

The Research Center of Medieval Art "Vasile Drăguț"



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QUEMADMODUM DESIDERAT CERVUS, the Psalm 42 (41): artistic interpretations and imagery

Rosângela Aparecida da Conceição*

Abstract: This article presents the analysis of the artistic interpretations and the imaginary representations of Psalm 41 (42), present in the motif of the chained deer that was represented in the ecclesiastical textiles of the Cathedral of Brandenburg, dating from the third quarter of the 14th century, with reproductions executed in the second half of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, with some copies in the Historical and Artistic Collection of the Venerable Third Order of Saint Francis of Penance of the City of São Paulo (VOTSFPCSP) and the Collection of the São Bento Monastery in São Paulo. In addition to textiles, we have the analysis of the Wilton diptych (c.1395-9), belonging to the National Gallery of London, as well as the relief on the altar of the Chapel of the Blessed Sacrament of the Abbey Basilica of Our Lady of the Assumption. Our analysis has as a theoretical basis 'The Commentaries on the Psalms' of Saint Augustine (1997), the work of Albert Rouet (1994) that deals with the relation between art and liturgy, methodology for the study of the image and its uses by Bock (1859), EH Gombrich (2012a, 2012b) and Panofsky (1990, 1995), with the support of the study in heraldry by William Berry (1828).

Keywords: Artistic interpretation, Visual representation, Imagery, Religious image, Sacred art, Art and Liturgy.

Introduction

When we proposed the cataloging of the textile collection of the Historical-Artistic Collection of the Venerable Third Order of St. Francis of Penance of the City of São Paulo (VOTSFPCSP), we hypothesized that this collection could be related to that of other ecclesiastical and museological institutions. We have been graced with the cooperation of researchers, conservators, restorers and religious people, whose information has been carefully confirmed.

Thus, we began our research work at São Bento Monastery in São Paulo (1598), where we located a complete set of vestments, dating approximately between the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century. Another object that composes our analysis is the relief in bronze, located in the Chapel of the Blessed Sacrament of the Basilica of Our Lady of the Assumption.

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The ecclesiastical textile research is very arduous, considering that the literature in Portuguese, especially in Brazil, is rare. We focus our efforts on reading texts from diverse backgrounds, correlating them with our objects. In this way, we base our research on the works of Bock (1859), Falke (1913), Fischbach (1874), Sangiorgi (1920), and newspapers with news published at that time.

Psalm 42 (41): artistic interpretations

In our work, we propose the analysis of the interpretation of canonical texts and the respective imagery representations¹, based on a liturgical vestment, specifically a chasuble, as well as a bronze relief. The literary source for comparison between the writing and the works analyzed is Psalm 42 (41), from which we extracted verses 1 to 6, in Latin and English (Table 1).

¹ <i>Magistro chori. Maskil. Filiorum Core.</i>	¹ For the leader. A maskil of the Korahites.
² <i>Quemadmodum desiderat cervus ad fontes aquarum, ita desiderat anima mea ad te, Deus.</i>	² As the deer longs for streams of water, so my soul longs for you, O God.
³ <i>Sitivit anima mea ad Deum, Deum vivum; quando veniam et apparebo ante faciem Dei?</i>	³ My soul thirsts for God, the living God. When can I enter and see the face of God?
⁴ <i>Fuerunt mihi lacrimae meae panis die ac nocte, dum dicitur mihi cotidie: "Ubi est Deus tuus?"</i>	⁴ My tears have been my bread day and night, as they ask me every day, "Where is your God?"
⁵ <i>Haec recordatus sum et effudi in me animam meam; quoniam transibam in locum tabernaculi admirabilis usque ad domum Dei in voce exultationis et confessionis multitudinis festa celebrantis.</i>	⁵ Those times I recall as I pour out my soul, When I would cross over to the shrine of the Mighty One, to the house of God, Amid loud cries of thanksgiving, with the multitude keeping festival.
⁶ <i>Quare tristis es, anima mea, et quare conturbaris in me? Spera in Deo, quoniam adhuc confitebor illi, salutare vultus mei et Deus meus. (...)</i> (THE HOLY SEE, <i>Liber Psalmorum</i> , 42:1-6, Online)	⁶ Why are you downcast, my soul; why do you groan within me? Wait for God, for I shall again praise him, my savior and my God. (...) (THE HOLY SEE, Psalm, 42:1-6 NAB, Online)

Table 1 Psalm 42 (41) in the Latin and English language versions.

Rosângela Aparecida da Conceição, 2016.

One situation worthy of further investigation is the fact that St. Augustine (354-430) is contemporary with the Empress Galla Placidia (c. 392-450), whose mausoleum, built around 430, contains this representation in one of its lunettes (Figure 1). It is possible that the exhortations made by Saint

¹ Original title in Portuguese: "*QUEMADMODUM DESIDERAT CERVUS, o Salmo 41 (42): interpretações e representações imagéticas*", selected to be presented at the *VII Encontro Internacional do LATHIMM "A imagem medieval: história e teoria"* [VII International Meeting of LATHIMM "The medieval image: history and theory"], University of São Paulo, São Paulo State, Brazil, from November 30, December 1 and 2, 2016.

Augustine² may have influenced other commentators of his work as well as the architects in the elaboration of the iconographic program for decoration of the temple, among other objects of liturgical use, as Mackie points out in his study on the iconography of Saint Vincent³ (MACKIE, 1990).

The commentary made by Saint Augustine also gives us important information about the understanding of the behavior of animals and nature in his time. For example:

3. But perhaps Scripture meant us to consider in the stag not this point only, but another also. Hear what else there is in the hart. It destroys serpents, and after the killing of serpents, it is inflamed with thirst yet more violent; having destroyed serpents, it runs to "the water-brooks," with thirst more keen than before. (...)

4. There is another point to be observed in the hart. It is reported of stags...that when they either wander in the herds, or when they are swimming to reach some other parts of the earth, that they support the burdens of their heads on each other, in such a manner as that one takes the lead, and others follow, resting their heads upon him, as again others who follow do upon them, and others in succession to the very end of the herd; but the one who took the lead in bearing the burden of their heads, when tired, returns to the rear, and rests himself after his fatigue by supporting his head just as did the others; by thus supporting what is burdensome, each in turn, they both accomplish their journey, and do not abandon each other. (ST. AUGUSTINE, 1989, pp. 276-277)

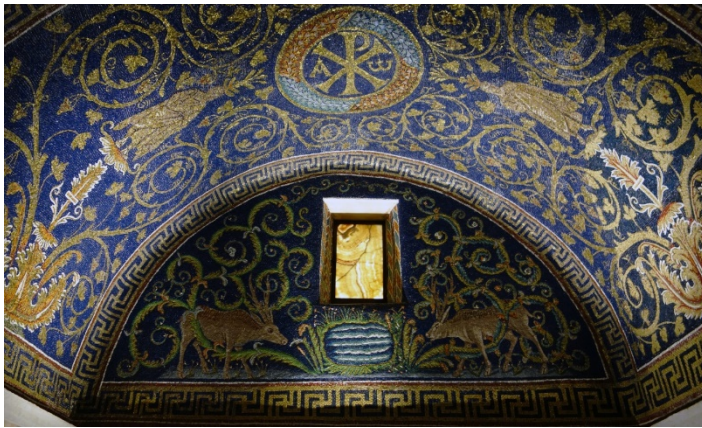


Fig. 1. *Deer lunette with vault*, The Mausoleum of Galla Placidia, Ravenna.
Photo: © Steven Zucker, 2013. Flickr, digital, 10 sep. 2016

² Saint Augustine. *Enarrationes Psalmos*, English translation with notes and indices *Expositions on the Book of Psalms*, translator Philip Schaff, Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, First Series 8, Christian Classics Ethereal Library, Grand Rapids, 1989, digital. 1 aug. 2016.

³ Mackie, Gillian. "New Light on the So-Called Saint Lawrence Panel at the Mausoleum of Galla Placidia, Ravenna" in "Gesta", vol. 29, no. 1, 1990, pp. 54–60. Jstor - digital, 13 sep. 2016.

Another example is the representation in the *Quattuor Evangelia* [Évangiles de Saint-Médard de Soissons]⁴, Paris, BnF, Ms lat. 8850. In the f. 6v (Figure 2), we see the scene of the source of life, flanked by pairs of animals, males and females, between them two pairs of deer and deer with seals attached to the neck respectively in the lower part, still young, showing the reddish coat. Just above, already adults, with grayish fur, the male with broad antler. We notice a certain formal similarity in the elaboration of the figures with those found in the fabrics of the Brandenburg Cathedral, which we will deal with later.



Source gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France

Fig. 2. *Fontaine de Vie*. Évangiles de Saint-Médard de Soissons, before 814. Paris, BnF, Ms. latin. 8850, fol. 6v. Gallica, digital, 20 nov. 2016.

In addition to these examples, we quote the Wilton Diptych⁵ (c.1395-9) which contains on its reverse the image of a white deer enchainé and with a crown around its neck. The diptych itself is an enigma, in the sense of its making, whether in France or England. However, we found a piece of explanation of the arm of King Richard II described by Berry in *Encyclopaedia Heraldica*:

⁴ Évangiles de Saint-Médard de Soissons, before 814. Paris, BnF, Ms. latin. 8850. Gallica 2012. Digital, 10 sep. 2016.

⁵ National Gallery. Wilton Diptych. Inv. Nr. NG4451.

ARM

(anno) 1377 - Richard II. Son of *Edward the Black Prince*.

Used *the same arms* as his grandfather, *Edward III*, upon his Great Seal, but having chosen *St. Edward the Confessor* as his patron, he *impaled* the arms of Confessor (being *az. a cross patonce between five martlets or*) with the arms of *France and England, quarterly*.

Richard II, was the first of the English monarchs who used supporters, which were *two angels*, and beneath the shield, *a white hart couchant, gorged with a gold coronet, and chained under a tree* - a device from the arms of his mother, *Joan Countess of Kent*, and which he used as a badge.

This King likewise used other badges, viz. *a peascod branch, with the cods open, but the peas out. The sun in splendor, - and the eradicated stump of a tree coupé, or.*

In some instances the Arms of England were placed in the 1st quarter. [...]

(anno) 1460 Edward IV

[...] A white hart attired, accolled with a coronet, and chained or, on a mount vert, which he used in honour of King Richard II, it being his badge.

A white rose rayonné or, and the sun in splendour or, were likewise two badges used by this King. (BERRY, 1828 ?)

For Sangiorgi⁶ (1886-1960), the persistence of a type of image is not linked to fashion, characterized by transience, but by stability.

... Ma non la sola ragione estetica governa il formarsi e il cristallizzarsi dei motivi: come la religione e la storia sono fonti alle arti plastiche, alla tessile i simboli. Quando per secoli, al variare dell'ambiente estetico vediamo resistere tenacemente un dato motivo, siamo indotti a pensare che in esso si riponga un significato più stabile della moda volubile. (SANGIORGI, 1920, p. 106)

We see that this figuration is similar to that of contemporary fabrics, such as those of the textile collection of the Metropolitan Museum of New York, discussed below.

Three Fragments in the Textile Collection of the Metropolitan Museum of New York

In this collection, there are examples of medieval brocaded fabrics, including three deer motif fragments, which we will call 1, 2 and 3 respectively, being 1 and 2 similar to those treated in our analysis.

⁶ Sangiorgi, Giorgi. *Contributi allo studio dell'arte tessile*, Bestetti & Tumminelli, Milano, 1920. p. 106. Archive.org - digital, 13 sep. 2016.



Fig. 3. From left to right. Fragment 1 *Brocade Textile*, 14th century, Rogers Fund, 1907; Fragment 2 *Textile Fragment with Recumbent Harts, Eagles, Clouds, and Sunrays*. 1390s, Fletcher Fund, 1946; Fragment 3. *Textile*, 14th century, Fletcher Fund, 1946. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

Fragment 1 (Accession Number [07.243.4](#)) was sold by Schulze (Hanns?) in 1907, dating back to the 14th century, made in Lucca, Italy, incorporated into the Rogers Fund in 1907. In order to understand the motif, a reconstruction was made with the painting of external parts.

