

**THE DIVINE BEAUTY IN THE FRENCH MEDIEVAL LITERATURE
AND
IN THE BAS-RELIEFS OF THE FRENCH GOTHIC CATHEDRALS**

-ABSTRACT OF THE PhD THESIS-

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This paper, entitled – The divine beauty in the French medieval literature and in the bas-reliefs of the French gothic cathedrals - aims at the interdisciplinary approach of literature and visual arts, searching for similitudes between the verbal and visual sides. The selection of materials aimed at the common themes of literature and visual arts, inspired by the worship of Virgin Mary.

Therefore, we analyzed the most representative examples of the French medieval literature and of the corresponding visual arts, without the subject being completely exhausted. Consequently, our study remains by definition an open paper, with the possibility of including at any time new elements of analysis.

We initiated our research from the hypothesis that relations between literature and the visual arts, namely bas-reliefs, have been little analyzed. Another reason was that literature and the visual arts reflect each other. We aimed at developing the awareness of interdisciplinarity between arts, defining the main notions and concepts, giving concrete examples. In our research, we took into account the complementarity of the two arts that we studied in the main, literature and the plastic arts, considering that during our research, the relations with the other arts are mentioned, too.

The chosen corpus, comprising Coigny's volumes of miracles, the theatre piece *Teophil's Miracle* by Rutebeuf and the novel *Perceval de Chrétien* by Troyes, is an illustration of the entire meaning of the religious medieval literature, the one of educating Christians in the spirit of Dogmata, and of contributing to their redemption. On the other hand, we accentuated the author's role, who innovated, transcending constraints, opening the road towards new types of characters, created myths and revolted against society's vices. The comparison with the visual arts presumed the acquaintance with images based on the same themes with the literary ones, of the history of arts, of the working techniques, of compositional canons and of the laws of chromatics, elements thoroughly approached in the academic specialty studies of arts, carried out in the previous years. The schemata suggested by Greimas helped us to notice the points of convergence between the two arts, the visual and the literary ones.

The beginning presents the medieval conceptions on beauty, theories, artistic canons, the writer's and the medieval visual artist's conditions. Overcoming the theoretical difficulties required by an approach from this point of view, we referred to the phenomena of culture and civilization corresponding to the 12th and 13th centuries, where the works suggested in the analysis corpus are also included. Of course, there is an impossibility to communicate with the world of the medieval man, as the differences of perspective on life and especially on the Divinity are totally different. The

experiences of the medieval man not only differentiated in an amazing manner, but here also interferes that estrangement of the modern man, for whom, the inclination towards a manuscript from the Middle Ages means deciphering a code related not only to letter, but to life, too. Emphasizing the fact that the medieval esthetics is an esthetics of symbols, that the thinking of the medieval man is symbolic, while the thinking of the modern man is scientific, we went to the brief presentation of lines of biblical interpretation, with the four meanings: literal, moral, allegorical and anagogical. We considered important to emphasize the idea of *Weltanschauung*, through which the medieval thinking expressed in an illuminating manner. This synthesis of medieval values is totally different from the one of Greeks. In fact, the origin of the entire medieval system of faith and values is a filter of all activities of production, reception and thinking of arts. Related to the idea of divine creation, the good, the truth and the beauty get another meaning, represent that change in the manner of perceiving the world. We tried to define the differences between the Greek paradigm and the Christian *Weltanschauung*, wherefrom the relation creator/creature, that we have presented with the formal justifications. One of the basic ideas going through the research, not only in this chapter, is the fact that in the Christian *Weltanschauung*, the main means of knowing and saving the soul from death are faith and love. In fact, the corpus of this paper that we chose for analysis contains works which represent at length this idea: Teophil, Perceval, but also Coincy, who represents the voice of the entire world, reach to the *Great Knowledge*, only through the two mentioned means.

In the next place we systematized, in the first chapter, the theories on art and beauty of the Middle Ages. The Christian *Weltanschauung* brings a major novelty in the world of the late antiquity. It is about the institution of faith as principle of knowledge, principle wherefrom derive all other human qualities: intuition, intellectuality, rationality. Having a divine origin, only faith can relate between the two couples of irreconcilable contraries, in the plan of thinking *Beyond* and *Here*.

For Christians, faith is a gift from God, a supernatural virtue rained down by God upon humans, it is the help given to the human being in order to understand the message of the divinity. Based on faith, on the divine help, on the revelation, the entire Christian education is built, as God cannot be known by human beings only through His own powers. Faith becomes the condition of knowledge, and this is how we explain why all Christians share the sayings of Aurelius Augustine: *I believe so that I may understand*. The act of knowledge is based on faith, therefore on a divine base, outside the human logics, through the idea of supremacy of faith, a symbolic knowledge, which opposes to the rational knowledge.

The Christian *Weltanschauung*, through the total mystery that the idea of divine creation institutes, through the idea of the gift, of knowledge by faith, transforms the symbol into a privileged instrument in knowledge, by means of the symbol, the human mind being able to understand what *Beyond* is, and by analogy, succeeding to represent that world. The entire Christian world is dominated by the world of the symbol and symbolism.

