SACRED AND PROFANE IN TUDOR ARGHEZI'S POETRY

The drama of the poetical knowledge

Arghezi's literary activity takes place for more than seven decades, in a variety of unprecedented media forms. Therefore, Arghezi has alternated poetry with journalism, he founded magazines and newspapers, and he wrote pamphlets, novels and short stories. It can be said that Arghezi was a unique and uncomfortable personality, even if he collaborated with numerous publications, he didn't actually adhered to them emotionally and intellectually. Just like Al. Macedonski before, Arghezi naturally goes through more schools and literary ages; so that we can say that he was connected with the literary movements of his epoch, without any of them being able to clearly claim him. Arghezi's debut was under the sign of the Parnassian influence, without neglecting several themes, places belonging to the Semănătorişti, but cultivated in a period when the orientation was dissolving (*Archaeology, Welfare, Writing on a country house*). The poems with which Arghezi draws for the first time attention are those from the cycle *Black agate*, a unitary poetical cycle, which does not excel through originality, from which the author will publish several poems in the volume. The inspiration and the tone belong to Baudelaire, existing also echoes from Eminescu, echoes that will remain until late in the poet's elegiac-sentimental creation. In these beginning verses are felt the social mutiny tonalities (*Evening prayer*). Arghezi consolidates in this first stage a wider reputation of a pamphleteer of a high verbal violence and of a total lack of respect towards the personalities of the epoch. It can be said that, in Macedonski's case, the man caused a lot of damage to the work of art. After the appearance of his own newspaper, *Parrot's notes*, the writer plenary states his double vocation: that of a poet and of a lyrical pamphleteer. The drama of the poet, resides at Arghezi, precisely in the very losing of the consciousness, of the self, of the individual, but also from the absence of an authentic way of communicating with the others. Although the general tone of Arghezi's lyricism is rather dark, the poet tries the experience of a lucid vision, ignoring the self illusion or the delusion. There is, on the other hand, radicalism in the problematic of understanding in Arghezi's poetry, which turns out to be his intellectual sub layer. The failure of this continuous effort of inner clarifying represents

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the drama that gives a unique tension to the poems and to the humanising of the lyrical self. The poet doesn't try at all to break free from the earthly inferno, to escape into the transcendental. For Arghezi a space of the metaphysical hypothesis, as stated before, does not exist or of onirical and evocative nostalgias. The poets' dreams are actually real nightmares, hallucinations, conflicting states between the lucidity of the consciousness and the fears of the unknown. Arghezi's drama is that of a courageous, restless and lucid consciousness, although always contradicted by a mundane reality. At the origin of the argumentative, nonconformist attitude of the poet, resides an overuse of the perceptions, on a general basis of understanding. The horrible sight and the exaggerated sensitivity equally fuel up the poet's art, but also the pamphleteer's. The satirical writer's laughter always triggers the moment when he captures the ridicule or the grotesque, borderline states of the human condition. The general attitude of the writer is an opposing one, of passionate relentlessness that sometimes exceeds its object. The poet is, therefore, at the antipode of the classical artist, he does not try to stop the impulses that come from his inner inferno. There are also oasis of calm beauty within Arghezi's universe, so that his heavenly space is the ideal one, that of simple nature, of the children, of the bugs and of the animals. The thinking, that the poet calls, in a verse, "poison" intervenes in this heavenly universe with its doubts and fears, so that this inherited paradise is only an ideal. In the context of his literary work, the poet is situated in a significant contrast with the regressive, nostalgic style of the spirits who are looking for "the poeticism" in intellectual or rational formulas. In 1961, Tudor Vianu shows that "Arghezi's historical role was to get over Eminescu's poems, still present in the work of many contemporary poets of his generation. The renewal of the Romanian lyricism, its taking away from the paths set by the influence of the *Star's* poet, is the most important consequence made by its affirmation from the second decade of our century". The volume *The right words* allows the approximation of the temporary levels, starting with the Parnassian and symbolist accents (*The mystical cup*, *Caligula)* to Eminescu's thoughts in the erotic elegies from *Black agate*. The cycle of the *Psalms* constitutes the dramatic nucleon of Arghezi's poetical vision. Man and God appear to be disputing without the possibility of finding a solution, filled with the fervour of the search and of identification. A profoundly religious poet, Arghezi assumes a paradox condition: of not

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accepting the belief, realising the impossibility of the living and of the authentic religious feeling outside the general belief.