Fragment 2 (Accession Number [46.156.36a, b](#)), purchased in 1946, purchased from the collector Adolph Loewi (1888-1977), belonging to the collection of Giorgio Sangiorgi. In the description there is the following note "[...] A similar silk appears in the painting of the English king Richard II created after 1396". (THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM, ONLINE, n.d.).

As for fragment 3 (Accession Number [46.156.38](#)) Sangiorgi wrote in "*Contributi allo studio dell'arte tessile*" (1920), the analysis of some patterns in the chapter '*Considerazioni sopra alcuni motivi e simboli tessili*', pointing out the possible elaboration of the drawing from the work of Giovannino di Grassi (1350-1398), whose reference would be one of the images contained in the *Taccuino di Bergamo* [*Taccuino di disegni*] (1390-1405), Biblioteca civica A. Mai, cassaf. 1.21, in a folio with the representation of the leopard chained in the garden. In another folio, there are eagles nesting on a hill, with the sun under clouds from which rays emerge. In addition to these images, we can see another configuration of two phoenix tied by a crown in the collar and chained in a sun in splendor (Folio C.17v; C.18r). The motif is given for repetition, as suggested by the pictures below, left and right, in a diamond arrangement. In this case, we are interested in observing the crown on the collar and the chain, a trace similar to the images found in the fabric of the deer.

Another contribution of the author concerns the appropriation of images of other oriental cultures, such as the transformation of the Chinese symbol of *Luen*, giving a clue about the construction of the image and the place of production.

Diversa sorte ebbe invece il simbolo cinese *Luen* che ci offre un evidente esempio, fra i tanti, dell'attivo potere trasmigratorio di certi segni ideografici, di regione in regione. Detto simbolo è di tre sfere fiammeggianti meggianti poste sovra fiore di loto, ad indicare, questo, la terra e l'acqua, quelle, il cielo. Tale appare primieramente in Oriente in una seta cinese del secolo VII, nel Tesoro di Mara (fig. 3 A) [p. 107]; ritorna quindi nel suo ulteriore cammino verso Occidente nel drappo ond'è covertata la tomba di una moglie di Murad II (1451), in Brussa; e poi in altri velluti, tappeti e maioliche osmanici; ma ivi in forma di tre palle e di ondulazioni, in luogo dell'acquatico loto. In Italia il simbolo rifiorisce in molteplici allegorie cosmiche, come ad esempio su di un broccato veneziano, recante dette sfere fra aquile raggianti verso leoni abbeveranti sì (fig. 3 B) [p. 107]; poscia, corrotto, scompare da un ultimo drappo quattrocentesco, qual semplice motivo privo di contenuto. (figura 3 C) [p. 107].

Forse per la stessa via, altrettanto tempo impiegarono le nubi stilizzate in nastri a raggiungere dalla Cina le anconette del Trecento nostro, che le accolsero nei loro cieli d'oro. (SANGIORGI, 1920, p. 108;113)⁷

When we examine the work of Falke (1913) analyzed by Sangiorgi in relation to fragment 3 and its possible approximation with the drawings of Jacopo Bellini (1400-1470), we remember the theme of the sail, heraldic sign existing in the decoration of the façade of the Church of Santa Maria Novella, work of the *Impresa Ruccellai*, we can see in figures 477 and 481 some elements that may have been used in the composition of the image of the deer, present in figure 483, whose origin would be Venice, dating from the 15th century.

Franz Bock and the popularization of the motif

The image of the deer is compiled by canon Franz Bock⁸ (1823-1899) in [Tafel IX] (Figure 4) of volume 1 of *Geschichte der liturgischen Gewänder des Mittelalters, oder Entstehung und Entwicklung der kirchlichen Ornate und Paramente in Rücksicht auf Stoff, Gewebe, Farbe, Zeichnung, Schnitt und*

⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 107-108, 113.

⁸ "... In 1852 he organised an exhibition of ancient and new church textiles and goldsmith art in Krefeld. Bock founded a weaving mill for silk church textiles made after medieval models. In the spring of 1853 he travelled through France, making numerous purchases for the Diözesanmuseum; his habit of cutting small samples from old robes for his collection of historical material patterns earned him the nickname of "Scissors-Bock" (a word play in German, "Scheren-Bock"). From 1854 to 1875, he was a board member of the "Christian Society for the Promotion of the Fine Arts in the Archbishopric of Cologne", bearing the title of "conservator" for the Diözesanmuseum, a title which all of the other members of the museum board also carried from 1855 onwards. In 1854 and 1855 he worked on and published the museum's first exhibition catalogue. Bock was curate at St. Alban's Church in Cologne. In 1862 he was made honorary canon in Aachen, actually becoming canon in Aachen in 1868." **Kolumba**. *Franz Bock*, digital, 1. mar. 2015.

*rituelle Bedeutung*⁹, published in 1859 in Bonn. The drawing was taken from a cope's fragment (Figure 5) in the Cathedral of Brandenburg, where he was around 1853¹⁰ and collected some pieces, organizing a textile collection that would later become part of collections of museums of decorative arts, such as the current Victoria & Albert Museum¹¹, as says the text of the exhibition "Bock auf Stoff" by the Cathedral of Brandenburg, in 2013,

... In the 19th century canon Franz Bock from the German city of Aachen (also known as Aix-la-Chapelle) carefully collected sections of antique and medieval luxury textiles as models for his homemade silk manufacture. From the garbs from Brandenburg Cathedral's collection he also took material and embroidery patterns. Later he sold his collection to newly opened arts and crafts museums throughout Europe. Consequently, parts of the Brandenburg garbs can today be found in Paris, London, Vienna, Berlin and Karlsruhe (Domstift Brandenburg, 2013, ONLINE).



Fig. 4. (left) Tafel IX. Franz Bock, *Geschichte der liturgischen Gewänder des Mittelalters...*, 1859. Fig. 5 (right). *Cope*. Third quarter of the 14th century. Silk, gold thread. Inv. no. P1, Brandenburg Cathedral Museum, Brandenburg, Germany.

⁹ **Bock, Franz.** *Geschichte der liturgischen Gewänder des Mittelalters, oder Entstehung und Entwicklung der kirchlichen Ornate und Paramente in Rücksicht auf Stoff, Gewebe, Farbe, Zeichnung, Schnitt und rituelle Bedeutung*, 3 vols, Henry & Cohen, Bonn, 1859-1871. The digital archives to volumes 1 and 3 are available in Heidelberger historische Bestände, in: <http://digi.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/diglit/bock1859bd1> and <http://digi.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/diglit/bock1871bd3>; the volume 2 is available 2 in Archive.org, in: https://archive.org/details/geschichtederlit02bock_0.

¹⁰ Geertje Gerhold, email message to author, emails message to author, 30 nov. 2015.

¹¹ "... In 1882, Bock attempted to sell to South Kensington Museum his entire collection of textiles which, he stated, 'fill 4 rooms and of themselves form a splendid Museum'. These and other collections (including ironwork and sculpture) were exhibited at the Museum and Bock himself travelled to London to superintend the opening of the cases and the chronological arrangement of the textiles. William Morris, in his capacity as Art Referee, recommended that the Museum should purchase a selection of star items; at the event, the collection was purchased by Manchester Corporation in 1883." Victoria and Albert Museum. Dr Franz Johann Joseph Bock, Digital, 1 mar. 2015.

In 1861 A. Breuil writes the article *Chasse d'Albert-Le-Grand à l'église Saint-André de Cologne*¹², published in the *Revue de Art Chrétien*, with illustrations by Franz Bock, which will be a source of inspiration for textile manufacturers in France. In this way, the motif was made by Tassinari & Chatel in 1865, classified as Patron 4002¹³, as we can see in the images (Figure 6).



Fig. 1 Patron 4002, *Livre de dessins* (left) and Patron 4002 (right). Photo: ©Tassinari & Chatel.

As to the interpretation of the image, Roon (2010, p.76) recalls that the motif is inserted in the Arab tradition, but it is seen by Bock as a Christian symbol, thus corresponding to Psalm 42:2, information given by the author himself in the description of the Table IX (BOCK, 1859, p. 54-55)

Another reference to the deer motif is in Friedrich's publication *Ornamente der Gewebe*, published in 1874. Fischbach questions if it would be from saracen or luchesse origin.

[104] b Von gleich grosser Begabung war der Zeichner, welcher die nach dem Lichte und himmlischen Thau sich sehnenden Hirsche componirt hat. Wir sind im Zweifel, ob dieses Ornament sarazenischen Ursprungs ist, oder ob einer der geschickten Zeichner Lucca's im 13. oder 14. Jahrh. in so täuschender Weise die bekannten Motive der Glorie etc. verwerthete. Die Unmittelbarkeit und Frische der Composition und vor Allem das Fehlen jeder speciellen christlichen Symbolik spricht dafür, dass wir es mit keiner Variation zu thun haben. Die ausserordentlich glücklich durchgeführte Idee befriedigte in ganz gleicher

¹² Breuil, A. "Chasse d'Albert-Le-Grand à l'église Saint-André de Cologne", in "Revue de l'Art Chrétien". Tome V. Août 1861. Desclée, De Brouwer, & cie, Lille, 1861. Archive.org, digital, 13 sep. 2016.

¹³ Carole Damour, mail message to author, emails message to author, 16 sep. 2016.

Weise das religiöse Gefühl der Sarazenen wie der Christen. Auf Seite 61 ist dargelegt, wie der Mohamedaner das Siehversenken in Gott als höchste Seligkeit betrachtete. Die Adler, welche in der Lichtquelle sitzen, und die auf blumiger Wiese angeketteten, nach Thau lechzenden Hirsche drücken in reinsten Weise die auch im Christenthum so lebendige Sehnsucht nach Gnade und Erleuchtung aus. Dass wir diesem Muster in verschiedenem Colorit im 14. und 15. Jahrh. begegnen, und dass es wahrscheinlich sowohl in Lucca wie in Venedig etc. gewebt wurde ist begreiflich. (FISCHBACH, 1874, Tafel V)

Thus, we can see that the production of textiles with this motif occurs in France, Germany, Holland and Belgium, during the 19th and the mid-20th centuries, with the export to other countries of both Europe itself and America, where we find several samples in Catalogs of collections, for example, in the catalog of the collection of the Musée Royal d'Art et d'Histoire de Belgium, made by Errera (1901), available for viewing in the online catalog ([Tx. 0532](#)); in the collection of the Church of St. Peter in Louvain dated from the 16th century (Object number [68775](#)).

These textiles probably arrived at the end of the 19th century and beginning of the 20th century in Brazil during the period of the First Republic or Old Republic (1889-1930), a time of many tensions between religious and civil entities.

... The advent of the Republic in 1890, paradoxically, brought the salvation of religious orders in Brazil with the separation of Church and State and associative freedom. The Abbot of the Baía, D. Domingos da Transfiguração Machado, elected Abbot General, turned to Rome and was directed to the Congregation of Beuron, succeeded in arriving at Olinda Dom Gerardo Van Caloen on 17/VIII/1895, with a group of monks who would revive the Brazilian Congregation. It is because, when the religious orders were expelled in Portugal in 1834, Brazilian monasticism, amputated from its generative matrix, after the crisis of the Empire and proclamation of the Republic, owes its revitalization to the German monks of the Congregation of Beuron, who, since 1895, aided those monasteries almost to extinction. The intrepid action of the Belgian monk, Dom Gerardo van Caloen and the monastery of St. Andrew of Zevenkerken, which he founded in Belgium with the intention of providing vocations and help for the Benedictine restoration in Brazil, was greatly valued. Named titular bishop in 1906, and Archiabade in 1908, D. Gerardo Van Caloen resigned in 1915 and passed away in 1932 in France. (DIAS, 2011, p. 224)¹⁴

In addition, the reorganization of the Catholic Church after Vatican Council I (1869-1870), convened and presided over by Pope Pius IX, also had repercussions. Dom Duarte Leopoldo e Silva (1867-1938) is the capital figure

¹⁴ Dias, Geraldo José Amadeu Coelho. *Quando os Monges eram uma Civilização... Beneditinos: Espírito, Alma e Corpo*. Afrontamento, FLUP, Centro de Investigação Transdisciplinar "Cultura, Espaço e Memória", Porto, 2011, p. 224.

for the restructuring of the church in São Paulo, during his time as a Metropolitan Archbishop (1907-1938). This ecclesiastical authority was also an honorary member of the Venerable Third Order of Penance of the City of St. Paul, a brotherhood founded in 1644.