Symbols are signs with double meaning. On the one side, the symbol is something related to the phenomenal, which is shown and which is hidden, metaphoric, existential, ontological, consequently which is bearer of multiple meanings and analogies. In reality, there is no art without a symbolic essence.

It is easily noticed that the symbol contains in its essence the dichotomy *Beyond/Here*, the two contradictory terms being found in its nature. To justify this situation, according to specialists, we mention that the idea of symbol entails the existence of some elements specific to the world of *Here*, a plastic element, something material, disposed in space and time. On the other hand, the idea of symbol infers the presence of the meaning, of the spiritual element characteristic to the world of *Beyond*. The Christian considers material things ephemeral, being signs for what really exists, God. The material world, the artifacts, the words or the iconic signs become symbols of the divinity, deciphered by means of faith. The role of symbol is represented by substituting a reality with another one, being a sign of replaced reality. Although artifacts or manufactured objects, an icon, a sculpture, a bas-relief, they substitute the divinity, by representing Him.

The interpretation of divine signs consists in the process of understanding something understood before, that we know to be true. The faithful must know what the *truth* is, which is a *faith truth*, obtained by divine grace. The assertion of the existence of truth does not also mean its *soul experience* and understanding, respectively relating the divine truth to the contents and conditions of human consciousness. Through symbol, which is spiritual, abstract, invisible, which belongs to the world of *Beyond*, can be seen, while concrete, individual things belonging to the world of *Here*, transcend the visible, they are signs of *Beyond*. Therefore creates a world of correspondences between the two different worlds which cannot communicate directly, correspondences mediated by symbol.

Beyond and *Here*, the two Christian worlds are associated by symbols of revelation and incarnation, the descent of *Beyond* towards *Here* and of the divinization, the ascension of *Here* towards *Beyond*. The symbolic Christian consciousness, having available only indirect means of knowledge, sees in the world of *Here* signs for the world of *Beyond*. The world of *Here* replaces the letters of the

alphabet, which we combine in order to form words in order to understand the world of *Beyond*. Therefore, the medieval man lived in a world populated of significances, references, manifestations of God in things, through a nature which has been speaking continuously in a heraldic language, where a lion was not just a lion. It is a symbolic-allegoric view on the universe.

Between symbol and allegory there are distinctions which consider that both the symbol and the allegory refer to analogy and substitution, representing similar procedures of association of the two worlds. Therefore, according to Umberto Eco, we speak of a symbolic-allegoric vision, without being necessary the distinction between them. The Christian perceives the mysterious signs of the presence of divinity in the world and tries to decipher their message.

Consequently, we need to specify that the speech on arts and beauty in the Middle Ages resides under the sign of the symbolic thinking, of analogies of the medieval man, of symbolic-allegoric visions suggested by the Christian *Weltanschauung*, in whose dichotomous structure resides the deciphering of theoretical representations, respectively of the medieval esthetics. The dichotomy of the two worlds presumes that all theoretical representations are couples of contraries, of symbol and allegory, maintained in a correspondence. An example would shape the idea, if we were to report to the theoretical representation of the beauty in the Christian world and namely, the beauty as light.

The Christian period, deprived of an esthetics in the real meaning of the word, builds the art and the beauty as some separate thoughts, the beauty as perfection, remaining a name of the divine being. Name of the divine being, the beauty can be applied to any individual object, the entire creation being beautiful, according to the dichotomy of the medieval *Weltanschauung*, attributing *There* and *Here*, a double ontological nature, can be attributed to it. At the same time, due to the fact that the world is a creation of God, and because it bears the attributes of this creation, the beauty becomes a sensitive entity, through the fact that all sensitive, material things of the world are beauty-bearers. The metaphysical, divine and spiritual beauty and the sensitive, earthly beauty related to the matter are not in an explicit relation of communication, but in a symbolic one, due to the fact that God has revealed Himself through his second part of His Trinity, through Jesus Christ.

Hereinafter, we insisted upon the social role of the medieval artist, who does not express himself, but makes the connection between the world of Here and the world of Beyond. With divine graces, the artist sets up the work due to the divine action which reflects upon his soul. Continuing on the same line, adding details to support assertions, we have noticed the features of the esthetics of the

light, the light being considered the name of God and respectively the dominant representation of the medieval divine beauty.

In this period, the concept of art in the modern acceptance, creation of the individual artist who expresses himself, does not exist. The religious architecture, religious objects, icons, were not perceived as art, as we nowadays call the achievements of the Christian Ages, but as miraculous images of transcendence. In the medieval world, nobody doubted the fact that there are icons of Messiah, which are not made by humans. It is not the individuality of the artist as a person that explained the power of representation of divinity, but the fact that he worked under the influence of the divine grace, of the outside help. The artist creates through the action of the divine being from his soul.