The cosmic and the miniature become familiar dimensions of this lyricism that hesitate between the sweetness of childhood and the infernal toughness of the social visions. From the purity of the erotic mystery, to the metaphysical turmoil when facing death – the poet's consciousness has a winding way. Arghezi's poetical discourse manifests itself through the direct confession or through the most unexpected metaphorical structures, so that Arghezi's poetry is nothing like any tradition neither by syntax nor by style. *Mildew flowers* (1931) express the experience of detention, the poems can also be read in a symbolical register, as the waiting room for death, description of a conflicting universe, where the primal human instincts abandon the masks of the conventions and reveal the nakedness of desperation. The enclosed space (the monastery hut, the prison cell) transmits the fear of the aggression and the tendency to escape. The humanity of the *Mildew flowers* is attacked, and the common state of the lyrical self is that of a nightmare made up of monstrous figurations. In these poems the fantastic of the vision sets free grotesques figures, the human being replaced with the beastlike. The gallery of representatives is sublime: hallucinating persons, androgens, instable, people tortured by the idea of a sin imagine a world tormented by dreams, murders and wild instincts. Arghezi's eros is no longer melancholy similar to Eminescu's poems, but physiological fever, biblical temptation and nightmare of the senses (*Streche, Rada, Tinca*). The woman is, here, the embodiment of demon like, as seen in the loners' visions. In the big picture scenes from these volumes (*Dinner, Morning, The Dead, Prisons, The Convoy*) the idea of domination is raised to the dimensions of the human condition itself. The fantastic tendency is also present here, where life behind bars offers situations of a savouring reality, narrated, with a movement of the epic that hesitates between the pure picturesque and the suggestion of the chimera (*Chickens, Let the drum kill him*). Coming down from a modern hell, *Mildew flowers* also symbolises to set free an imaginary demon. With his contrasting imagination, the renegade from *Mildew flowers* returns to the familiar universe from *Little book for the evening* (1935) volume that can be considered a "book of the hours" written in a retraced, calm tone. The poetical accents purify here in a bucolical atmosphere similar to Vergiliu's, the poet finding again the pure emotion of a paradise like space, identified

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in the familiar universe of the domestic world, of living amongst plants and animals. The ceremony of love is transcribed in tones of ode, these "evening verses" being the expression of a naive, decorative and sort of minor drawing. The verses from *Horas* amplify this aphoristic point of view, of a graceful and fragile game. The game like perspective enhances, in *Horas* with a grotesque-pamphleteer perspective, a sign of the presence of the lucid moralist and of the observant of the social evil. "The horas" are also games imagined by the poet for his children, but under the game like-childish aspect of the verses, we can notice even the sarcastic accents, which cover the pamphlet or the Aesopian fable. The same ambiguity (suavity/grotesque) is a characteristic of his prose, from the novels *The eyes of Jesus' Mother, The cemetery Good-spread, Lina.* An important feature of Arghezi's poetry is the richness of the thematic register, as well as the diversity of formulas and lyrical methods. Arghezi is a protean poet, whose expressions always take on new faces, sometimes conflicting.

A fundamental theme of Arghezi's lyricism is that of the big, existential questions about man, represented by the *philosophical and moral* poem. This theme appears in all Arghezi's volumes, from *The right words* (1927) to the volume *The night* (1967). The best known poems that work with this theme are the *Psalms*. The notion of *psalms* goes through major changes, because Arghezi's psalms don't have an exclusive religious character and they do not resume to the attitude of praising the divine being. *The Psalms* are a philosophical poem where the poet asks himself a number of questions related to the meaning and the condition of man in the universe. The poet seems to be talking to a Heaven where God does not reside; he addresses an absence of the divinity. Faith combines with contestation. *The psalms* show an attitude of doubt and search, but also a dramatic situation, one of crisis of communication between man and divine. The poet's suffering comes from the fact that, not having a religious certainty, in his soul the unbearable consciousness of the loneliness that the human being has in the universe comes to life: "I am so lonely, God and across / Lonely tree forgotten in the field..." This absence of the Creator calls, with the help of long-lasting harmonies, for the presence of the creator. By not considering Heaven sacred any more, Arghezi sacralises simultaneously life, the human beings, the plants and the animals. Arghezi's paradise must be looked for on Earth, among the most humble beings, and not in bare Heaven, where nobody lives. In the poet's

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imagination, Heaven is “caught in nails” and “padlocks”. God is the Lord, the Father, the Dad but also Somebody, Someone, Nobody, Who knows who. For Arghezi, outside of life, that represents the ultimate good of man, there is no precipice, no death. Arghezi’s philosophical lyricism is the place for dramatic questions, with no answer, of inner struggles of the poet with himself, of sentimental tortures, but also of the joy of living. Another important theme of Arghezi’s poetry is love. In the beginning poems (*Melancholy, Autumn, Breaking up, Lost bones*), Arghezi cultivates a sort of erotic elegy inspired from Eminescu, where meetings and separations of the lovers asre provoqued in an autumn monotonous atmosphere.

