

BABEȘ-BOLYAI UNIVERSITY

FACULTY OF LETTERS

PhD IN PHILOLOGY

**THE INFLUENCE OF BIBLICAL PSALMS IN MODERN ROUMANIAN
LITERATURE : VASILE VOICULESCU AND TUDOR ARGHEZI**

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THE INFLUENCE OF BIBLICAL PSALMS IN MODERN ROUMANIAN LITERATURE: VASILE VOICULESCU AND TUDOR ARGHEZI

The aim of the current thesis “The influence of the Biblical psalms on the Romanian Modern literature, respectively on Vasile Voiculescu and Tudor Arghezi poetry” is to determine the intertextuality between the Biblical Psalms and the modern Romanian Psalms of Voiculescu and of Arghezi. The two categories of analysed texts are therefore taken through a process of juxtapositions and interconditionality.

The Book of Psalms is one of the most read and referenced books from the Christian ritual mainly because the modern reader can easily identify himself or herself with the itinerary described by the vetero-testament authors. The 150 lyrical renditions of the relation between the human creature and the divine comprise a large diversity of feelings, emotions, sentiments varying from the deepest form of desolation to the most exuberant expression of happiness, or to the truest disparaging cry when he or she is being denied access by the sacred.

In the first chapter, we undertake a quick review of the exegete literature focusing on the Biblical Psalms, with the inter-conditionality between the biblical poetry and its Jewish liturgical context. In the annex, one can find the biblical poetry classification as per renowned biblical exegetes.

The second chapter deals with identifying the psalmic archetype present in every lamentation, regardless of its cultural Jewish or Romanian tradition. We will focus on three main common characteristics for both texts, Voiculescu’s and Arghezi’s: the psychology of the homo religious, the geographical and temporal mythical coordinates, and the continuous metamorphosis of the divine.

Firstly, the religious phenomena, irrespective of its various manifestations, it will always inherently imply a religious way of living through which the man experiences the divine in his proximity. Most often, this perception is not a linear process, and it incorporates upward or downward variations, as we also see them reflected in “*the night of the mystics*”. Precisely because of the strong influence of the affects, the encounter with the Sacred is so ineffable.

Secondly, the geographical coordinates of a religious encounter as reflected in the Psalmic literature implies a delimitation between a sacred space and a profane space, between a structure following the horizontal principles of the human existence, and one following the principles of the verticality, respectively the accession to another Ultimate reality. The personal epiphany happening in front of Moises’ eyes, will later on turn into a national theophany, as marked by the consecration of concrete sacred places such as Jerusalem Temple and Horeb

Mountain. One can infer thus that any Christian religious architecture will keep the same principle of divine contamination.

The journey towards the Center represents the obsession of any homo religiosus, for only this pilgrimage can deplete one of the existential void and complete him with the fulfilment of the Sacred. Such is the case with Jacob's ladder, the Holy Mountain and the Sacred Tree that are all transubstantiations of this concrete axis mundi, the Center.

The man will return to *Illo tempore*, the magical time of early beginnings, by following a series of traditions and rituals that will allow him to undergo a process of healing. It is in this illo tempore that profane element is suspended, the modernity and the tradition become complementary, and the collective religious memory of the biblical psalmists will be preserved in the Romanian psalmist tradition.

Thirdly, the sacred involves a separate set of norms and values, opposed to the profane world. Notably, not any emotional earthquake is a testimony of the presence of the sacred, says Wunenburger, while Rudolf Otto underlines that the irrational is inherent to any divine manifestation.

The 3rd chapter, the largest of the present thesis, is a textual analysis of the main works of the two Psalmic poets. Voiculescu's portrait is comprised of a series of occurrences: a medic without money, promotor of the Romanian culture, political prisoner on religious grounds, all of which predispose the author for an encounter with the Alterity.

We identified ten manifestations of the divine, each complimentary to each other. We briefly mention some of them, while you can find all the typologies expanded in the aforementioned chapter. The imaginary of a diamond forged out of an amorphous mineral by a craftsman deity that is actively involved in the forging, drilling, shaping of its object (*Ca pe un diamant, Minerul*). In the antipode, we identify a poetic imaginary of bewilderment facing a *deus absconditus* who causes man such suffering and anxiety. The fear of abandonment and of emptiness cannot be compensated by anything, which is why Voiculescu's wailings are in fact biblical echoes of the pit and of the abyss (*Părinte, unde să te caut, Dezlegare, De profundis, Tâlhă, Vânător, Spovedania, Vaier*); the imaginary of the Sower brings into the conversation the agrarian ecosystem, the harvest and the drought, the life and death intrinsic to the seed. Regardless of the type of seed, or tree or bulb used for the crop, it is only by invoking the deity that this will yield fruits.

On the other hand, *Deus otiosus* focuses on a deity that has decided to leave his creation and withdraw from it. Whether the threat emerges from the aquatic element (*Sufletul*) or from the telluric one (*Dezlegare*), Voiculescu cannot save himself through his own strengths and

that's why he invokes the deity. The poetic quest is one for a poetic imaginary of totality, for a God – *coincidentia oppositorum* in whom all the contraries co-exist. Such is the case with “*Nebunul*”, “*Suprema libertate*”, “*Contemporan*” where Voiculescu is undertaking the process of annulling the spatial and time boundaries that separate him from “the Entirety”.

In the case of Tudor Arghezi's poetry, we have identified eight lyrical masks, all of which revolve around the same theme: the encounter with the divine, and the struggle to guard it untainted. We will mention here just a couple of them: the rebellious psalmist who challenges the divine authority by asserting his own superiority (*As putea vecia cu tovarasie*) ; the God seeker (*Sunt vinovat ca am râvnit, Te drămuiesc în zgomot și tăcere*); the tree – psalmist involves an imaginary of the vegetal whose fertility or aridity vary in a direct proportionality with the presence or absence of the divinity.

Through the psalmic creations of the two interwar poets we see the existence of type of psalm of individual lamentation in the interwar Romanian literature. The resulting research question one might like to raise is whether the psalms of Stefan Augustin Doinas and of Lucian Blaga could be submitted to the same hermeneutical approach: what is the rapport between the divine and the creation in their lamentations, what is the soteriological perspective in Lucian Blaga's poetry? We are left with a lot of incertitudes, and we look forward to their conversion into certitudes

KEY WORDS

Intertextuality, biblical lamentations, poetical masks, hypostases of the divine, spatiality and temporality sacred, the psychology of the psalmist