Therefore, the Christian Ages replaces the Greek vision of the demiurge artist who produces the new through the science of ordering the existent materials, with a genetic vision, creating objects which are not in the nature. The artistic creation is an augmentation, an addition to a being. The source of creation resides in the grace, in the spiritual element which is something to give, a gratuitousness obtained from the outside, and that the soul of the artist bears with himself. The parable of creation is the parable of increasing the talents given by God. The artist must fulfill his vocation of man with grace. This way of seeing the position of the artist in the world, the artist-creator, will generalize in the Renaissance, becoming, as known, the canonic vision of modernity and postmodernity. To create means to produce a new existence. The suggestions of Latin are illustrative on this line: the existence is a compound of: *în afară* (outside), *a sta* (to stay), *a exista* (to exist) means *a ieși în afară* (to exit), and the verb *exister* is translated by *a ieși din* (to go outside from), *a se naște din* (to arise from). Therefore, *to create* is different from the usual activity of *a face* (to do). The creation produces a work, something which is unique and original.

Hereinafter, we systematized the conceptions on art and beauty of Saint Thomas Aquinas and of Saint Augustine. Through the Saint Augustine, the Occident emphasizes the idea of the *theosized human being*. God created man in His own image and likeness; therefore, we are, through our soul, bearers of God.

The *heart*, the generic name of our interior spirit, love, which God set at the moment of creation, is the innermost of our interior lives and known by God *only*. The *heart* of every man is unquiet, looks for God even when the man is not aware of it. All heart beats, its intentions, are directed towards God. Love as an exit from the self, as an irrepressible desire, determines the man to act. But

the man lives at the same time, in two worlds, the first, *civitas terrena*, Babylonia or Rome, the fruit of love of self of the human being, and *civitas Dei*, the Jerusalem, the fruit of love of God. The first one looks for welfare, the second, for the eternal peace. Along history, the two fortresses combine, the good separating from the bad in the world beyond and everything ends with the *Last Judgment*.

Consequently, the feeling of love makes the connection between the worlds drawn by the two contradictory adverbs: *Beyond/Here*. And as love is the main engine of fact, the relation between the two poles of the Christian *Weltanschauung* is the fact. That is why, when Augustine speaks of redemption, he emphasizes the fact, the action, the creation, the ascension of the human being to his divine creation. Consequently, we are replaced by an inner man, of a nature which is different from our human nature, by means of which we can acquire knowledge, if accompanied by the act of faith. The favorite formula of Augustine, "*I believe so that I may understand!*" incites us to use rationality and follow the knowledge of the *interior Master*, Jesus Christ.

The idea of human divinization does not exclude at Augustine the idea of fall of the human being and the possibility of his redemption. In other words, he shares, together with Basil the Great, the central dogma of Christianity: the fall and the redemption. Unlike the Parents of the Eastern Church, Augustine conceives differently the relation between God's action on the human being and human being's *action*. The human being does not have at the same time the free will, the capacity of choosing and the freedom, the power to make what he chose. The man, as a fallen existence through his nature, cannot change this nature. God condemned all of us through the original sin. But it is still God who grants the possibility of redemption, the divine grace. God being free, He is not constrained to grant everyone this grace. God does not have obligations in relation to human beings. It is known that God grants this grace. The human being himself does not have any right to be redeemed. If God grants this redemption, He does it from divine reasons, which cannot be reached. Therefore, the human being is predestined. He is either redeemed or not redeemed. He cannot influence in any way God's choice. But this does not affect our freedom. The divine grace does not reduce freedom. The Christian, having the Christ in his heart, he is free. It is just that he does not have the confidence that God will grant him the grace. He must hope that he will be chosen and must act accordingly. Even if he does not have any confidence.

The phenomenon of Rebirth cannot be understood in the absence of the idea of God's relation with the man, which originates in Augustine's works. The Christian vision explains the involvement of the human being in the daily life, the focus on rationality in the purpose of knowledge, the birth of

science and the revolt of the man against the divine being. All these elements are developments subsequent to the Augustine's Christian vision.

Augustine's esthetic ideas can be placed in this context. Before conversion, he preserved the Greek-Latin vision on the beauty, which he interprets from a Christian point of view. Initially, Augustine gives an answer specific to antiquity – things are beautiful: *the beauty is a matter of order*. The order is the harmony of the universe. He is ordered because he reflects the eternal laws from God's mind. He confers goodness and beauty to the creation, even there where the human eye believes to perceive the bad and the ugly.

As a true Christian, Augustine distinguishes two species of the beauty corresponding to the dichotomy *Beyond/Here*. The beauty is defined by unity, order, harmony, measure, form, and belong both to the sensitive world and to the spiritual, intelligible one. Things in the physical world are rather *pleasant* than beautiful. The most beautiful things, with the meaning of pleasant, are those related to life and life manifestations. Above the physical beauty resides, of course, the spiritual beauty, the authentic beauty. The supreme beauty, which transcends the world, is God. Reporting to Him, we deal with degrees of beauty, corresponding to the hierarchy of degrees of existence. The divine beauty can be contemplated only by innocent souls, such as angels. The man is forbidden the access to this beauty.

But the most important contribution to the theory of beauty is brought by Saint Augustine through the idea of his subjective dimension. The beauty is an objective property, but it reflects on the human soul depending on his interior *constitution*. In other words, Augustine speaks of the *esthetic experience*, of the way in which the beauty is an interior dimension of the human being, something lived and thought. Therefore, Augustine anticipates the preoccupations of artistic psychology, as he is interested in establishing the relation between sensorial impressions, perceptions and intellect. Things reveal their beauty only under the *inclination* of a soul of perceiving it. Those who are interested in the utility of things, cannot see its beauty. Therefore, beauty is perceived by the one who has an uninterested attitude towards objects. Thus, there must exist a homology, a congruence between soul and thing, an element belonging to both entities. This is the rhythm (the rhythm of sound, of perception, of memory, of action and of intellect's discernment). The human being is given birth with a rhythm embedded in him by God Himself. The human being lives the beauty of the world and God's beauty, because that beauty exists in the soul itself.