The volume which contains the most erotic poems is *Little book for the evening* from 1935. In this volume’s poems, the poet imagines the terrestrial space like a heavenly space where the lovers live in complete harmony with the world, with the creatures. Arghezi’s paradise is a religious and pagan one, the result of a cosmic vision. Love is regarded by the poet simultaneously in its spirituality and its material form. In this universe, the woman appears like a graceful deity who communicates directly with the creatures of the world. In the poem *The Bride* the calling in nature is done by the man who says words of a fascinating ritual. Arghezi cherishes the feminine beauty (that of the “velvet eyes”, “eyelids' hem” etc.). Arghezi’s love knows all the variety of attitudes, from the chaste, honest love to the firing sensuality. In many poems, love is presented like an illness, like an unreachable desire (the motive of the flying lover). The first volume representative for the social theme is *Mildew flowers*. In these poems, Arghezi becomes the echo of the “aesthetics of the ugly”, widening the sphere of artistic expressivity to the areas considered so far anaesthetic. *Mildew flowers* represent, as previously mentioned, the biggest work to “recover” the ugly from the Romanian literature. Jargon, abject, delicate, suave words intermingle in an extremely expressive poetic language. The mentioned environment is that of the slumber, of prison, presented in different visions: grotesque and bitter or ironic. The aesthetic recovery of this degraded existential environment has to be understood also as a moral recovery, so that, just like there is an aesthetic beauty in the “ugly” sides of the existence, in the same way there is a morality in the degradation and in the filthiness. Man is retrievable, no matter how low he got – here is one of the sub textual ideas of *Mildew flowers*. Arghezi’s social lyricism is much more comprehensive.

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In the poem *Testament*, for instance, "the book" is regarded as the inheritance of a long tradition, the tradition of the many, from whose language "with advice for cattle" the poet manages to find "the right words". In *1907 – Landscapes,* Arghezi gathers more paintings that make out a narration in verses of different moments and characters of the 1907 mutiny. The atmosphere of the mutiny is made by a summation of various procedures (the satire, the political pamphlet, the elegy and the description etc.). The social poem the most important in length and intentions is *Singing to the man*, a sociologic poem where the author traces the origin and the evolution of man on Earth, "through ages, decades and millenniums". The birth and the evolution of the social man allow the poet to use verses where he praises innate talents of man and his aspiration to reason. *The theme of the game* (of the seed and of the crumb) is one of the most meaningful in the entire creation of Arghezi. The game is a central motive in Arghezi's work. In the verses and the prose from *Weeds, Tokens, The book with toys, What do you have against me, wind? ,* Arghezi imagines a miniature, childish universe, filled with delicate creatures. The world from these verses seems to be copying the real one, at a smaller scale. By shrinking things even the parody of serious elements, Arghezi simulates the dimensions of the concrete reality, revealing new meanings. Besides the visionary, fantasist poet there is also a craftsman poet, who stands out through an inexhaustible linguistic mastery, by unpredictable associations, by an unexpected, own syntax. Unlike the other modern poets, where the word is a *sign* related to the intellect, Arghezi is a sensual person with a primitive voluptuousness; ready to use the touch, the sight and the other senses, to enjoy of the mater's concreteness: "The word is like the rock or it is soft like the snail. They attack like the wasps or they comfort you like the cold, they squash you like the sponge or they caress you like the rosy dew". Arghezi's originality of the poem does not result from the statistical frequency of archaisms and regionalisms, but from their rhythm. The chanting from the *Welfare,* the metaphorical monologue from the *Spiritual,* the symbolic-allegoric form from *Linger***,** all these take their sap almost entirely from the popular lexical basis. Balancing wondering between earth and transcendently, Arghezi is not per say a poet of nature, although this dimension is present. Therefore, *the mountain*, *the eagles*, *the sea*, *the tree* have a symbolic significance, just like *forever*, *the light*, *the mystery*. The picturesque images, the chromatic nuances are oriented