During his archbishopric, many of the Baroque and Rococo churches were demolished and, in their place or new location, new churches were built to serve the growing population, considering that the City of São Paulo had a rapid population and economic growth, driven by immigration and wealth generated by coffee, so it demanded the construction of new temples, built in revivalist and historicist styles such as Neogothic or Neo-Roman. Most of the ornaments were imported by liturgical houses or brought by religious and patrons from Germany, France, Holland and England.

In the journal *Correio Paulistano* in its section *Culto Cathólico* of June 2, 1914, a news article was published about the Feast of the Holy Spirit in the "Abacial Church of St. Benedict" with the use of vestments designed by Dom Adalbert Gresnigt (1877-1956) from Germany, as well as the miter and the abbot's crozier, made by the Maredsous School of Arts¹⁵, and in another passage "and we know that, in addition to these artistic vestments, the Benedictine Order awaits, for a short time, several orders of the same kind, in order to render religious solemnities in the abbatial church as sumptuous as possible" (CORREIO PAULISTANO, 1914, p. 2).

It should be noted that another set of funerals¹⁶ was part of the collection of VOTSFPCSP, with the existence of two veils of chalices.

¹⁵ "... Dès le 30 novembre 1890, il présente à la communauté le voeu qu'il a fait de construire un établissement d'enseignement destiné à des enfants pauvres, projet apte – il l'espère – à susciter l'éveil de nombreuses vocations religieuses. Son projet primitif n'est pas de créer des sections d'art mais, plus modestement, de former des menuisiers, des forgerons, des plombiers et des cordonniers.

Mais le Père Pascal Rox va faire évoluer le projet initial de son Abbé car il a la vision d'un Moyen Age monastique idéal où les monastères auraient disposé d'écoles d'art adonnées à l'orfèvrerie sacrée, à l'émaillerie religieuse, à la reliure de manuscrits liturgiques, à la sculpture, au mobilier d'église et à la confection de vêtements du culte.

Devenu, en 1903, directeur de l'École Saint-Joseph, le Père Pascal Rox pourra y mettre ses idées en pratique." Abbaye de Maredsous. *L'Ecole de Métiers d'Art*. Digital, 29 sep. 2015.

¹⁶ According with *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, CHAPTER VI - The Requisites for the Celebration of Mass, IV Sacred Vestments, "...345. The purpose of a variety in the color of the sacred vestments is to give effective expression even outwardly to the specific character of the mysteries of faith being celebrated and to a sense of Christian life's passage through the course of the liturgical year. 346. As to the color of sacred vestments, the traditional usage is to be retained: namely,

...

e. Violet or purple is used in Advent and Lent. It may also be worn in Offices and Masses for the Dead (cf. below).

f. Beside violet, white or black vestments may be worn at funeral services and at other Offices and Masses for the Dead in the dioceses of the United States of America." Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments. *Institutio Generalis Missalis Romani*, 2003, English translation *General Instruction of the Roman Missal - Including Adaptations for*

VOTSFPCSP performed several funeral ceremonies in his church, with processions going out to the local cemeteries. Due to the good state of preservation of the collection of the Monastery of São Bento, we infer that its use was reduced, which allowed us to evaluate in its whole and to understand the relations between its parts.



Fig. 2. *Chasuble of funerals*. n.d. Collection of the São Bento Monastery in São Paulo.
Photo: @Rosângela Ap, 2016

As in the fabrics, the motif of the deer forms the relief in the Chapel of the Blessed Sacrament¹⁷ (Figure 8) of the same basilica, also designed by Dom Adalbert Gresnigt, according to the note of Dom Amaro van Emelen (1863-1943), O.S.B., published in *Correio Paulistano* on April 5, 1917.

... All the paintings are converted to the central scene, representing the Savior in the act of breaking the bread destined to be transformed, from there a moment, in the Eucharistic bread, perpetual and supernatural food of our souls. These works of pictorial art to the Benedictine monk D. Adalberto Gresnigt and to his assistant brother Clement Frischauf, being the first one to plan the set and the parts, both decorative and sculptures.

(...) The altar, however, is made of marble from Italy, its front highlighted by a bronze plaque, symbolizing the secularity of the Christians for the eucharistic food, figured by the biblical deer to quench thirst in a source of clean waters. (VAN EMELEN, 1917, p. 3)

the Dioceses of the United States of America, translator Conference of Bishops of the United States of America. Vatican, 2003, digital, 13 sep. 2016.

¹⁷ The Chapel of Blessed Sacrament was consecrated in April 2, 1917 by the Metropolitan Archbishop Dom Duarte Leopoldo e Silva. *Correio Paulistano*. "Chronica Religiosa", Tuesday, April 3, 1917, nr. 19300, p. 3. Memoria Bn - digital, 20 mar. 2016.



Fig. 3. *Relief*, n.d. Golden bronze. Basilica of Our Lady of the Assumption, São Bento Monastery in São Paulo, São Paulo. Photo: @Rosângela Ap, 2016.

Conclusions

We noticed that in the case of the textile motif, there were changes in the elaboration of the image, as it can be seen in figures 3 and 4, respectively. In the first, the animal has the crown around its neck, the second not, which made us wonder what would have been the source and if there was any connection between the image of the phoenix *Taccuino of Bergamo* or even with the weapon of Ricardo II, both made in the 14th century.

The influence of Eastern cultures - China and the Middle East - helps while explaining the modulation and configuration of elements such as the use of eagles, lotus flowers, rays, nimbus and Luen, imagery appropriations that enhance the final message, but also reveals the various cultural exchanges in the medieval period, in this case between the 13th and 14th centuries, since Bock reports the presence of a play with the motif of the deer in the inventory of the Cathedral of St. Paul in 1295.

Also, we found musical representations in the compositions "*Sicut Cervus*", moteto for four voices, by Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina (1525-1594) and "*Quemadmodum desiderat cervus*", BuxWV 92 (c.1690) by Dietrich Buxtehude (1637 -1707), composed for tenor, 2 violins and continuo. Thus, music integrates both liturgical space and liturgy, responding to the expectations of the beauty and total art involved in worship with a view to the Divine.

The fabric is still produced by the *Haus der Seidenkulture*, located in Krefeld, whose original designs (design Nos. 220, 170 and 320) are in the museum archives. It is interesting to note that this company proposes "*By purchasing this item you are not just acquiring a stylish, pure-silk product, you are also helping to preserve our treasure for future generations. We wish you much pleasure with your scarf and / or necktie.*", extending the use of textiles beyond the religious purpose (Haus der Seidenkultur, n.d., Online).

We think that when they are exhibited, the vestments acts as activators of the imaginary of the spectator or faithful, and perhaps reach the catechetical dimension, the image being a pictorial instruction, as already pointed out by Gombrich (2012b).

We understand that Psalm 42 (41) has been a source of inspiration for artists, where we have located representations of it since the 4th century AD, and that Saint Augustine's commentaries may have been one of the possible textual sources for the elaboration of the images, given his descriptive character of deer behavior.

As the Psalm 42 (41) refers to the relationship between Baptism and the Eucharist, in our case, we found its representation in liturgical textile and in the altar front of the Chapel of Blessed Sacrament in the Basilica of Our Lady of the Assumption of the Monastery of St. Benedict of São Paulo. Concerning the liturgical space, the motif gains dispositions, configurations, materials and artistic techniques of the most diverse arrangements, with greater or less complexity of the compositional elements.

Finally, it seems to us that the elaboration of the image brings a consideration to the question of reuse and recombination, with the attribution of new meaning becoming part of the liturgy. Thus, we infer that 'recycling' or 'reuse' of images, are possibly two words that help us reflect on the medieval image in its most diverse presentations and representations, whether in the decoration of a building, in a manuscript, in a song or in a vestment.

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L'EGLISE DE L'HOPITAL DU MONASTERE DE BRÂNCOVENI (Dép. OLT). RECHERCHES ICONOGRAPHIQUES

Tereza Sinigalia*

Abstract: The Church of the Hospital from Brancoveni Monastery (Olt County). Iconographic Research. The present paper aims to provide information on the recent restoration of the murals inside the small church of the „Bolnița” (Romanian word for a chapel lying next to a monastic hospital) of the Brâncoveni Monastery (Department Olt), built by the Prince of Wallachia Constantin Brâncoveanu in 1700.

All the inside of the church was covered with frescoes, but my attention focused on the paintings in the narthex. As the church is dedicated to The Archangels, the upper part of the walls is covered with 10 compositions illustrating facts from the Ancient Testament and from the inter-testamental texts in which Angels Michael et Gabriel were involved: *The Sacrifice of Abraham, Lot and the destruction of Sodom; Prophet Gideon; The Fake Prophet Balaam; Prophet Daniel and the dream of the king Nabucodonosor; The dream of the Prophet Elijah; Archangel Gabriel announces Zacharias and his wife Elisabeth about the birth of a son, the future John the Baptist; Archangel Gabriel announces Joachim and Ann about the birth of a daughter, Mary; Archangel Gabriel advises Joseph to take Mary as his fiancé; Annunciation.*

A huge Votive composition of the ancestors of the Prince Constantin Brâncoveanu (*grandfather, father, grand uncle, the Prince Matei Basarab and his father*) is painted on the lower register of the room. *Princess Maria, Brâncoveanu's wife, is present, too.*

Keywords: Brâncoveni Monastery, “Bolnița”, murals, iconographic programme, Archangels

En 1699, à la mort de sa mère, Stanca Cantacuzino, la fille du Grand Chambellan Constantin Cantacuzino et la sœur du Prince Șerban et de ses frères Constantin le Grand Ecurier, Mihai le Chef de l'armée, Drăgici, Iordache et Matei, tous grands dignitaires, le Prince régnant Constantin Brâncoveanu (1688 – 1714), afin de respecter le désir de sa mère d'être ensevelie près de son mari Papa Brâncoveanu, a démoli l'ancienne église du monastère de Brâncoveni, bâtie par ses ancêtres, et a décidé d'en construire, sur son emplacement une autre, plus grande, qui va être peinte à son tour [Fig. 1].

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Fig. 1.



Fig. 2.

Le monastère avait déjà une enceinte fortifiée et une forte tour-cochère [Fig. 2], construites avant 1640 par le Prince Matei Basarab¹, le cousin de Preda Brâncoveanu, le grand-père du Prince Constantin. Il avait aussi une grande maison pour l'higoumène, entourée de caves impressionnantes [Fig. 3].

Après la finalisation de la grande église (le *catholicon*), en 1699, toujours à l'initiative de Constantin Brâncoveanu, en dehors des murs d'enceinte a été construite la petite église de la „Bolnița”, pour laquelle le Prince a décidé de reprendre la forme et les dimensions de l'ancienne demeure de Dieu² [Fig. 4].



Fig. 3.



Fig. 4.

Cette formule avait déjà une tradition dans l'architecture monacale de la Valachie. A la fin du XV^e siècle, un nouveau programme architectural fait

¹ P. B. Bakšić, dans *Călători străini despre Țările Române (Voyageurs étrangers sur les Pays Roumains)*, tome V, București, Editis Științifica, 1973, p. 208.

² Voir infra, le texte de l'inscription dédicatoire.

son apparition, avec le monastère Bistrița (dép. Vâlcea), fondation de la famille des grands dignitaires Craiovescu. Il s'agit de celui désigné comme "Bolnița" (hôpital), une église de dimensions relativement réduites, construite en dehors des enceintes principales des monastères, destinée aux offices pour les moines malades ou très vieux, qui habitaient des cellules dans les alentours.

Le prince Constantin Brâncoveanu a suivi cette tradition et dans ses fondations de Hurezi et Brâncoveni de petits ensembles de ce type ont été bâtis. La „Bolnița” du monastère de Hurezi est la fondation de 1696 de la princesse Maria, la femme de Constantin Brâncoveanu.