It is also attempted the explanation of the existence of the ugly in the world created by God. Augustine claims that the ugly reveals only from the point of view of the human being. There is no

ugly as such, as beauty is, the ugly being always contextualized. On the other hand, the ugly means the absence of some qualities, which together confer beauty to a thing, the lack of unity, of order, of harmony or form. The objects of the world cannot have all these qualities met in their substance. Therefore, the ugly is something which accentuates the beauty, in the way the shadow accentuates the light. The influence of Augustine's esthetics for almost a millennium has not appeared only from his vision on the beauty, but of the art, too. Following the antiques from whom he took the idea, art is a workmanship. Art represents what is being produced by the man only, it means knowledge, the science of doing it. Augustine claims that we need to speak of the beautiful arts, of those workmanships producing the beauty, arguing that God and achieving the redemption must be the supreme purpose of every believer, so the plastic artist is subjected to the same principle, too. Visual arts do not need to be seen any longer as imitative and illusionist arts, but as aspiration of painting God's world. Giving up to the sensory beauty, visual arts must aspire to the divine beauty, to the intelligible beauty, having the mission to transmit a message of spiritual ascension, and not of incitation of earthly livings and desires.

In order to understand the esthetics produced by Saint Thomas, the recourse to Aristotle belongs to a methodological stringency, especially because Saint Thomas considered himself, with modesty, only an interpreter of Aristotle. His esthetical thesis was polemically directed against the Christian tradition up to his time, tradition sustained in an ideatic manner by Plato's and Augustine's esthetics. In the world of scholasticism, the ideas of tradition were represented by the Franciscan monk Bonaventura in the following theses: The esthetic optimism or the idea that the world is beautiful, the esthetic Integralism according to which the world is beautiful as a whole, meaning not in pieces, but due to the universal order which reigns in it, the esthetic transcendentalism or the opinion that the real beauty must be found in God. As the natural beauty is concerned, the beauty of the soul is superior to the beauty of the body. Saint Thomas assimilates these esthetic ideas accumulated by tradition, continues them through his works, but also suggests important elements of novelty.

First of all, the definition of beauty suggested by Saint Thomas has a fundamental importance in understanding the esthetics from the late Middle Ages and a significant ideatic contribution for esthetics, generally. The good, according to Saint Thomas, concerns the faculty of desire, being good what everyone wishes, therefore has a feature of purpose, while the desire is a movement towards something. Instead, the beauty concerns the faculty of knowledge, in fact beautiful are only those things, which being seen, cause pleasure. That is why the beauty consists of the correct proportion: because our senses enjoy with well-proportioned things, as being something similar to them; as any

other faculty of knowledge, the sense is in fact a proportion. And as knowledge is achieved by assimilation, and the similitude, on the other hand, concerns the form, the *beauty* is really related to the idea of formal cause.

As may be noticed in this definition of the beauty, Saint Thomas suggests several conceptual distinctions: the beauty applies to things pleasant to the view, to the sight. Therefore, from the class of all existent things, beautiful are the ones which cause pleasure to the view. Two observations are required here. The *sight* is *view*, meaning a representation of the mind under the form of the eye, symbol of the universal knowledge. As known, under the inspiration of oriental motifs, and in the Christian iconography, God is represented through a symbolic eye. The second observation: the term of *thing* is considered here as individual, as a material or spiritual *entity*. Therefore, this definition includes both the intelligible entities, those related to the spiritual beauty, and the sensitive ones, expression of the physical beauty. If these entities, when seen, viewed, cause pleasure, then we have the right to say that they are beautiful. The importance of this mention is a major one, because if the beauty is intimately related to the pleasure generated by sight, by view, we can distinguish it from good. Thomas speaks of the proportions interior to senses. Consequently, even if the beauty is an objective property of some things, which through their form of manifestation induce pleasure to our soul, complementarily, we also need to speak of a certain interior organization of senses. The definition given by Saint Thomas to the beauty implies the fact that senses have their own proportions, thus a certain ordered, harmonic interior structure. This means that senses possess this structure inside themselves, independently, for example, of the *effective* fact of the view. Therefore, there is also an interior dimension of the beauty on *formal* line. The interior proportions of the soul are *related* to the exterior proportions of things and, by means of view, cause the pleasure.