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towards refinement and tenderness. Similarly to Blaga and Sadoveanu, the biblical savour tends to create an atmosphere of a genuine myth. Just like Eminescu, Arghezi invents some verbal forms, when he adds to the feeling a necessary nuance ("the ink pot", "barren Golgota", "boyish girl", "the afternoons" etc.). Arghezi does not have an equal concerning the metaphoric language. Demigod, creator of possible worlds, with the help of the *created word*, the poet tends to measure with *the firry word* of nature. Poet of fundamental questions concerning the existence, moralist and creator involved in the social problems of his time, Arghezi enrols in the highest trajectory of the Romanian verse. His creation represents a decisive contribution to the development and renewal of the Romanian lyricism, both by problematic and the artistic means used.

Sacred and profane in Arghezi's *Psalms*

As in most of Arghezi's *Psalms*, that dialectic of prayer and unwillingness to forgive, of humility and ego shapes up in the psalm *I could live forever if accompanied...,* as we find the antinomy sacred/demon like, antinomy that comes from the poet's God like temper, overwhelmed by the materiality of the world, but on the other hand, trying to discover the religious truth, to reach spirituality, God. In the first lines the poet notices an inadequacy between the insufficient linguistic instruments that he has – words- and the unlimited, surrounded by mystery space, which he has to designate: Transcendence. The Godliness cannot be written through the poetic vocal, the divinity always escapes the poet's attempts to set it in verse. Therefore, the poet is in a permanent search for new lyrical ways capable to capture something from God's aura, but in the same time his own turmoil related to the opposition between his perishable, ephemeral condition and the boundary free horizon where the divinity subscribes: "I could live forever accompanied / To take her partner in my thoughts;/ New violins to charm, a new melody / To find – and fast, difficult verses. // anyway, the band can play, / If a press the bow, if I pinch its strings. / A restless heavenly passion / My arm twitches, my soul burns". To the irrepressible need to put down in the verse the interior turmoil or the godliness burning it matches, in the second part of the psalm a movement of rebellion, of mutiny against a God who calls, at some point, to death so many earth like beauties ("The woman's body, the embraced one, / I will not bring to you, soft and mellow; / Only the suffering of the sky, too bad /

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It's not there to stir Jordan's water"). The last stanza of the poem is a comeback, after the previous heightening moment, to the world of darkness and rotten, of atrocious materiality and of enclosed suffering into the infernal circle of the body: "I want to die in darkness and rotten, / Not bothered by slave, determined and sickened. / And don't let them know that you used to comfort me / And that inside me you used to live". The Psalm shows the reader several contradictory lyrical attitudes, one of heightening, of stamina to God and another one, an opposing one of seclusion in the darkness of the body, but also a titanic mutiny facing a given unbearable. In the psalm *I am so alone, my God and crooked! ...* Arghezi's specific attitude towards divinity is noted: that of isolation, of not being able to do anything and of resignation, of having been gifted and a pointless aspiration towards a sky that remains "closed" that does not send any sign to the one who is waiting cold, thirsty for the divine fruit. The word "crooked" together with the epithet "alone", plastically characterises the position he admits in the non limitation of the universe: the exceptional one, of thinking out of the box, of surpassing the norms and the natural, of being situated at the edge, at the boundaries of the world. The poet resembles a tree with bitter fruits, lacking the beauty and the force, a tree situated at the outskirts of life, almost mortified, waiting for small tokens and songs, proofs of life and of good fruit: "I am so alone, my God and crooked! / Stranded tree forgotten in the field, / with bitter fruit and with leaves / thorny and rugged. // I long for the chirpy bird / To stop on its way, / To sing inside of me and to fly away / Through my shadow of smoke. // I am waiting for small token of affection, / Small songs of sparrows and martin/ To be given to me, / Just like the fruit trees that taste good. // I don't have pink nectars of am, / Not even the aroma of the first sour grapes, / And captured deeply between forever and the fog, / The soft caterpillars won't stay on my rind". The aspiration to the divine tremor is, therefore, that of a being who discovers with painful lucidity its own frailty and limitation in the patterns of an ephemeral body. The poet has in the poem *My prayer is without words* secret shivering and unheard harmony in a delicate and sober verse. In Arghezi's vision, the word is incapable of remembering the divine's final mystery, to express the ravishing settlements of God, to be in a total communion with the high stature, unenclosed of the transcendental. The silence, as a major power of the untold messages, but present *in nuce* in the undefined absence of the word

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is the best way to express the divine unsaid, to sustain the communion with the eternal being: “My prayer is without words, / And the song, my God, is without voice. / I don’t ask you of anything. I remind you of nothing. / From your eternity I am not even a clock. // Not even the prayer, maybe, it is not a prayer, / Perhaps not even my man is human. / I burn to you slowly, like a brand, / I am looking for you mute, I imagine you, I think of you”.