L'inscription dédicatoire en pierre de la „Bolnița” du monastère de Brâncoveni nous informe que [Fig. 5]: „*Cette sainte et divine petite église, qui a été faite comme bolnița, est similaire et ressemble exactement à la première église du monastère, qui est remplacée par cette grande et belle qu'on voit aujourd'hui placée au même endroit, bâtie dès les fondements par l'illuminé et le glorieux Io Constantin Basaraba Voïvode, et dédiée aux Grands*



Fig. 5.

Archanges Michel et Gabriel et aux autres Forces Célestes, dans l'année du Christ 1700, mois de mai, le 20^e jour”³.

L'église de la „Bolnița” a fonctionné parallèlement avec le monastère jusqu'au 1863, quand, par la décision du Gouvernement des Principautés Unies, la majorité des monastères du pays ont cessé de fonctionner. Le temps et la négligence des hommes l'avaient affectée.

Le monastère de Brâncoveni a recommencé de fonctionner comme couvent de nonnes en 1985. Les travaux de restauration ont immédiatement débuté, premièrement au catholicon, puis à la „Bolnița” et aux bâtiments monacaux. Parce que la tour sur la nef a été endommagée, ainsi qu'une bonne partie des voûtes, on a décidé de les consolider, mais les solutions utilisées par les constructeurs étaient assez dures et même négligentes.

L'église, de petites dimensions, a un plan triconque et une tour sur la nef. L'espace sacré est partagé entre le sanctuaire, la nef et le narthex.

Un ou deux ans après la finalisation de la construction, l'église était peinte à l'intérieur par une équipe de peintres, qui, à la différence des autres ensembles bâtis par Constantin Brâncoveanu, n'a pas signé son œuvre.

³ Aurelian Sacerdoțeanu, *Constantin Brâncoveanu și ctitoriile sale din Oltenia (Constantin Brâncoveanu et ses fondations en Olténie)*, Mitropolia Olteniei, Craiova, 1964, nr. 9 -10, p. 725.

Un fait significatif à commenter est que cet anonymat s'étend aussi à l'auteur du programme iconographique, programme qui, à plusieurs points de vue, est différent de celui des églises de „Bolnița” antérieurement construites et décorées dans la région de Vâlcea (Bistrița, Cozia, Hurezi), par l'introduction de thèmes nouveaux, autres que ceux déjà connus par les récentes publications des historiens de l'art Ioana Iancovescu et ceux du groupe coordonné par professeur Corina Popa⁴.

Si pour la „Bolnița” du monastère de Hurezi, comme pour toutes les églises de cet ensemble monacal, la recherche a établi qu'on pourrait attribuer à l'higoumène Ioan la conception iconographique des ensembles muraux, les particularités retrouvées dans la peinture de la „Bolnița” de Brâncoveni nous obligent à affirmer que nous sommes devant un iconographe différent, maître d'une vision susceptible de choisir et d'accentuer des thèmes nouveaux, rares, dont certains ne seront jamais retrouvés dans les églises de la Valachie.

Au contexte créé par ces particularités on ajoute les caractéristiques stylistiques de l'ensemble mural. La restauration touche à sa fin. L'équipe jeune coordonnée par le professeur Oliviu Boldura a pratiquement mis au jour et récupéré la plus grande partie des peintures, abordées avec un professionnalisme sans faille.

Nous avons aujourd'hui la possibilité de l'analyser, et une monographie très récente est le premier travail qui les met en valeur⁵.

Je ne parlerai pas de l'ensemble mural en entier, mais d'un seul grand thème, solutionné du point de vue iconographique et artistique par un groupement de scènes placées dans les lunettes au-dessous des grands arcs sur lesquels, par l'intermédiaire des pendentifs, se décharge le poids de la calotte qui se trouve sur le narthex [Fig. 6].

L'icône de la dédicace [Fig. 7] se trouve dans une niche de la paroi est du narthex, au-dessus de l'entrée vers la nef. *Les Archanges* sont représentés dans la formule habituelle de l'Eglise de l'Est, comme un groupe compact, vu dans une perspective théorique, les deux dans le centre portant dans les mains un *clipeus* qui renferme le buste du *Christ-Emmanuel bénissant*.

Dix scènes viennent illustrer l'implication des deux Archanges les plus connus, *Michel et Gabriel*, dans des séquences de l'Ancien Testament et dans quelques textes intertestamentaires aussi.

Les moments choisis par l'iconographe visent l'intervention des Archanges dans les situations qui évoquent explicitement leur présence comme messagers de Yahvé, afin de soutenir, de sauver ou de menacer des personnages privilégiés, respectivement coupables: Abraham, Lot, Le

⁴ Corina Popa, Ioana Iancovescu, Vlad Bedros, Elisabeta Negrău, *Repertoriul picturilor murale brâncovenești. I. Județul Vâlcea*, tome I – texte, tome 2 – illustrations, Bucarest, Editions UNARTE, 2008.

⁵ Tereza Sinigalia, Oliviu Boldura, *Brâncoveni. Un drum spre trecut, o cale către viitor (Brâncoveni. Un chemin vers le passé, une voie vers l'avenir)*, București, Ed. ACS, 2016.

Prophète Gédéon, le faux Prophète Balaam, mais aussi les Prophètes Elie et Daniel.



Fig. 6.



Fig. 7.

Les séquences se référant aux quatre premiers ont été peintes à la partie supérieure des lunettes, et les deux autres dans la zone inférieure de la paroi ouest, au-dessus de l'embrasure de l'entrée.

L'état de conservation de ces compositions est différente de l'une à l'autre, situation qui empêche leur identification sûre et leur placement dans la suite des textes vétérotestamentaires.

Le cycle vétérotestamentaire commence dans la partie supérieure de la lunette sud, avec une séquence moins lisible, inspirée par les récits abrahamiques. Il semble s'agir du *Sacrifice d'Isaac* [Fig. 8], sacrifice demandé par Yahvé à Abraham afin de mettre sa foi à l'épreuve. On sait des même textes [Genèse 22, 21 – 41], que Yahvé, par l'intermédiaire d'un Ange, a arrêté la main du père en train d'empoigner le fils unique, légitimement et longuement désiré, qui était déjà attaché à l'autel de sacrifice. Dans le même temps, l'Ange, généralement identifié comme Michel, indique à Abraham un bélier qui devait être offert comme holocauste.



Fig. 8.

Isaac est considéré comme un prototype de Jésus, le Dieu-Fils devenu homme, se sacrifiant pour le salut du monde maculé par le péché adamique. Mais, à la différence du Dieu d'Abraham, Dieu le Père accepte le sacrifice rédempteur de son Fils.

Au-dessus de l'icône dédicatoire, sur la paroi de l'est, l'histoire de la *Destruction de Sodome* amenée par les péchés de ses habitants se recentre sur

le personnage nommé Lot, le neveu d'Abraham [Genèse 19, 1 – 23] [Fig. 9]. L'épisode succède à l'étrange discussion, presque une sorte de „transaction”, visant la destruction de la ville et de ses habitants, entre Yahvé et Abraham [Genèse 18, 20 – 33], qui lui demande, presque impertinent, en diminuant progressivement le nombre possible des justes de 50 à 10, comme justification du salut de la ville, dans le cas où ils existeraient. Or, même ce nombre minimal n'existe pas, Lot étant le seul juste. Ainsi, les deux Archanges qui ont demandé son hospitalité essaient de le convaincre, d'une manière impérative, de fuir avec sa femme, ses filles et ses gendres. Ils ne devraient pas regarder en arrière parce qu'une pluie de cendre et de soufre va détruire la ville. Les gendres de Lot refusent de partir, mais celui-ci part avec le reste de sa famille. En dépit de l'avertissement des Anges, la femme de Lot regarde en arrière et est soudainement transformée en un pilier de sel.



Fig. 9.

Ce thème est interprété comme une preuve de la miséricorde divine face aux élus de l'ancien Israël, comme Jésus le rappelle aux apôtres, dans l'*Évangile de Luc* (17, 28 – 33), quand il parle du jour où le Fils de l'Homme va venir, Dieu va détruire les pécheurs et sauver les justes. Et pour mieux leur faire comprendre ses paroles, il leur rappelle l'épisode de l'Ancien Testament, duquel ils avaient précisément connaissance: " Ce qui arriva du temps de Lot arrivera pareillement. Les hommes mangeaient, buvaient, achetaient, vendaient, plantaient, bâtissaient ; mais le jour où Lot sortit de Sodome, une

pluie de feu et de souffre tomba du ciel, et les fit tous périr. Il en sera de même le jour où le Fils de l'homme paraîtra. En ce jour-là, que celui qui sera sur le toit, et qui aura ses effets dans la maison, ne descende pas pour les prendre ; et que celui qui sera dans les champs ne retourne pas non plus en arrière. Souvenez-vous de la femme de Lot. Celui qui cherchera à sauver sa vie la perdra, et celui qui la perdra la retrouvera. ” (Luc 17.32, Bible éd. par Louis Segond, 1910).

Le troisième épisode inaugure le „Cycle des Prophètes”. *Le Prophète Gédéon*, de l'Ancien Testament [Juges 6, 8 – 40], est mieux connu par une seule séquence, celle dénommée „*La Toison de Gédéon*”, mais les péripécies qui le concernent sont plus nombreuses et plus amples et c'est à eux que fait allusion la composition de Brâncoveni. „La Toison” est figurée dans la partie droite de la composition [Fig. 10]. C'est le miracle de la *Toison* mouillée par la rosée tandis que la terre tout autour reste sèche, et puis la seconde séquence dans laquelle la terre devient humide et la rosée reste sèche. Les deux miracles sont interprétés dans le sens d'une prophétie messianique, la rosée préfigurant la naissance du Messie d'une Vierge et la perpétuelle virginité de Marie. Les Archanges sont les compagnons de Gédéon sur la scène de la lunette nord. L'un des Archanges demande à Gédéon de présenter à Dieu une offrande de viande de chevreau et de pain. Le Prophète a vu le visage du Seigneur et a bâti sur cet endroit un autel dénommé „La Paix de Dieu” [Fig. 10] ; en même temps, il a détruit l'autel du dieu Baal et puis il a conduit les milices d'Israël vers la victoire.



Fig. 10.

Dans la lunette de l'ouest, l'Archange Michel fait son apparition devant le faux prophète Balaam [Fig. 11]. Dans la composition on a utilisé une perspective montante, facilitée par l'emplacement de l'action sur une colline, avec deux surfaces clôturées par de palissades, une citadelle sur la ligne de l'horizon, avec de murailles d'enceinte, de tours et une église en dehors d'elle. L'Archange lève son bras, armé d'une épée, visant d'un geste menaçant Balaam, effondré devant lui, près de sa propre ânesse, qui était maltraitée par le prophète. Dans le livre intitulé *Les Nombres* [22, 15 – 41, 23, 1 -], Balaam est présenté dans une posture ambigüe: personnage positif dans certains textes, négatif dans certains autres, il était considéré comme un prophète des non-israéliens. Ce caractère a été accentué par les juifs, le philosophe Philon d'Alexandrie et l'historien Joseph Flavius, Origène et puis par les Pères⁶.



Fig. 11.

Les deux autres scènes inspirées de l'Ancien Testament se trouvent dans la partie inférieure de la lunette ouest. La première représente *le Prophète Elie* [3 Rois 19, 5 - 9]. Elie s'enfuit dans le désert à cause de la femme du roi Achab, Isabel, qui l'avait menacé. Il se couche sous un sycomore et dort. Pendant le sommeil, l'Ange de Dieu l'appelle par son nom et lui ordonne:

⁶ Dans *Septante*, traduction roumaine *Septuaginta*, tom 1, volume cordonné par Cristian Bădiliță, Francisca Băltăceanu, Monica Brășteanu, Dan Slușanschi et pr. Ioan-Florin Florescu, voir le Commentaire des éditeurs au chapitre 22, péripocopes 22, 2 -24, Bucarest, Collège La Nouvelle Europe et Editions Polirom, 2004, p. 487 – 488.

„Réveille-toi et mange!”. Près de sa tête, Elie trouve un tourteau d’orge et une cruche à l’eau. Les vivres vont lui servir pendant son cheminement de 40 jours à travers le désert [Fig. 12]. C’est l’épisode illustré *ad litteram* dans l’image. L’exégèse patristique voit en Elie un prototype de Jésus-Christ, mais elle déchiffre aussi la signification eschatologique de sa figure⁷.