Therefore, the beauty is a relation between the internal proportions, structures of senses and the effective proportions, structures belonging to objects. The idea of assimilation, from the second part of the definition, suggests us that there is a faculty, *a sort of rationality*, which synthetizes in a whole the data which originate from senses and from the cognitive power, power which produces the pleasure through sight. This fact gives us the right, as Saint Thomas said, to invoke the idea of formal cause when we speak of the beauty. We need to distinguish between good and beauty. The good refers to the ability of desire, while the beauty refers to the ability of knowledge. Therefore, the human being possesses distinct abilities, devices of the mind which have specialized functions. The desire, in its capacity of *ability*, interior *form*, imprints on objects the property of being good. If an object is desired,

then it becomes good, as far as it serves to the purpose of the desire. Of course, the object can be beautiful too, but it is not desired for this property, but because it is adequate to the purpose. Therefore, the world of objects can be divided in two major classes, depending on the two abilities of the mind. Those referred to by the desire ability are good. Those referred to by the knowledge ability are beautiful. By means of this definition, Saint Thomas distinguishes what has been thought together for millenniums, the beauty as species of the good. The beauty is a form that we contemplate, while the good is the finality we desire.

Saint Thomas is the most important *esthetician* of the late Middle Ages and for the fact that, starting from Aristotle, that is from particular, suggests a conceptual analysis of arts and beauty, starting from the esthetic object. The perspective of analysis of Saint Thomas reminds of the contemporary investigations from the field of the analytical esthetics. In esthetic terms, Saint Thomas, when speaking of the beauty, starts from the natural beauty, from the way it is updated individually. The positioning of its mind is Aristotelian. For Aristotle, the particular, which exists as substance, as substratum, consists of a matter under a certain form. The particular represents the starting point in knowing the things of the world. The particular is always the logical subject in a cognitive sentence. For example, in the sentence *this painting is beautiful*, *this painting* – the particular, the one which sets up under the form of the painting the given materials, the canvas, the pigments, colors, etc. – is the logical subject to which is associated a universal predicate, *beautiful*. *Beautiful* is a universal predicate, in the sense that it can be predicate not only for the subject *this painting*, but also for *this sculpture*, *this drawing*, *this icon*.

Consequently, the beauty can be a predicate for a sensitive, physical subject, as its intrinsic property. Thus, Saint Thomas argues against the Neoplatonic perspective, of the ideal beauty, which dominated up to his time. For Neoplatonics, the only form of authentic beauty is the intelligible beauty. The sensitive beauty participates in the intelligible beauty, in its capacity of imperfect copy, of shadow. Or, Saint Thomas's perspective is a *naturalist* one. Because when he speaks of the intelligible beautiful, Saint Thomas considers it by analogy with the sensitive beautiful. More precisely, both to sensitive things and to intelligible things, the same predicate is applied: *beautiful*. For example, the soul, as an intelligible object, is beautiful, and a sculpture, too, a sensitive object, is beautiful. Being an universal, the predicate *beautiful* predicates both on intelligible objects and on the sensitive objects. In both cases, the predicate *beautiful* determines an essential, definitive form. Irrespective of its nature, intelligible or sensitive, the beautiful designates the essence of an object: the one of pleasing.

In the second chapter of the paper, we systematized and analyzed the sources of the French medieval literature and of the visual arts, respectively the role of hagiography on the two sides of the paper, word and image. Hagiography remarks through its purpose of moral and religious edification. Even in Coigny's and Rutebeuf's works, profane elements appear too, the lives of saints represent a source of inspiration which, at least at Gauthier de Coigny, leads to the creation of a real monument of religious literature, the tomes *Les Beaux Miracles de la Vierge*. Both Coigny and Rutebeuf start from hagiographies and respect the features of saints' behavior, which has no resemblance. They cannot imitate these manifestations of virtues with divine support, but, as the Lives of Saints differentiates the heavenly, the believer from his model, the past and the present.

According to the medieval testimonies, the *Golden Legend* by Jacques de Voragine or Varazze, typed between 1261-1266, which also represents one of the rich sources of inspiration for the medieval religious literature, had a great success at occurrence. Explaining the church services celebrated during the church year, Voragine grants the lives of saints a place of honor in his book. Every believer had to understand the motivation of every holiday in the calendar. Taking them one by one, the writer adds them elements of tradition. Acting like the hagiographers of the time, he decomposes words, respectively the name of the saint, and associates an allocution to each part. Thereafter is the story itself, full of the same elements as in the Lives and in the religious literature of the 12th, 13th centuries, such as miraculous healing, visions, but also the devil. The legend also wins through the poetic arsenal, used not only to impress, but with the same purpose required by the dogmata of the time, in its case by the Dominican Order, the one of encouraging the people to take good actions. The literary men of the time noticed the positive or symbolic truth of the work, which, as Ozanam states, does not take anything from mythology. It suffocated the soul and the spirit.

The Golden Legends have been found the qualities to guide the spirit over the matter, the prayer over the nature, and the eternity over time. Practicing the good, one of the requirements of the Church, and the fight for the promotion of this virtue contoured the purpose of the work, with the inspiration taken from Saint Dominic's preaches, who dedicated his entire life to saving the fellows. Careful to the reactions of the world which hung upon his stories on the miraculous, as the chronicles say, Voragine transforms his saints into heroes, in whose language the elements of greatness represented the mark of the divine spirit. The fight between vices and virtues, represented in the text, is found in the writings of medieval estheticians. Voragine does not philosophize, but lets the reader to understand the moral by himself. The obedience to God does not make the man a slave, as God

does not mean obedience. Slavery cannot exist here, but eternal harmony and independence, and at this eternal independence one participates when one listens of single God only. The interior harmony which leads to the achievement of good has a correspondent in Saint Augustine's words, where he mentioned that harmony seeks only after imitating the purest spirits.