The need to communicate with the deity is irrepressible. The poet, thirsty for certainties, wants to assume the knowledge of God in concrete-sensorial data. The heart of the poet, “opened with seven cups” is just like a receiver trying to get the divine gift, to transform in the highest and authentic way: “My eye is alive, my power is complete / And I gaze at you through your white clothing / So that my mind can understand / Without kneeling to the Earth. / The arrow of the night daily breaks its point / and daily reunites with metal. / My soul, opened with seven cups, / Awaits for a crystal peeping, / On a towel with light girdles”. The incertitude, the tormenting thirst for truth and light, the vocation of the fulfilment and the powerlessness to authentically communicate with the divine – all these states overlap in the intensity of the verse, offering spiritual tension and emotional dynamism to the poetry. The last stanza marks the state of purity where we await for the divine message, the clarity of thought and feeling of the poetic message (“All set for dinner, the table, / Remains set from lunch. / Oh my God, I am surrounded like a garden, / Where a foal grazes”). Thrilled by the rumour of transcendence, the poet tries new ways to communicate, to have a dialogue with a divinity that does not show up, that refuses to appear in all its fullness. The state of *deus absconditus* is best shown in the psalm *I don’t ask of you something very difficult...,* where the suffering comes from the *absence* of the divine. The horrible silence of the strengths, the cloth of eternity and the refuge in an oppressed historical time, the suggestion of extinction, of “decades that perish” put in value the consciousness of a lonely poet, who really feels the fear of not being and the pain of his own loneliness: “I don’t ask of you something very difficult / In my cold, desperate suffering. / If I started to pay attention to you, / I want you to talk to your slave more often. // Ever since the Holly Bible has been written / You didn’t step foot in here / The years fade away and the skies die / Here below you, underneath the sky”. The apocalyptical vision, that the poet envisages lyrically in this psalm results from the very perspective of the “not showing up” of the divinity. A taste of ash, an inert

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dynamic of negativity and a step back into the impure world of materiality are felt here. The shredding of the poet is the result of the absence of the sign coming from God. The poet does not feel at all a chosen one, therefore his drama, his suffering due to the lack of the divine message. The communication man/divinity is excluded or at least put under a question mark: "When the wizards followed a star, / you talked to them and it was possible. / When Josef had to go as well, / you found him writen in the papers / and you sent him an angel to guide him -/ and the angel stood there. / Your angels used to take care in those days / of the baby and the man with the woman. // only to me, the long-lasting and good God, / didn't send, how long have I been praying, nothing…" The poet talks about a time of regress, of decline concerning the dialogue man/divinity. The man cannot find the language that might define his own aspirations to the infinite, to the absolute; he lost his capacity of simply saying his own self.

The poet's prayer gets, in the psalm *I value you in noise and in silence,* the resonance of a scream and the lack of indulgence of an accusation. *Belief* and *patience* are the two attitudes that overwhelm the poet's soul, shared between the terrestrial space and eternity, between sacred and profane, between the ephemeral and precarious condition and the aspiration to the strengthens of the transcendence. A transcendence that does not reveal itself, but it always hides, camouflages its strength, retreats in an inaccessible space. The divinity does not favour communication between its creatures, leaving to them the perplexity of faith and negation, of begging and contestation. The rhetorical negations used by the poet in the first stanza have the very role of amplifying the tension created by man's powerlessness, of the humble creature's having a dialogue with divinity. The search is in vain, the prayer remains unanswered, all of these offering the poetic attitudes a taste of meaningless search ("I value you in noise and in silence / and I stalk you like a pray, / To see: are you my wanted falcon? / Shall I kill you? Or kneel and ask you. // For faith or for patience, / I look for you brave and in vain. / You are my dream, of all, the beautiful one / And I don't dare to take you down from the sky"). The entire restlessness of Arghezi's tormented spirit by the irreversible contradictions is found here, in these verses that claim the revealing of Divinity, of the dream "from all of them beautiful", a dream that remains unapproachable and undetectable. The revelation does not take place, the hydrophane is always postponed, and the sacred remains in disguise in the

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prosaic precarious magma. The tormenting sentimental torture comes from here: from the poet's weakness of having certitudes concerning God. Scattered in everything, the Divine does not reveal as itself, does not show his mightiness, enhancing the need for truth and the poet's thirst for the authentic: "Like the mirroring of a water road, / You appear to be or not to be; / I noticed you among the fish with the stars, / Like the wild bull when he grazes. // All alone now, in your big story, / I stay with you to measure myself some more, / without wanting to win. / I want to touch you and to scream: «There it is! »". The Demonic and dominant substrate of Arghezi's rational approach here is to shape the image of a poet tormented by the inner disturbing contradictions.