Fig. 12.

Le dernier épisode vétérotestamentaire est une illustration inspirée du *Livre du Prophète Daniel* [2,19 –]: *L’Ange vient à l’aide du Prophète Daniel afin de déchiffrer le mystère du songe du roi Nabuchodonosor*. L’image surprend d’une manière intelligente et inventive la modalité par laquelle le Prophète Daniel déchiffre le mystère de Nabuchodonosor. Le roi lui-même ne dévoile pas son songe, mais demande à ses devineurs et finalement à Daniel à lui dire ce qu’il a rêvé et quelle est la signification de sa vision. A l’aide de l’Archange Gabriel, Daniel lui-même a une vision: „*Alors le secret fut révélé à Daniel dans une vision pendant la nuit. Et Daniel bénit le Dieu des cieux.*” (Daniel, 2,19, Bible éd. par Louis Segond). La vision expliquée à l’aide du Très Haut parle de la fin des jours. Daniel a vu une figure d’un aspect terrifiant – “*La tête de cette statue était d’or pur ; sa poitrine et ses bras étaient d’argent ; son ventre et ses cuisses étaient d’airain ; ses jambes, de fer ; ses pieds, en*

⁷ *Ibidem*, tome 2, Commentaire des éditeurs au chapitre 19, pericopes 1- 8, Bucarest, Collège La Nouvelle Europe et Editions Polirom, 2004, p. 487 – 488.

partie de fer et en partie d'argile. ” (Daniel, *ibid.*, 2.32-33). Une pierre s'était détachée de la montagne et a terrassé le colosse. La Bible nous explique que les parties du colosse sont les quatre royaumes de ce temps qui vont s'écrouler ; le dernier sera celui de Nabuchodonosor.



Fig. 13.

Sur les parties médianes des parois nord et sud, quatre compositions viennent changer l'orientation du discours. Ce sont des épisodes tirés de cette étape nommée « intertestamentaire », impliquant donc des événements qui précèdent de quelques années l'avènement du Christ. Ils sont intimement liés, directement ou par leurs conséquences, au Nouveau Testament plutôt qu'à l'Ancien.

Il y a un élément commun entre les quatre, **l'annonciation** : l'ange apprend à Zacharie que sa femme, Elisabeth, âgée et considérée comme stérile, va enfanter un fils qui portera le nom de Jean ; c'est l'Annonce faite séparément à Anne et à Joachim concernant la naissance d'une fille, Marie ; c'est l'Annonce faite séparément à Marie et à Joseph concernant leurs fiançailles arrangées par le Seigneur et, finalement, l'Annonce de l'Archange Gabriel faite à Marie qui va enfanter le Messie par le pouvoir du Saint-Esprit.

Les deux premiers épisodes sont illustrés sur la paroi nord. Si les sujets sont clairs, les compositions vues du point de vue artistique comportent au moins quelques commentaires. *L'Annonce à Zacharie* a lieu dans le Temple, où celui-ci accomplit l'office auquel il était obligé comme prêtre [Fig. 14].

Le texte de base provient du Nouveau Testament, de l'*Évangile de Luc* [1, 5 – 25]. La composition est complexe, comportant plusieurs plans. Au premier, L'Archange Gabriel présente son message à Zacharie qui est debout près de la table sur laquelle se trouvent l'*Arche de l'Alliance*, le *Livre* et la *Cruche*. Dans le coin gauche, un groupe de Pharisiens fait des commentaires, en dépit du fait que l'Ange est invisible à leurs yeux. Dans le second plan, entre les deux groupes, se trouve la porte dorée de la muraille du Temple. Le troisième plan représente les espaces de l'intérieur du Temple: *Le Saint*, entouré de draperies, vu comme un bâtiment surmonté d'un tambour et d'une toiture pyramidale, et le *Saint des Saints*, sous la forme d'un ciborium, couvert d'une sorte de voile gonflé, aux extrémités nouées autour de piliers en bois, remémorant les indications données par Yahvé à Moïse sur le Mont, quand il lui a demandé de faire construire le premier Temple [Exode 26, 12 - 37]. Dans le dernier plan sont suggérés les bâtiments de la ville de Jérusalem.



Fig. 14.

Toujours sur la paroi nord se trouve une scène moins rare : *Les Annonces faites par l'Archange Gabriel à Joachim et à sa femme Anne* [Fig. 15]. La composition a comme fond un paysage rocheux, dont les cimes laissent entrevoir les bâtiments d'une ville, peut-être Jérusalem, si on tient compte de l'image précédente. Les deux époux se rendent vers la montagne de droite. Chacun porte une offrande : Anne – une colombe, Joachim – un agneau blanc. Ces sont d'anciens symboles, récupérés par le Christianisme: *L'Agneau* symbolise le Christ qui va être immolé pour le salut du monde; *La Colombe*

est le symbole de la pureté virginale de Marie: Ainsi est figurée leur ardente prière d'avoir un enfant. Le Seigneur a écouté leur demande, qui correspondait à son plan de salut, et chacun, séparément, va recevoir l'annonce faite par l'Archange Gabriel : Anne va enfanter une fille, qui sera Marie, la mère de Jésus. Le contexte dans lequel les deux époux reçoivent l'annonce angélique est différent : Anne est le personnage le plus important. L'Ange la retrouve, agenouillée, dans un paysage fleuri entouré d'une muraille, allusion à un type de composition centrée sur l'image de la Vierge, fréquente dans l'imagerie médiévale occidentale : *Hortus conclusus* ou *Le Jardin clos*. Indirectement, c'est un rappel de la Conception Immaculée de la Vierge, concept qui n'existe pas d'une manière explicite dans l'Eglise de l'Est, mais ici quelques peintres orthodoxes ont choisi une solution plastique spéciale pour illustrer l'idée de la conception de Marie. Un exemple est fourni par l'image illustrant la date de 9 Novembre dans le *Ménologe* de l'église St. Georges du monastère St. Jean le Nouveau de Suceava (1534). Ici, à l'encontre de toutes les autres scènes, l'Annonce faite à Anne, impliquant la conception de Marie, a été peinte sur un fond blanc pur.



Fig. 15.

Joachim est peint sur un plan secondaire, agenouillé sur la montagne où il reçoit l'annonce de l'Ange sorti des cieux ouverts. La source de l'image se trouve dans un livre apocryphe, la *Proto-évangile de Jacob*, IV⁸.

⁸ *Protoevangelia lui Iacob (Proto-Evangile de Jacob)*, dans „Evanghelii apocrife”, Traduction, étude introductive, notes et présentations par Cristian Bădiliță, Iași, Editions Polirom, 1999, p. 36 -37.

Ce sont toujours les *Apocryphes* qui représentent la source de la scène suivante, peinte sur la paroi sud. Il s'agit de ce qu'on pourrait appeler "*Les fiançailles de Joseph et de Marie*" [Fig. 16]. Nous ne sommes pas devant la formule occidentale du thème, mais il s'agit d'une combinaison de séquences qui a donné, à Brâncoveni, une composition habituelle dans ce registre: deux personnages, séparés, reçoivent simultanément le même annonce. Ici il s'agit du fait que Joseph a été élu par Dieu pour conduire Marie, sortie du Temple, à sa maison, afin de lui offrir la protection nécessaire à l'accomplissement de la volonté du Seigneur : Marie va rester vierge et va enfanter le Fils de Dieu. Joseph est présent dans le premier plan, d'une même hauteur que l'Ange-messager, portant dans la main droite un bâton dont s'élance une colombe, signe du prétendant élu ; Gabriel est tourné vers lui aussi bien que vers Marie, encore assise dans le Temple, figurée comme une sorte de tour vue dans une perspective géométrique correcte, munie d'une porte d'or, d'un ciborium qui protège Marie et d'un second ciborium, uni par *vella* aux autres bâtiments. L'Archange apparaît pour une deuxième fois s'adressant à Marie et lui présentant un petit livre contenant les prophéties, dont celui d'Isaïe : "*C'est pourquoi le Seigneur lui-même vous donnera un signe, Voici, la jeune fille deviendra enceinte, elle enfantera un fils, Et elle lui donnera le nom d'Emmanuel*" [Esaïe 7, 14, Bible éd. par Louis Segond]. Les sources directes pour le thème de l'image sont dans les *Apocryphes*: *La vie de Joseph le Charpentier*, IV, 1- 6, mais aussi dans l'*Evangile de Luc* (1, 26 – 38).



Fig. 16.

La dernière composition de la "Bolnița" de Brâncoveni dont nous parlons est la plus fréquente tant dans l'iconographie de l'Est que dans celle de l'Ouest, parce qu'elle illustre un des moments cruciaux dans l'économie du salut: C'est l'*Annonciation* [Fig. 17]. L'Archange Gabriel transmet le message divin adressé à Marie de devenir la Mère du Fils de Dieu et celle-ci l'accepte et, par son "Fiat !", elle va concevoir de l'Esprit Saint. De nouveau, nous nous trouvons face à une composition qui comporte la double présence angélique : au centre de la partie supérieure, l'Archange en vol reçoit des mains du Père, sorti des nuages, la bénédiction pour aller annoncer à Marie que le moment longuement attendu est venu, qu'elle est la femme élue afin d'accomplir la promesse du Très Haut d'envoyer à son peuple le Messie, le Rédempteur.



Fig. 17.

Dans la partie inférieure, après un tracé en arc de cercle, le même Gabriel, impétueux, entre en dialogue avec la Vierge, debout, méfiante et en même temps acceptant le message, ses sentiments s'étant exprimés par son attitude : corps tendu dans un mouvement en arrière, tête inclinée, main droite sortie timidement des plis du maphorion. Le fond des architectures est utilisé comme un écran, et dans ses ouvertures flottent les draperies, modalité ancienne de matérialiser les paroles de l'Ange : "*L'ange lui répondit: Le Saint Esprit viendra sur toi, et la puissance du Très Haut te couvrira de son ombre. C'est pourquoi le saint enfant qui naîtra de toi sera appelé Fils de Dieu.*" (Luc 1, 35).

A la fin de cette analyse une conclusion s'impose. Vus dans le contexte large de la peinture murale de l'époque du Prince Constantin Brâncoveanu, les thèmes d'inspiration vétérotestamentaire et intertestamentaire présents dans les parties hautes du narthex de l'église « Bolnița » du monastère de Brâncoveni constituent une nouveauté absolue du point de vue iconographique aussi bien que de celui du message. Si l'iconographie est déchiffrable et peut être commentée, le message est moins clair. Il n'y a pas d'explication appropriée pour ce choix, sauf l'implication des Archanges Michel et Gabriel – auxquels l'église est dédiée – comme messagers de Dieu, tels que l'on les retrouve dans les différentes circonstances racontées par les textes canoniques ou apocryphes de la Bible. En même temps, c'est une preuve de la grande ouverture spirituelle et culturelle des théologiens de l'époque et de leur parfaite connaissance des textes qui leur ont permis d'offrir, par l'intermédiaire d'un ensemble peint cohérent, un support visible à l'invisible.

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COULEURS DU PASSE/COULEURS DU PRESENT LA POLYCHROMIE D'ARCHITECTURE CHEZ VIOLLET-LE-DUC

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Abstract: *Colours of the Past/ Colours of the Present. The Polychromy of the Architecture of Viollet-le-Duc.* Viollet-le-Duc has always been attentive to the polychromy of the medieval churches. This article proposes to dwell on the technique developed by the architect, with P. Mérimée and J.-B. Lassus, for the preservation and restoration of polychromy. In a second stage, this study focuses on the creation, by the same Viollet-le-Duc, of a new polychromy of architecture, in Pierrefonds in particular, and on the technical reflection that accompanies it.

Keywords: Viollet-le-Duc, technique, polychromy of the medieval churches, preservation and restoration of polychromy, Pierrefonds

Introduction

Bien que le chantier impose souvent une adaptation des moyens et des méthodes, c'est toujours avec rigueur archéologique que Viollet-le-Duc a procédé au choix des matériaux, à l'élaboration des techniques et à la conduite des hommes. En témoignent les chantiers qu'il dirigea en Bourgogne¹, les travaux du château de Pierrefonds², la construction de la façade de la cathédrale de Clermont-Ferrand³ ou celle de l'église Saint-Denis-de-L'Estrée⁴.