Having the net and distinct feeling of the positive and negative, the protagonist of Voragine's legends got into God's great secret. The readers were not left than to know the harmony and to learn to transpose the Trinity in thoughts, in order to have the divine light. The life time, divided in four stages, of deviation, renewal, reconciliation and pilgrimage, is explained by the hagiographer through the difference between the four seasons, time which is represented also on the cathedrals' bas-reliefs. Regarded from another point of view, *Voragine's Legend* takes over the subjects from the famous *Lectionnaire*.

In the 13th century, this book came to replace all old liturgical books. Later, the lessons from *Lectionnaire* went to *Breviary* and made possible for the saints to remain in the memory of the Church for centuries. According to the specialists, here reunited legends from the History of Apostles of Abdias, Rufin's Parents' lives from desert, The dialogues of Saint Gregory the Great, and Bède's *Martyrology*. Being up to date and in the same line with the works *Summae* from the Middle Ages, the *Golden Legend* comes to become likewise, adding to the book *Lectionnaire* new legends, completing the originals.

Voragine's book was read in cathedrals and was represented on the stained glass. Louis Mâle, who was looking for the genius in the books of the Middle Ages considers that the *Golden Legend* was one of the most interesting books of the period. The Medievalist believes that reading this book is enough to explain the legendary bas-reliefs and stained glass of the French cathedrals. For a work achieved for the people, as the cathedral is, the response to the questions caused by bas-reliefs was this popular legend. An entire human existence, with totally different professions, enriches the paper, considered to be an *Acta sanctorum*. A thesaurus of wisdom leads the reader beyond the limits of the known world. The charm of the book consists in identifying the miraculous. Like the most interesting novels, legends sometimes look like fairy tales.

In the pot of the medieval culture, the reliquia, irrespective of their type, always guaranteed the sacred character. In the theological reflection of the body, everything the saint's body touched was considered sacred. The historiographer researchers, after authentication and their separation in true or false distinguished between the *primary reliquia*, which represent rests of reliquia and

secondary relics, respectively objects which were in contact with that saint. Their value and practices which originated from them, established the social functions that the reliquiae assumed without their will. The complexity of this problem sustained in the Middle Ages some rules of correct and concrete use of reliquiae, their relation with houses, the types of reliquiae.

In the third chapter we treated in a detailed manner the representations of the divine beauty in the French medieval literature, respectively in the works intended for analysis. This chapter, a dedication to the relation between literature and religion in the medieval France detaches the main manners of textual manifestation of the divine beauty, insisting on the specific linguistic and rhetorical manifestations. The selection of the illustrative material – Rutebeuf's *Le Miracle de Théophile* led to observations on the phenomena of continuity analyzed. On the same line, in the fourth chapter, dedicated to the visual arts – stained glass, bas-reliefs, miniatures – we emphasized the manner in which it subordinates to the dominant idea.

We noticed that the poet Coigny structures strong relations and a visible influence on the following periods, especially of the writings of the satiric genre, of the poetry related to Mary and devotion. The spiritual vein is represented by *Miracles par personnages* by Jean le Marchant. It also influenced the anonymous adaptation of Robert *Le Clerc d'Arras, Les vers de la Mort*, things that suggest the effect on the religious genres of the 13th and 14th centuries and the function of *Miracles* in the evolution of the lyrics.

There are analogies that suggest a familiarity with Chrétien de Troyes's works too, terms retaken in the novel *Yvain*. Also, it can be noticed the reoccurrence in the first miracle. Uncounted sequences announce a more visible association – thematic and the same plan of expression, with the novel *Cligès*. Insisting on the structure of the miracle, it can be asserted that the miraculous story is conceived on two ideas, namely the rescue of the believer – the ascension and the fall – the loss of divine clemency and the capture of the character by Satan. According to the researchers, a model of actantial scheme would include: a *sender*, in the person of God, who offers the rescue, which represents the *object*, to the believer, respectively, the *receiver*. The role of the Virgin, angels and apostles is of intervening for the rescue of a subject, a believer – receiving the role of character which intervenes. The purpose is to oppose to Satan, which can receive the name of *opus*, an anti-sender, which destines, to the human being – the keeper, the loss, respectively the object.