In the psalm *To touch you, crawling on the root,* Arghezi returns to his own artistic condition driven by straying and failures, by temporary days and the demonic of the destroying time. The thirst for the absolute and the powerlessness of being to your own expectations, the tension towards ideal and the impossibility to reach it are the structural data of Arghezi's poetical being that can be found in this psalm. The crisis state remains similarly affected both sentimentally and stylistically, the dialectic of the approach and of the distance to the divinity is still alive. We have to state out the fact that Arghezi's poetical language receives here an extra concreteness, a special power, by the use of terms with the taste of wine, the suggestion of the living, the dynamic of the empiric reality. "Crawling", "field", "coast", "ravines", "cliffs" etc. These are such words which offer effects of closeness to reality, of the world seen with passion, absorbed in the verse. Two instances collide here: that of the horizon and of frailty ("the straw") and that of verticality ("the cliff"). They are equally two existential and moral posts. One of the inert living, of the retraction, the other one of the daring, of the enthusiasm for the unknown, of severe interrogation: "In order to touch you, crawling on the root, / On many occasions I moved stems, / In the field, in the coast, in the ravines and on the top, / Alive when I climb and sad when I find myself there .// I was a straw and I made it on the mountain, / A tall and proud cliff that you make a bridge / On the heads, from the world to forever. / And I listened to the tic-tac beating". The last two stanzas bring onto the stage a different attitude, one of humiliation of the being that carries in himself the burden of so many tormenting questions, of the exceptional being that lives under the spell of "forever" and who wants to regain its humane, too humane condition ("I

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would humiliate myself now and I would pray: / Set me straight from my path. / Move from the fog the hand that the mountains have crushed / and, all together, bring it to my forehead"). The refuge in the world of art, in the interior universe brings a whole new different perspective: the poet considers that God can also be found inside the human being, under the form of a delicate and redeemed prayer.

Because he couldn't understand... might be the most pathetic psalm in Arghezi's work. The tone of the poem is that of a retained complaining, of the interrogation with the solemn and serious diction. If generically "the poet is foremost the man of the knowledge thirst" (N. Balotă), this psalm can be considered the insatiable search of the divine, search that does no longer have insurgent accents, doubt does not have the negating pathos of imprecation, and the dynamics of the lyrical discourse receives a certain god like posture. The poet's questions have now an unsettled melancholic air, just like the taste of the powerless knowledge is overwhelming, and the burden of the turmoil – relentless. God is first imagined in his will like posture, authoritarian and vindictive, of unimaginable dimensions, which the people have put in anthropological patterns: "Because he couldn't understand you / Their nothingness of dream and clay, / The Saints let me know they have seen you / and that you were wearing a stick and a whole beard. // You often let yourself seen by the creature / and always in emperor's clothes, / threatening and only upset, / that even the vultures were scared of you. // In Eve's paradise, through the forest, / Like in the sad forever that was to come, / Your holly mouth, all the Fathers know, / Only opened to curse us". The last two stanzas underline the pathetic side of Arghezi's religious feeling, a held pathos of a self tormented by shattering questions related to his own existence and regarding the rapport between being and Godliness. The humiliation takes the place of insurgence, and the absence of divinity challenges, as Nicolae Manolescu notices, "the unbearable consciousness of loneliness in the universe". The fervour of the interrogation turns into begging, and the search has more and more the character of an attempt to empathically identify the self with what is above human nature, the divinity: "Lord, my inspiration and my songs! / My hope and my labour! / From which alive seeds of stars / I try to freeze a grain of bead. // You are and have been more than naturally / you almost were, stayed and lived, / you are like a thought, you are and you aren't, / between willingness and memory". Withdrawn in his self, into the maze of

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the absolute callings, the poet will not stop expressing his doubts, anxieties, and the tormenting questions concerning his own being, over God and about his place in the infinity of the universe. The communication like a *deus absconditus* gradually turns into a monologue of knowledgeable exasperation, of the lack of god like significance.