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¹ A. Timbert, *Restaurer et bâtir : Viollet-le-Duc en Bourgogne*, Villeneuve-d'Ascq, PUS, 2013.

² A. Timbert, *Viollet-le-Duc et Pierrefonds : Histoire d'un chantier*, Villeneuve-d'Ascq, PUS, à paraître en 2017.

³ A. Timbert, « Des artisans, matériaux et techniques du XIX^e siècle », *Cathédrale de Clermont-Ferrand*, dir. Mgr. J. Doré, Strasbourg, La Nuée Bleue, Strasbourg, 2014, p. 125-130.

⁴ A. Timbert, « Formes, matériaux et techniques de construction à l'église Saint-Denis-de-L'Estrée de E. Viollet-le-Duc », *Bautechnik des Historismus. Van den Theorien über gotische Konstruktionen bis zu den Baustellen des 19. Jahrhunderts*, Actes du colloque international de Zürich, 17-18 février 2011, dir. Uta Hassler, Christoph Rauhut, coll. Santiago Huerta, München, Hirmer, 2012, p. 249-261. Pour complément : A. Timbert, dir., *Materials and Techniques of Construction at Viollet-le-Duc*, Actes du II^e colloque international de Pierrefonds, 24-25 septembre 2010, Paris, CMN-éd. du Patrimoine, 2014.

Toutefois, le thème de la couleur dans le chantier Viollet-le-ducien a été peu abordé. Les quelques analyses offertes sur cette question par François Loyer et Georges Costa⁵, la réédition des planches de Notre-Dame de Paris par Jean-Michel Leniaud⁶, ainsi que l'article de Laure Chabanne en 2014⁷ – qui complètent des réflexions antérieures⁸ – associent rarement l'étude formelle à une approche matérielle (techniques, matériaux, savoir-faire) et contextuelle (histoire du chantier). Seule la récente analyse de Alessandro Paillex, qui reconstitue avec minutie la mise en couleur de la chapelle axiale de la cathédrale de Reims⁹, est à cet égard exhaustive ; ce chercheur s'inscrit ici dans la continuité des prospections – plus modestes – engagées dans le cadre d'un programme de recherche commun à l'École du Louvre et au Laboratoire de recherche des Monuments historiques¹⁰.

L'actuelle réification des peintures murales de la salle dite *Synodale* du château de Roquetaillade¹¹ offre l'occasion de revenir sur le cas de la polychromie d'architecture comme élément archéologique et source de création artistique chez Viollet-le-Duc.

⁵ Fr. Loyer, « Pierrefonds ou le dépassement du conflit », *Viollet-le-Duc. Centenaire de la mort à Lausanne*, cat. expo de Lausanne, Musée historique de l'Ancien-Evêché, 22 juin-30 sept. 1979, Lausanne, éd. du Musée de l'Ancien-Evêché, 1979, p. 37-47. G. Costa, « Viollet-le-Duc et le décor intérieur des chapelles du chevet de l'église Saint-Sernin de Toulouse », *Viollet-le-Duc*, Actes du colloque international de Paris, 1980, dir. P.-M. Auzas, Paris, Nouvelles éditions Latines, 1982, p. 207-215.

⁶ E.-E. Viollet-le-Duc, M. Ouradou, *Peintures murales des chapelles de Notre-Dame de Paris*, Paris, Morel, 1870, rééd. présenté par J.-M. Leniaud, Paris, Bibliothèque des Introuvables, 2008.

⁷ L. Chabanne, « La décoration de Notre-Dame de Paris pour le baptême du Prince impérial », *Viollet-le-Duc. Les visions d'un architecte*, cat. expo. Cité de l'architecture et du Patrimoine, 20 nov. 2014 – 9 mars 2015, dir. J.-M. Leniaud et L. de Finance, Paris, Norma, 2014, p. 110-115.

⁸ Lire la bibliographie de l'article précédent.

⁹ A. Paillex, *La polychromie d'architecture chez Viollet-le-Duc, entre histoire de l'art et restauration : le cas de la chapelle de la Vierge de la cathédrale de Reims*, Univ. polytechnique de Turin, dir. M. Naretto et A. Timbert, 2016.

¹⁰ C. Paumier, *La polychromie à Pierrefonds : interprétation matérielle et analyse formelle*, mém. master 1, 4^e année, Ecole du Louvre, dir. I. Pallot-Frossard, A. Timbert, 2 vol., 2008. C. Durox, *Le décor polychrome des chapelles de la cathédrale Notre-Dame d'Amiens : œuvre d'E.-E. Viollet-le-Duc*, mém. master 1, Ecole du Louvre, 4^e année, dir. I. Pallot-Frossard, A. Timbert, 2 vol., 2008. M.-L. Ribadeneira, *La mise en couleur des chapelles rayonnantes de la cathédrale Notre-Dame de Paris : œuvre de Viollet-le-Duc*, mém. master 1, Ecole du Louvre, 4^e année, dir. I. Pallot-Frossard, A. Timbert, 2 vol., 2011.

¹¹ V. Delpech, *Les plafonds peints et la polychromie dans l'œuvre de Viollet-le-Duc. Mission d'assistance à maîtrise pour la restitution des décors de la salle synodale du château de Roquetaillade* (33), DRAC Aquitaine, décembre 2015. Du même auteur, on lira divers propos sur la couleur dans *Abbadia. Le monument idéal d'Atoine d'Abbadie*, Rennes, PUR, 2014.

Restaurer : de l'instruction à la pratique

Dès 1831, à la suite de l'ouvrage fondateur de T. B. Emeric-David¹², L. Vitet attira l'attention de ses contemporains sur l'évidence d'une polychromie des monuments du Moyen Age : « On ne comprend pas l'art du Moyen Age, on se fait l'idée la plus mesquine et la plus fausse de ces grandes créations d'architecture et de sculpture, si, dans sa pensée, on ne les rêve pas couvertes du haut en bas de couleurs et de dorures¹³. » L'impact de ce texte est assez grand pour que Viollet-le-Duc en cite un passage dans son article « Restauration » : « En effet, de récents voyages, des expériences incontestables, ne permettent plus de douter aujourd'hui que la Grèce antique poussa si loin le goût de la couleur, qu'elle couvrit de peintures jusqu'à l'extérieur de ses édifices, et pourtant, sur la foi de quelques morceaux de marbre déteints, nos savants, depuis trois siècles, nous faisaient rêver cette architecture froide et décolorée. On en a fait autant à l'égard du moyen âge. Il s'est trouvé qu'à la fin du XVI^e siècle, grâce au protestantisme, au pédantisme, et à bien d'autres causes, notre imagination devenant chaque jour moins vive, moins naturelle, plus terne pour ainsi dire, on se mit à blanchir ces belles églises peintes, on prit goût aux murailles et aux boiseries toutes nues, et si l'on peignit encore quelques décorations intérieures, ce ne fut plus, pour ainsi dire, qu'en miniature. De ce que la chose est ainsi depuis deux ou trois cents ans, on s'est habitué à conclure qu'il en avait toujours été de même, et que ces pauvres monuments s'étaient vus de tout temps pâles et dépouillés comme ils le sont aujourd'hui. Mais si vous les observez avec attention, vous découvrez bien vite quelques lambeaux de leur vieille robe : partout où le badigeon s'écaille, vous retrouvez la peinture primitive... »¹⁴. La découverte de la polychromie dénonce ainsi l'application de chaux autant qu'elle annonce les critiques sur les méthodes appliquées pour le retrait des

¹² T. B. Émeric David, *Histoire de la peinture du Moyen Age depuis Constantin jusqu'au XII^e siècle*, 1^{ère} éd. 1811, 2^e éd. Paris, Charpentier éd., avec une « Notice sur l'auteur » par P. L. Jacob, 1852,

¹³ L. Vitet, *Rapport à M. le ministre de l'Intérieur sur les monuments, les bibliothèques, les archives et les musées des départements de l'Oise, de l'Aisne, de la Marne, du Nord et du Pas-de-Calais*, Paris, 1831, rééd. dans le t. II des *Etudes sur les Beaux-Arts. Essais d'archéologie et fragments littéraires*, Paris, 1846, p. 65.

¹⁴ E.-E. Viollet-le-Duc, *Dictionnaire raisonné de l'architecture française du XI^e au XVI^e siècle*, Paris, Bance, t. VIII, 1866, p. 19, art. : « Restauration ».

badigeons¹⁵ : si le chaulage « se contente d'être stupide », son dégagement par des restaurateurs non expérimentés est « dévastateur »¹⁶.

A la faveur des réflexions menées sur la restauration de la polychromie dès 1836¹⁷ et riche des recherches engagées à partir de 1840 sur la méthode de débadigeonnage la moins intrusive¹⁸, Viollet-le-Duc propose en 1849 une technique expérimentée par ses soins. Selon lui, pour ne pas altérer les parties anciennes présentes sous le badigeon, il faut « l'imbiber avec de l'eau chaude et attendre pour l'enlever avec des racloirs de bois, qu'il soit boursoufflé¹⁹. » Il rappelle ici ce qu'il avait déjà énoncé avec Lassus : « [...] le mode d'exécution de ce travail nous paraît être de la plus grande importance. Il est évident que dans ce cas la brosse et l'éponge peuvent être seules employées, et que le grattage doit être totalement exclu²⁰. » C'est néanmoins dans son article « Badigeon » qu'il est le plus précis : « On peut enlever le badigeon, suivant sa qualité, de plusieurs manières. Lorsqu'il est épais et qu'il se compose de plusieurs couches, que la pierre sur laquelle il a été posé n'est pas poreuse, on le fait tomber facilement par écailles au moyen de racloirs de bois dur. S'il cache d'anciennes peintures, ce procédé est celui qui réussit le mieux, car alors il laisse à nu et n'entraîne pas avec lui les peintures appliquées directement sur la pierre. Si, au contraire, la couche de badigeon est très mince, la méthode humide est préférable. Dans ce cas, on humecte à l'eau chaude, au moyen d'éponges ou de brosses, les parties de badigeon que l'on veut enlever, et lorsque l'humidité commence à s'évaporer, on racle avec les ébauchoirs de bois. Presque toujours alors le badigeon tombe comme une peau. Le lavage à grande eau est le moyen le plus économique, et réussit souvent ; on peut l'employer avec succès si le

¹⁵ *Bulletin Archéologique*, vol. 1, Séance du 28 avril 1841, p. 302. J.-P. Schmit, *Nouveau manuel complet de l'architecte des monuments religieux ou Traité d'application pratique de l'archéologie chrétienne à l'entretien, à la restauration et à la décoration des églises*, Paris, 1859, p. 139. Abb. Desrosiers, « De l'usage du badigeon », *Bulletin monumental*, 1859, p. 219-229. R. Bordeaux, *Principes d'archéologie pratique appliqués à l'entretien, la décoration et la réparation des églises*, Caen, 1862, p. 172-176.

¹⁶ V. Hugo, *Le Rhin. Lettre à un ami*, Paris, t. II, 1842, p. 296. En 1887, Louis Courajod dénonce encore, pour la sculpture cette fois, « le zèle de certains ecclésiastiques amis du badigeon ou du grattage. » Cité par Cl. Raynaud, « Fortune de la polychromie médiévale aux XIX^e et XX^e siècles : une approche historiographique », *Technè*, n°39, 2014, p. 8.

¹⁷ S. D. Daussy, « L'élaboration des doctrines de restauration des sculptures à Amiens au XIX^e siècle », *Restaurer au XIX^e siècle*, Actes de la Journée d'études, 16 février 2010, Clermont-Ferrand, dir. B. Phalip et J.-F. Luneau, Clermont, PU Blaise-Pascal, 2012, p. 35-45.