In this case, those who intervene are the Jewish or Saracens. The scheme's graphic is consequently *manque-intervention de l'adjuvant-liquidation du manqué*. The Virgin asks for her Son to forgive and redeem the believer who left God. The narrative sequence according to which develops a narrative miracle, in verse or prose, consists of several stages. An initial situation presents the character, which has a bright life, full of faith. The following moment prefigures a rupture of the initial situation, marked by a gesture, which requires a performance on the part of the believer. The following state resides under the sign of gesture and trains a lack, a spiritual or physical absence. The following state belongs entirely to Mary, who intervenes and rescues the believer. The last sequence represents the insurance given by Virgin Mary to the believer, for the eternal life. Common in the volumes of *Miracles among characters* and Coincy's *Miracles* are some convergences, rendered by the illustration of sequences, as text or image, in miniatures, illuminations or bas-reliefs. Sometimes, the sequences in the text flow linear, while the sequences from miniatures, illuminations or bas-reliefs are concomitant. The text presents the stages of rescue, of the rupture of the Pact with the Devil, of the gesture of hitting Satan with a stick by the Virgin, successively, while, in a miniature, on an illumination or a bas-relief, these moments can be seen all at the same time. The supremacy of the text, unlike the image, resides in this case in the fact that tension is graded in ascension, the culmination being a crown of developing the event. The variety of developing stages also depends on the themes of miracles, many of them common, in *Les Miracles de la Sainte Vierge de Coincy*, *Les Miracles de Notre-Dame de Jean Miélot*, *Les Miracles de Nôtre-Dame de Chartres de Jean le Marchant*, *Les Miracles de Nôtre-Dame de Jean le Conte*, *Les Miracles de Notre-Dame tirés du Rosarius*. Apart from the theme of the Virgin who intervenes by violence, to set free the believer who sinned, here joins the theme of miracles of flowers which grow from the body of the dead believer and come out of the mouth, for the stupefaction of the crew, the theme of the ascension of the soul to the sky, which has the form of angel or devil, depends on the dead's faith, the theme of miracles that Virgin Mary rescues from labours, the Miracles through which are saved those who signed the pact with the Devil, the Miracles through which they come back to faith, servants of the Church, the Miracles through which Mary rescues cities as a whole, in the middle of fights, the Savings of children.

At the same time, this type of miracles, achieved by Virgin Mary, physically, are completed by the Miracles that the Virgin makes through warnings during the sleep. One of the several miracles with the theme of Nun who wanted to run with a knight is eloquent. Therefore, instead of the five constituents of the narrative sequence, listed by researchers, 1. *Initial situation*, 2. *partial rupture*,

3.absence, 4.intervention, 5.promise, we suggest: 1. *Initial situation*, 2. *Warning*, 3. *Remorse*, 4. *Intervention*, 5. *Promise*. Characters who are warned are being sorry, say prayers of forgiveness and redemption, the intervention of the Virgin saves them from Devil's trap, after which the believer utters hymns of praise for Mary. The specialty critics justify the superposition of images from several miniatures or illuminations of miracles, by the sign of Teophil's fall.

Compared to the text, which contains all the five *constituents*, the image stages, almost all the time, the *constituent* number 4, respectively the *intervention*, but in Coincy's manuscripts there are also miniatures which illustrate the *constituent* number 5 – the *promise* made by Virgin Mary for an eternal love – element reconsidered in the *Miracles among characters*, too. Like the text, the image obliges the reader to a graded deciphering, generates questions concerning the possible confusion which may be made, between the constituent number 1, respectively the initial situation and the constituent number 3, the *remorse*, as characters are painted on their knees, inside churches, chapels or simply inside house, with their hands together in front of God's Mother's icon.

After that, we concentrated our attention on the medieval imaginary, with the special configuration in the doctrine of the courtly love. The anthropologic journey identified at the level of the imaginary develops between the subjective drive and the objective, cosmic and social somations. Therefore, we speak of ideological systems, of schemes of values, of mental structures of the society where the artist, writer or visual artist lived, schemes that make intelligible the contents of the cultural process in which configured the art intended for analysis. Suggesting models of humanity, there are emphasized models of culture which led the actions of the society of which they are a part. Researchers established the existence of several interpretations of Eros, with its different representations, in art or literature, became *constant values* of the literary representations. There are also found sacred origins of themes from novels, from seeking the fiancée, to the brave actions and until the thirst of death. In parallel with these interpretations, the literary images required through a living language support the life of the spirit and convert in literature the space of creating imagination within the individual. The collective mental, with a very important role, is associated to these images and to the human impulse towards isolation, towards seeking after the unknown or the indefinite, in a single word, of that *something*, that the novel will take over, a research specific to the chivalrous inquietude. The absolute, another side of the person who aspires towards himself, leads to his conflicts with the society. The thirst of absolute of the self makes him discover the existence of some principles which are limiting, and which does not accept its place in the great cosmic hierarchy.

The novels of the Saint Grail and of the Round Table reunite the religious feeling and the profane love, the knights' purpose being the one of hallowing the value by faith, and *Perceval* is an example, ... *preus et courtoi, Et plein de grant chevalerie*. The religious element of Chrétien de Troyes's work, the legend of Grail concentrates around it the entire attention. Seeking after the mythical vessel offers Perceval's life an original and great character. The myth, as we will mention hereinafter originates from Britannia. The matter in Britannia reunites the works which treat the legendary adventures of the king Arthur and his knights and lasts since the 9th century, until the 15th century.

Up to the period spent at Blanchefelur's castle, Perceval's evolution does not allow to be seen the subsequent turns of his sentimental life and therefore, meets Gauvain. The thematic relation of the two parts in the last novel of Chrétien should be sought according to the Middle Ages, in the conversion of seeking love in the seeking after the divine love. The end, marked by the discovery of the Grail and by the Lance which bleeds could have had as consequence the rehabilitation of the two heroes, situation which cannot be noticed due to the fragmentary character of the novel. Doctrine strongly shadowed, the courtly love becomes at Chrétien a principle of order, one of the solutions suggested for the tension between ideal and reality.