Arghezi's eros

The feeling of love is explored in more registers by Arghezi: the carnal love, the domestic one, the suavity of falling in love, the demonic love and the sublimated one – all these instances of the feeling are found in the lyrics. *Morgenstimmung* is a poem in which the author catches exactly that undefined state, almost unreal of being in love, of love's exuberance, of the magic that brings together two beings until they are melted. The communion between the lovers is favoured by the "song", a song with colourful sonorities, that gets into the poet's locked "monastery": "You sneaked your song into me / One afternoon when, / The window of the soul, well bolted / Opened in the wind, / without knowing I will hear you singing. // Your song filled the entire building, / The drawers, the boxes, the carpets, / Like a loud lavender. Here you are, / the bolts got out, / and the monastery remained unlock." The dialectic of love, its fragile mechanism, the mixture of sensations and thoughts, of instinct and pure affection that are its composition can be seen here. The feminine presence is in the same time corporal, but also ideal; it has both suggestions and suavity belonging to the angelic, but also demonic accents, enveloped in a hallo of mystery, difficult to comprehend into the rationality's horizon.

The show of love once started gets more and more ample resonances into the poet's soul; it receives entirely new dimensions and accents. It is like a change of zodiac, a change of the paradigm belonging to the human being. The consciousness of the lyrical, retracted, "narrow-minded" self, as it has been noticed, reverberates acutely in the notes of the erotic feeling, when seeing the loved person, who appears accompanied by the elements of nature, which penetrate "the chamber of the closed universe". So love is accompanied by an acute, troubling notification of the outside world, of the exterior universe. The echoes of the feeling of love so powerful, drive us to a weakening of the certitudes prior to the poet's being, they move his ideas to a new register, that of sensitivity and permeability to the beauties of nature: "And maybe it would have been nothing / Unless he got in to dig, /

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with the song and your little finger, / that would caress the blackbirds on the keys -/ And all your being, up close. // With the thunder also came down the clouds / in the chamber of the closed universe. / The storm had brought the cranes, / the bees, the leaves … they are / wrecked, the beams, like flower's sheets". "The acknowledgement" of the loved one, about which Octavio Paz talks in *The double flame. Love and erotic* is produced through the body and the closed affects in an instinct of a subtle competence, an instinct that notices, like a seismograph of feelings, the irresistible attraction towards a certain person, the involuntary communion with him. Communion that is not made without a crash of the self identity with the being, without a deep disturbance, which reveals the soul giving it a new identity, a new existential contour, a new life. This is noticed, in a commentary, by Alexandru George, the author of an interesting monographic study dedicated to Arghezi (*The Great Alpha*): "The process of penetrating the beloved one in what the poet refers to as his locked monastery, takes in the third stanza the material shape of the digging. And to enhance the messy feeling that this irresistible and shroud invasion has done, the fourth stanza gives «the building » the shape of a raggedy ruin, without a roof". In the infallible substance of the feeling of love comes into play an acute sense of ephemeral; life and death come together here, the suffering and the pleasure come so close that we cannot tell them apart, up and down are in a paradoxical relationship of communion. The contingent and the absolute touch each other, life and death are a part of a disturbing feeling of love: "Why did you sing? Why did I hear you? / You vaporously lost yourself in me -/ not separated – in the skies. / I was coming from above, you were coming from below. / You were coming from the living; I was coming from the dead". *Morgenstimmung* is one of the most turmoil love poems of Arghezi. The sense of closeness between the two beings, the anxiety, the crash of self confidence, the ecstasy and the thanatos tremor, the revealing of new existential dimensions – all of the above are found in Arghezi's lyrics, where the abstract notions become plasticised into actual words, almost material, sensitive and almost corporal.

A poem of the miniature related to the erotic feeling, of the decorative and of the lexical game like come to life in *Linger*. It is not by chance that the poem's rhythm has folkloric resonances and accents of spell. Because love is shown here, like in the popular mythology, under the spectrum of mystery and the infusion of fantastic. The feeling of love is captured in a

