply/ If I also come from the skies and I am a god as the sour cherry tree is.* (s.n.) (**Philosophy**)

It seems that the certitude concerning his own divine powers is the result of his prayers in **The psalmist's prayer**, which dates from the 10th of April, 1915. At that time, at only 17 years old, the young man declared: *My heart is a wound and my soul is broken. / A large sunset sits bleeding in it.*

A tumultuous soul, consonant with the generation he belonged to, he stays captive in a universe where the terror of war was planning in a threatening way. The returning to God – seen as an exile place for the tormented souls – is the only way of regaining hope in the disappointment of the tragic existential condition. The poet's verses are a pious prayer and in the same time they confirm the existence of the divinity: *Have mercy, oh, God, and help me!/ Be the oasis which makes the Saharan way to flourish/ Be the wine which foams in the glasses/ And be the spring of my thirsty soul.*

Speaking about his evolution, Constantin Ciopraga considers him “a wanderer in the world, among the books, never reaching his target.”¹⁰ *My word creates, if it wants, a God/ And my word can also dethrone Him/ I live the blind life of a generation/ And as I look far in the blue sky/ My earths all spin around me.”* (**Philosophy**) The evolution of the feeling of the sacred has, with Hertă's poet, substantial outlines with his native space back in the North of Moldavia, articulated on the archetype of universal values, to which he had always related.

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¹⁰ Constantin Ciopraga, *op.cit.*, p.302