Perceval's amorous behavior does not announce a total detachment of the lyrical song. But the passing towards choosing an object different from the one of this type of song comes from the mechanism of orienting the search, a technique which emphasizes the relation between the form as a structure and the fundamental theme of the work. The discursive selection became necessary through the evidence of the monist conception of Chrétien on love and on the chivalry adventure defines the theme of love through its essential quality, the one of being, before everything, an interpretation of the human. Paradoxically, the hero who was to mark a reversal in the evolution of the chivalry towards the religious ideals was at the beginning a perfect ignorant in terms of Christian practices, not being capable of recognizing a church or a monastery. Still, the performance of beauty directs Perceval's intuition towards divinization. The naïve Perceval had been trained fugitively by his mother on the distinctions between church and monastery and on their role.

Thereafter, starting from the definition of theater, we treated the evolution of literary concepts along centuries, in order to be allowed to establish the position held by the medieval religious theater. The attempt to define the theatric esthetics nowadays requires the attempt to notice the notion of a

double dimension, diachronic and synchronic and at the same time, the awareness of its relation with the rest of the sciences of arts and literature.

For a long time, theater was defined as text only, having at its base Aristotle's *Poetics*, afterwards the performance, with its power of seduction, is totally far from arts and has nothing in common with poetics, the tragedy achieving its finality even without actors, theory understood late in the 18th century, but from which will not be a complete detachment, for the foundation of a new esthetics, the theater being completely assimilated by the classical poetry. For the 18th century, and almost the entire 19th century, the theatric esthetics considers first the dramatic text. The staging becomes artistic with André Antoine, through the creation of the Free Theater, which confers him the position of second creator and the theater receives a new definition.

The movement, the décor, the voice are in the first plan of writers, which consider the gesture and the dance a prose and a poetry of movement. Voice *becomes* word said or sung and opposes to writing, being considered two distinct structures. Late at the end of the 19th century appears the modern theatric esthetics, still confounded with the classical one and whose philosophical discourses on art concentrated particularly on the text. As assembly of theoretical reflections of the theatric phenomenon, in the first period, the modern esthetics comprises the fundamental elements of theater, such as architecture, place, text, actor, staging, lights, and costumes. At the same time there are preoccupations on the entire process of creation and reception, process which also contains the instances involved in it, respectively author, actor, stage director and spectator. As narration through imitation, about theater, in the old times were launched negative opinions, Plato being one of those who virulently condemned the mimesis, and hence, an entire ramification of conceptions on theater, which are against him, as Platonic negative effect.

At the opposite pole, Artaud makes visible the echoes of the Platonic esthetics, the assimilation of the theatric fact as an illness representing the new conception on theater. The new theatric reflection is comprised in his work *Le Théâtre et la peste*, but there is here an inversion of values, Artaud attributing the illness of theater to the human being. Founding the theater of Alfred Jarry, the representations that the great writer records on the theatre bill do not reach admiration, but rather hostility, although the art suggested by him was related to the force of suggestion, of the transformation of relations of the violence and truth of objects.

But, unlike other theatric esthetics, Artaud's esthetics suggested an infusion of poetry and an absorption of magic, which aimed at renewing the culture, suggesting an association with life and nature. *Giving up* to the works of the past, which have instituted a tradition which pointed a language marking a separation between words and things, Artaud aims at an inspiration from mute cinematography, which he considers a raw force of expression. From here, the institution of the text, in theater, as pretext for the performance, performance which feeds from it, but exceeds it. Emptied of substance, characters are depersonalized, the substance of dialogues becomes void, thus the total absence of mimesis.

The theater of cruelty, as Artaud's theater was defined, assimilated to the plague, was not defined in this manner for having been contagious, but because, like this illness, represents a revelation, a launch towards the exterior, forward, from a slow cruelty, due to which stops on the individual or on an entire nation and *works* there all pervert possibilities of the spirit. Transmitting the theater the mission of being a creator power of life, the writer imprints to the performance and to the spirit, the emblem of force, of metaphysics and not the one of reflex, in the manner presented by Artaud, of a state of degeneration.

Accepting the idea that behind the main character is in fact the poet, the monologues reflect the strong interior conflict that he passed in a moment – maybe in the end or maybe along his entire life. Poverty and humility in which he lived could have led to hesitations, resentments, and thoughts of renouncement of faith. Teophil's rescue through Virgin Mary is not only a sign of moral writing, but a possible rescue of Rutebeuf's soul. Staging the ego, the poet proves courage, and also opens the road towards a poetics of poverty.

In the fourth chapter, dedicated to visual arts, we focused our attention on some illustrative examples from the French medieval visual arts miniatures, stained glasses, bas-reliefs, analyzing Greimas's actantial scheme, observing similitudes between these two ways of representation of the divine beauty. Conclusions present under a synthetic form all ideas and remarks expressed along analyses on the approached aspects, the work ending with the bibliography, separated in the Corpus of texts chosen for analysis and the Selective bibliography of examined works.

Key Words

Middle Ages

Cathedral

Miracle

Virgin Mary

Grail

Miniature

Bas-relief