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new instance: that of sickness, craving, and deep suffering that leads to lethargy of the being, to a deafening cureless pain. The addressing is direct, involved, mostly in the second person, with several constructions in the first and third person. Also the poem is characterised by a certain narration that puts in value a "pedagogical" finality of a universally recognised value. The poet feels sorry for "the girl" who, stung "in the top of her foot" lost her balance, her peace, her serenity, craving for something else. Under the empire of the feeling of love, the existential regime of the girl has changed; her being altered her allure, receiving new shades of life. We can talk about a slow, vegetative and vegetal living, of aboulic where we feel comfortable with all the changes that go on in his being, but which cannot be explained. The invasion of the feeling of love is also accompanied by anxiety and hope, of longing and unclear trust, of resignation and organic debility: "Our girl is sick, / Mine and the longings. / In her tiptoe / was stung with poison / by the thorn caught between lilies and laurel. // Girl, didn't I tell you / to wear the golden shoes, / to lock yourself into the tower, / to charm your paths, / to play with the Holy Spirit / and only with the dawns / to sit on the Earth? / Didn't I tell you to put at your heels/ Sulphide flower / and, just like the star, to caress / the thorns with light? / To be the flower that separates its / beauty from the dust / and lives up there, far away, / her one week life? / Didn't I tell you in the evening, in the morning, / all of the above, three times each? ". Then follows a descriptive passage, where the comparison that describes the regime of the illness is also from the vegetal area. The acute, silent, unknown, inexplicable suffering induced by the thrills of love is suggestively framed in a space of setting and miniature, with oriental resonances ("The girl lies down in bed, / Frail and sleepy / Like on a silver, expensive tray").

The next poetic sequence resides under the sign of hypothesis, of potential, of an "als ob". The poet imagines the making of the girl like a mixture of cosmic and terrestrial, of natural and supernatural. It is a fabulous image that resides under the sign of the fictional, with writings of rare words, with suggestions of precious stones and of unexpected sparkling; the pearls, the rubies, the topaz, the stars – are elements of such an unexpected gathering, from the fantastic and the setting domain. On the other hand, the miniature and the ample perspective meet, the sky and the Earth come together in a suggestive attempt to set the girl free from her illness and suffering: "I hadn't been from the beginning / To have made

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you myself, / with my fingers,/ from stars and rings!/ I would have put on you, so that you don't suffer, / eyelids taken from the water lilies, / eyes as big as a dew bean, / fireflies in new moon. / Your breasts, like two blackbird's babies, / I would have put each of them in a pearl. / and on every check / a ruby or a topaz". The last part of the poem represents an acceptance of the girl's earthling condition, and implicitly a realisation of human love and common living, of the suffering of love as an experience and adventure of the being involved in the horizon of knowledge from now and here a ("But if think about it, / It's better to be just like you are, / to sting yourself, to crash yourself / through earthling goods"). Arghezi's eros goes, in the poem *Linger*, in a whole new dimension: that of the relevance of the body's suffering, of organic disorder caused by love. Love's sickness is the sign of the beginning of a new existential regime, of a new status of the being, with different sides, revealing for the immeasurable availabilities of the human soul.

Expression of disappointment and existential disabuse, *Barefoot verses* represent a complaint on the theme of the irreversible passing of time, of the human destiny marked by ephemeris and precarity, of the lack of hope and trust in man. The dialogue between the poet and man sets a lyric scenario where the dominant feelings are the melancholy, the nostalgia, the pain of losing the being, of the wandering in a pointless world and without a coherent finality. Between acceptance and non acceptance of his own condition, the poet bears in his verses the trademarks of the suffering of living and of the passing. His crying is a metaphysical one and in the same time of a disturbing concreteness. It is not by chance that the setting where this poetic scenario takes place is one of ruins and of destruction, of deep loneliness and bitter memory ("Why are you sitting man, in these lonely ruins crying?"). The man's crying is inflicted by all the suffering in the world, by the degradation of his own being and by the other's sufferings. It is a tearing crying, a begging that sounds agonic in a world of ontological, disabled, out of use significances: "The storks of the days passing with a black wing each cry. / The days that go by cry. / The children without parents cry, / the hungry beings from the wood cry at night; the beasts, the snakes, the raw, gentle creatures. / The deceived women, the lied men cry. / The subdued people cry, / the hopeless people cry. / The birds and the slaughtered cattle cry. / And the lost times cry. / I feel sorry for my sins. I cry because time does not return. / I cry because

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the man goes away and returns only looking down, / as if looking for his grave. / He cries about me, the one you sang about". The poet's complaining is therefore started by the tacit acceptance of his perishable condition, of perceiving his own destiny from the perspective of hopelessness and frailty. The horizon of the self narrows down, the duration is stopped, the verse turns into deafening mourning, and the communication with the self's instances and with the others becomes unbearable, residing under the sign of a knowledgeable apories, just like in the Psalms or in a few other poems that exist under the sign of erotic dissatisfaction.

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