¹⁸ E. Jeannest, « "Découvrir" la peinture murale au XIX^e siècle : le rôle pionnier du Comité historique des Arts et Monuments dans la connaissance, la diffusion et la conservation du décor peint (1835-1852) », *In Situ*, 22, 2013, p. 10, consulté le 28 novembre 2016, URL : <http://insitu.revues.org/10832>

¹⁹ P. Mérimée, E.-E. Viollet-le-Duc, *Instruction pour la conservation, l'entretien et la restauration des édifices diocésains et particulièrement les cathédrales*, Paris, 1849, art. 71.

²⁰ J.-B. Lassus, E.-E. Viollet-le-Duc, *Notre-Dame de Paris. Projet de restauration. Rapport*, Paris, 1843, p. 34.

badigeon est mince et s'il ne recouvre pas d'anciennes peintures. En tout cas, il faut se garder d'employer des grattoirs de fer, qui, entre les mains des ouvriers, enlèvent avec le badigeon la surface de la pierre, émoussent et déforment les profils et altèrent les sculptures, surtout si la pierre est tendre²¹. »

Dans la pratique, Viollet-le-Duc donne des ordres en parfaite adéquation avec ses instructions. Ainsi, à Vézelay, il invite Emile Amé, l'inspecteur des travaux, à « Surveille[r] aussi les débadigeonneurs. Qu'ils n'emploient pas de fer et que lorsqu'ils touchent aux chapiteaux, [qu'] ils ne le fassent qu'avec la plus grande précaution, c. a. d. [c'est-à-dire] avec de petits couteaux de bois et des brosses²². » Au même inspecteur, pour Saint-Père-sous-Vézelay : « Je vous prie de veiller au débadigeonnage, je tiens à ce qu'il soit fait à sec afin de conserver les traces de peintures qui sont dessous et que l'on n'emploie pas de fer²³. » La minutie de la démarche, encore expérimentale comparativement à ce que Capelly propose dix ans plus tard²⁴, lui autorise plusieurs découvertes. A Vézelay, il met au jour le décor de faux-appareil des chapelles rayonnantes ainsi que les décors des voûtains du déambulatoire et ceux des colonnes du rond-point²⁵. A Semur-en-Auxois, il note au sujet du débadigeonnage intérieur de la collégiale : « Je regarde cette opération comme fort importante puisque partout où j'ai fait enlever quelques parties de badigeon j'ai retrouvé des peintures. Je ne doute pas d'après les trous que j'ai pu reconnaître que le triforium du chœur n'ait son mur de clôture couvert de grandes figures tenant des légendes dans leurs mains²⁶. » Pour finir, à Saint-Père-sous-Vézelay, il découvre sur la façade de l'église une polychromie extérieure : « Malgré le badigeon qui couvre l'intérieur de l'église et du porche j'ai retrouvé de nombreuses traces de peintures. Il en existe aussi d'assez bien conservées extérieurement²⁷. » La couleur de l'architecture retient donc tout l'intérêt de l'architecte et, à cet égard, il est le premier à penser l'église médiévale comme une proposition chromatique totale. Outre ses observations sur les toitures à tuiles glaçurées ou ses remarques sur la subtilité des effets plastique de l'ardoise²⁸, il est l'un des premiers à attirer l'attention sur les revêtements polychromes des toitures en plomb : « Lorsque l'architecte devra réparer ou remanier des couvertures de plomb, il s'assurera, avant de déposer les vieux plombs, qu'il n'existe aucune

²¹ E.-E. Viollet-le-Duc, *Dictionnaire raisonné op. cit.*, Paris, Bance, t. II, s. d. [ap. 1854], p. 59, n. 1, art. : « Badigeon ».

²² A. Timbert, *op. cit.*, 2013, Annexe III, pièce n°3.

²³ *Ibidem*, Annexe III, pièce n°74.

²⁴ Capelly, « Moyen de débadigeonner les murs », *Bulletin monumental*, 1859, p. 749-750.

²⁵ A. Timbert, *Le chevet de La Madeleine de Vézelay et le premier gothique bourguignon*, Rennes, PUR, 2009, p. 159-161.

²⁶ A. Timbert, *op. cit.*, 2013, Annexe I, pièce n°10.

²⁷ *Ibidem*, Annexe II, pièce n°2.

²⁸ E.-E. Viollet-le-Duc, *Dictionnaire raisonné ...*, *op. cit.*, art. « Ardoise », t. 1, 1854, p. 454.

gravure ou peinture, aucun dessin, sur les tables ; s'il s'en trouvait, il aurait le soin de faire calquer avec soin toutes ces traces, et d'en référer à l'Administration avant d'entreprendre le remplacement des tables. Faute d'avoir pris cette précaution, bien des dessins curieux gravés sur d'anciens combles ont été perdus²⁹. » Le château de Blois et l'hôtel Jacques Cœur à Bourges, les flèches de la collégiale Notre-Dame-en-Vaux de Châlons-en-Champagne³⁰ ainsi que les récents travaux du château d'Azay-le-Rideau confirment la justesse de cette remarque archéologique³¹.

Créer : de la théorie à la réalisation

C'est sur le fondement de ces observations faites en Bourgogne et ailleurs – notamment à la Sainte-Chapelle³² et Notre-Dame de Paris³³ – que Viollet-le-Duc a élaboré sa conception de la polychromie. Il en formule les principes chromatiques et les finalités esthétiques dans le tome VII de son *Dictionnaire* en 1864³⁴ : « En supposant que le jaune vaille 1, le rouge 2, le bleu 3 : mêlant le jaune et le rouge, nous obtenons l'orangé, valeur 3 ; le jaune et le bleu, le vert, valeur 4 ; le rouge et le bleu, le pourpre, valeur 5. Si nous mettons des couleurs sur une surface, pour que l'effet harmonieux ne soit pas dépassé, posant seulement du jaune ou du rouge, il faudra que la surface occupée par le jaune soit le double au moins de la surface occupée par le rouge. Mais si nous ajoutons du bleu, à l'instant l'harmonie devient plus compliquée ; la présence seule du bleu nécessite, ou une augmentation relative considérable des surfaces jaune et rouge, ou l'appoint des tons verts et pourpres, lesquels, comme le vert, ne devront pas être au-dessous du quart et le pourpre du cinquième de la surface totale³⁵. » De cette maîtrise optique il résulte alors les effets esthétique, plastique et illusionniste qui donnent vie, mouvement et lumière à l'architecture : « La peinture décorative grandit ou rapetisse un édifice, le rend clair ou sombre, en altère les proportions ou les fait valoir ; éloigne ou rapproche, occupe d'une manière agréable ou fatigue, divise ou rassemble, dissimule les défauts ou les exagère. C'est une fée qui prodigue le bien ou le mal, mais qui ne demeure jamais indifférente. A son

²⁹ P. Mérimée, E.-E. Viollet-le-Duc, *op. cit.*, 1849, art. 52.

³⁰ A. Texier, J. Mayer, « La polychromie des plombs de couverture du XIII^e au XVI^e siècle », *L'Homme et la Matière. L'emploi du plomb et du fer dans l'architecture gothique*, Actes du colloque de Noyon, 16-17 nov. 2006, dir. A. Timbert, Paris, Picard, 2009, p. 207-214.

³¹ S. D. Daussy, *Les éléments métalliques de couverture du château d'Azay-le-Rideau (ca 1520). Rapport intermédiaire*, Bureau d'Etudes patrimoniales Arthémis, CMN, 2 mai 2015.

³² J.-M. Leniaud, « Félix Duban, architecte de la Sainte-Chapelle », *Duban. Les couleurs de l'architecte*, Paris, Gallimard, 1996, p. 71-78.

³³ Fr. Bercé, *Viollet-le-Duc*, Paris, éd. Du Patrimoine-CMN, 2013, p. 94.

³⁴ E.-E. Viollet-le-Duc, *Dictionnaire raisonné ...*, *op. cit.*, t. VII, 1864, p. 56-109, art. « Peinture ».

³⁵ *Ibidem*, t. VII, 1864, p. 80.

gré, elle grossit ou amincit les colonnes, elle allonge ou raccourcit des piliers, élève des voûtes ou les rapproche de l'œil, étend des surfaces ou les amoindrit ; charme ou offense, elle concentre la pensée en une impression ou distrait et préoccupe sans cause³⁶. » Alors que ces lignes sont publiées, Viollet-le-Duc éprouve sa théorie par la pratique en menant à bien l'ornementation de monuments sacrés et civils comme les cathédrales d'Amiens (1854-1869)³⁷, de Reims (1860-1864)³⁸ et de Paris (1864-1868)³⁹, les châteaux de Pierrefonds (1861-1870)⁴⁰, de Roquetaillade (1865-1868)⁴¹ et de Pupetières (1860-1870)⁴².

Ces réalisations témoignent d'une attention particulière aux coloris et à la place du monument dans son contexte polychrome, qu'il soit fait de main d'homme – jardin – ou façonné par le temps – paysage. Ainsi, à Pupetières, Viollet-le-Duc a-t-il choisi les matériaux lithiques et les enduits extérieurs en privilégiant une large palette chromatique afin de mettre le monument en harmonie avec son écrin naturel durant les quatre saisons. Les couvertures à tuiles glaçurées du château résument l'ensemble des couleurs employées. Visibles de loin, elles constituent comme une introduction chromatique à un monument qui ne se découvre qu'à la faveur d'un cheminement sinueux⁴³. A Pierrefonds, l'architecte n'agit pas autrement. En dessinant les voies périphériques qui mènent à la forteresse, en plantant des centaines d'arbres aux essences multiples (bouleau, chêne, épicéa, hêtre, sorbier) et en valorisant les talus par un gazonnage aux contours réfléchis, il met le château en scène⁴⁴ ; il impose aux visiteurs un parcours périphérique qui dévoile progressivement la bâtisse, ses masses, ses contrastes et ses couleurs. Pour accentuer l'effet de surprise finale, il prend soin de vieillir les parements extérieurs de manière à exalter la blancheur de l'appareil intérieur. Passant ainsi du gris au blanc dans une découverte lente, les visiteurs sont ensuite enveloppés d'une forte polychromie dès lors qu'ils entrent dans le monument. Il y a ainsi chez Viollet-le-Duc, comme il s'en est exprimé dans

³⁶ *Ibid.*, t. VII, 1864, p. 79.

³⁷ C. Durox, « Viollet-le-Duc et les chapelles du déambulatoire », *Amiens*, dir. A. André et X. Boniface, Strasbourg, La Nuée-Bleue, p. 93-99.

³⁸ Arch. Dio. Reims : 7 J 119 – *Devis et travaux de décoration*.

³⁹ E.-E. Viollet-le-Duc, M. Ouradou, *op. cit.*, 1870.

⁴⁰ Fr. Loyer, « Pierrefonds : le décor mural », *Viollet-le-Duc*, cat. expo., 19 fév.-5 mai 1980, Paris, RMN, 1980, p. 327-329.

⁴¹ J.-Cl. Lasserre, « Château de Roquetaillade : une collaboration de Viollet-le-Duc et de Ed. Duthoit », *Viollet-le-Duc*, cat. expo., 19 fév.-5 mai 1980, Paris, RMN, 1980, p. 318-320.

⁴² A. Timbert, S. D. Daussy, *Le château de Pupetières. Viollet-le-Duc en Dauphiné*, Paris, CMN, 2013, p. 12-30.

⁴³ A. Timbert, « Matières, matériaux et couleurs au château de Pupetières », Actes du colloque *Viollet-le-Duc, Villégiature et architecture domestique*, Université de Pau et des Pays de l'Adour, 9-10 oct. 2014, dir. V. Delpech, Villeneuve-d'Ascq, PUS, 2016, p. 75-92.

⁴⁴ Beauvais, Arch. dép. Oise : 4 Tp 11/2/44 – Plantations du vallon d'Autreval, 6 novembre 1867, Viollet-le-Duc. Fr. Loyer, *op. cit.*, 1979, p. 37-38.

ses écrits, ses projets et ses réalisations⁴⁵, la volonté de recourir à la couleur pour animer des architectures comme l'on crée des contrastes en peinture⁴⁶. Cette recherche repose principalement sur une bonne connaissance technique de la polychromie architecturale dont Pierrefonds devint un lieu d'expérimentation.

Nous savons peu sur la mise en couleur de ce château. Nous ne possédons que quelques études présentant des compositions d'ensemble, principalement de la chambre de l'Empereur⁴⁷, des dessins et des motifs à échelles ainsi que des poncifs⁴⁸ et des projets de carrelages polychromes⁴⁹. En complément, mais succinctement, le *Marché général des travaux*⁵⁰ mentionne les pigments, produits et méthodes désirés par l'architecte. On relève ainsi l'emploi de peinture à l'huile aux tons gris perle, vert, brun, jaune et ardoise (noir violacé). La peinture à la détrempe concerne les tons de pierre et le gris. Un vernis à l'esprit de vin est également utilisé. Le *Marché* précise par ailleurs : « Les matières qui entreront dans la composition des peintures tant à l'huile qu'en détrempe, seront de première qualité, telles que l'huile de lin, le blanc de céruse, vernis à l'esprit de vin, colle, etc. Les couches seront appliquées successivement après que les masticages, recouvrements à l'essence ou au vernis des nœuds de sapin, ponçage etc. auront été faits. Les remplissages des moulures en blanc d'argent seront faits à deux couches bien fournies. »

Quelques lettres de Viollet-le-Duc à son inspecteur des travaux – Lucjan Wyganowski – apportent un complément sur les techniques et les applications. Ainsi, en 1858 : « Il ne faut pas peindre les plafonds en brun Vandyck [Van Dyck]⁵¹ mais se contenter de passer une couche d'huile de lin chaude sur les bois d'abord, puis une seconde couche d'huile de lin également chaude dans laquelle on aura fait bouillir de la racine d'arcanette qu'on trouve dans tous les Marchands de couleurs⁵². » Les instructions aux

⁴⁵ E.-E. Viollet-le-Duc, *Dictionnaire raisonné ...*, op. cit., t. VII, 1864, p. 56-109, art. « Peinture »,

⁴⁶ Fr. Loyer, « Viollet-le-Duc et le décor peint », *Viollet-le-Duc*, cat. expo., op. cit., 1980, p. 322-324.

⁴⁷ Charenton-le-Pont, Méd. Arch. Pat. : n^{os} inv. 476 à 480 ; 2365 et 2453.

⁴⁸ Beauvais, Arch. dép. Oise : 4 Tp 82-87 – Poncifs de décorations murales, 1865-1867 et s. d. ; 4 Tp 88-91 – Poncifs de décorations murales non localisées, s. d.

⁴⁹ Beauvais, Arch. dép. Oise : 4 Tp/1/13 – Projet de carrelage pour la tour Charlemagne. Reproduction de l'ancien labyrinthe de la cathédrale d'Amiens. Dessin de L. Wyganowski, s. d.

⁵⁰ Beauvais, Arch. dép. Oise : 4 Tp 9 – Marché général des travaux pour la peinture, s. d. [1865].

⁵¹ « Le brun Van Dyck est le brun rouge sont des terres dont la préparation ou la fabrique est très simple ; ces couleurs sont fort employées unies ou blanc ; on en obtient une grande quantité de teintes, toutes très-fraîches et d'une grande solidité. Ces deux couleurs sont inoffensives. », Borromée, « Les divers procédés de peinture », *Gazette des architectes et du bâtiment, Etudes de l'Exposition universelle de 1867 à Paris*, n^o sp., 1867, p. 116-117.

⁵² A. Timbert, op. cit., 2016, Annexe I : n^o32.

peintres sont tout aussi précises : « Veuillez dire à M. Nicolle de ne point pousser les tons des cottes d'armes des 9 chevaliers de la cheminée de la chambre de l'Impératrice. Je me déciderai à leur mettre des cottes armoriées. Cela ne change point le dessin mais nous fera ajouter des parties de blasons. Je vais m'en occuper pour lui donner cela à mon prochain voyage qui sera bientôt⁵³. » Ou encore : « Dites à Nicolle de faire passer dans cette tour (Artus) un ton de bois à la colle sous les plafonds et un ton gris vert-clair *idem* à la colle sur les murs des chambres de ladite tour avec plinthe à l'huile [...], ton plus foncé⁵⁴. » L'architecte laisse par ailleurs des instructions aux peintres sur les dessins. Ainsi, en 1863, au sujet des appartements de l'impératrice : « Le brun rouge ocre rouge pur. Les blancs sont faits avec du blanc, une pointe d'ocre jaune et une très légère pointe de cynabre. Le noir est noir, avec un peu de brun Van Dyck⁵⁵. »

Les quelques informations rassemblées, associées à des restaurations et analyses stratigraphiques récentes⁵⁶, laissent envisager l'usage d'une technique mixte employée par ailleurs par Viollet-le-Duc pour la mise en couleur des chapelles rayonnantes des cathédrales d'Amiens, Paris et Reims⁵⁷. Il apparaît que dans ces monuments les murs ont bénéficié d'un recouvrement à la cire sur impression à chaud. Bien que contraignante⁵⁸, cette technique était particulièrement reconnue et appréciée pour sa résistance à l'humidité⁵⁹ – voir notamment l'église Saint-Aignan peinte sous les ordres de

⁵³ *Ibidem*, Annexe I : n°254.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, Annexe I : n°304.

⁵⁵ Beauvais, Arch. dép. Oise : 4 Tp 77/1/1 – Décor peint des appartements de l'Impératrice, Pierrefonds, juin 1863.

⁵⁶ C. Piel, « Pierrefonds : peintures décoratives », *Architecture et décors peints. Entretien du Patrimoine*, Amiens, octobre 1989, coll. « Actes et colloques de la Direction du Patrimoine », t. 9, Paris, 1990, p. 197-200. S. Demailly, *Château de Pierrefonds, peintures murales (XIX^e siècle)*, Champs-sur-Marne, LRMH, rapport n°797A, mars 1990. Pour un état de la question : C. Paumier, *La polychromie au château de Pierrefonds : analyse formelle et interprétation matérielle*, Mém. Master 1^{ère} année, 2^e cycle, Ecole du Louvre, dir. I. Pallot-Frossard et A. Timbert, 2008, 2 vol.

⁵⁷ C. Durox, *Le décor polychrome des chapelles absidiales de la cathédrale Notre-Dame d'Amiens, œuvre de Viollet-le-Duc*, Mém. Master, 1^{ère} année, 2^e cycle, Ecole du Louvre, dir. I. Pallot-Frossard et A. Timbert, 2 vol. 2009. M.-L. Ribadeneira, *La mise en couleur des chapelles rayonnantes de la cathédrale Notre-Dame de Paris : œuvre de Viollet-le-Duc*, Mém. Master, 1^{ère} année, 2^e cycle, Ecole du Louvre, dir. I. Pallot-Frossard et A. Timbert, 2011, vol. 1, p. 24. M.-E. Salle, *La mise en couleur des chapelles rayonnantes et autres interventions de Viollet-le-Duc à Notre-Dame de Reims*, Mém. Master, 1^{ère} année, 2^e cycle, Ecole du Louvre, dir. I. Pallot-Frossard et A. Timbert, vol. 1, 2012, p. 24.

⁵⁸ G. Reille-Taillefert, *Conservation-restauration des peintures murales. De l'Antiquité à nos jours*, Paris, Eyrolles, 2010, p. 226.

⁵⁹ R. Bordeaux, *Principes d'archéologie pratique appliqués à l'entretien, la décoration et l'ameublement artistique des églises, à l'usage des curés, des conseils de fabrique et des architectes et ouvriers appelés à réparer les églises rurales*, Caen, A. Hardel, 1852, p. 228.

Boeswillwald à Chartres⁶⁰ – et par conséquent relativement défendue⁶¹. Elle consiste à imbiber les murs jusqu'à saturation d'une couche de cire chauffée au cauterium⁶². Cette couche ainsi liquéfiée par la chaleur puis solidifiée par refroidissement, s'avère être un excellent moyen pour consolider la pierre par obturation des anfractuosités. L'autre avantage est de favoriser le lissage de la surface pour produire un aspect brillant ou, au contraire, si l'on passe la deuxième couche au tampon, de créer un grain qui accentue la matité⁶³. Cette technique – qui doit encore être identifiée à Pierrefonds, notamment pour les frises sommitales – est dite « peinture à la cire mixte procédé Beau⁶⁴. » Les molécules linéaires de cire s'insèrent comme plastifiant dans la couche d'huile facilitant ainsi le travail. Toutefois, il semblerait, dans l'état des analyses et observations actuelles sur le sujet, que la détrempe ait été privilégiée par les praticiens et l'architecte⁶⁵.

Ce constat résulte de l'intérêt porté par Viollet-le-Duc à la qualité des produits et procédés Borromée⁶⁶. « Si la détrempe pouvait avoir la même solidité que la peinture à l'huile, il n'est pas douteux qu'elle aurait la préférence ; on n'a en effet à redouter ni le rancissement des huiles ni le repoussage ; la fraîcheur des teintes se conserve éclatante. Mais la peinture ne peut guère résister à l'humidité et, à plus forte raison, ne peut être lavée. On a toutefois depuis quelque temps, réalisé de grandes améliorations à cet égard, et les belles peintures du château de Pierrefonds donnent la mesure des nouveaux résultats obtenus dans cette voie⁶⁷. » La peinture est ainsi réalisée sur pierre striée, le parement est ensuite encollé de deux couches d'une « lotion d'huile de lin avec essence de térébenthine liquide de Venise ». Sur

⁶⁰ S. Chetrit, « La mise en couleur de l'église Saint-Aignan de Chartres au XIX^e siècle. Une œuvre d'Emile Boeswillwald », *Mémoires de la Société Archéologique d'Eure-et-Loir*, n°2, t. XXXVI, 2013, p. 77.

⁶¹ P. Mérimée, « De la peinture murale et de son emploi dans l'architecture moderne », *Revue Générale de l'Architecture et des travaux publics*, n°9, 1851, p. 261.

⁶² Le cauterium est une « [...] sorte de cage métallique fixée à un manche et emplie de braises, présentée régulièrement devant le support, sur toute son étendue. On ajoute de la cire, au fur et à mesure qu'elle fond, jusqu'à saturation. », G. Chomer, « Victor Orsel ou le rêve mural : la chapelle des Litanies à la Vierge à Notre-Dame-de Lorette, Paris (1835-1850) », *Les peintures murales du XIX^e siècle en France, 1^{er} volet : 1800-1860*, Actes du 7^e séminaire International d'Art Mural, Saint-Savin-sur-Gartempe, 8-10 nov. 1995, *Cahier du centre International d'Art Mural*, n° 4, 2000, p. 13.

⁶³ Cl. Buisson, *La peinture murale à la cire à Paris dans la première moitié du XIX^e s.*, Mém. de fin d'année, Institut Français de Restauration des Œuvres d'Art, 1983, p. 26-31.

⁶⁴ Mixte signifie qu'elle comporte un ajout d'huile siccatrice à la cire.

⁶⁵ Sur ces techniques : V. Aspart, *Panorama des techniques de la peinture murale dans la seconde moitié du XIX^e siècle : supports, pigments, liants*, Mém. Master, 1^{ère} année, 2^e cycle, Ecole du Louvre, dir. I. Pallot-Frossard, 2 vol. 2006.

⁶⁶ E. Poncelet, « Un château reconstruit dans les années 1860. La leçon d'architecture », *Viollet-le-Duc à Pierrefonds et dans l'Oise-Viollet-le-Duc at Pierrefonds and in the Oise region*, Actes du 1^{er} colloque international de Pierrefonds, 6-7 juin 2007, dir. J.-P. Midant, Paris, CMN, 2008, p. 26.

⁶⁷ Borromée, *op. cit.*, n° sp., 1867, p. 113.

ce « fond unique » revêtu d'un enduit « glacé à la planchette » est appliquée la peinture à la détrempe.

Ainsi pour la colle : « On sait le peu de solidité que donne aux peintures l'emploi de la colle de peau ; s'il s'agit surtout de couleurs à la détrempe, il faut bien peu de temps pour que les alternatives de sécheresse et d'humidité aient raison de ces peintures et les détruisent complètement. M. Borromée a su parer à ce grave inconvénient par un moyen très-simple et très-économique : dans un litre d'eau on fait dissoudre 50 ou 55 grammes de bonne colle-forte ; cette dissolution ne prend pas en gelée et peut, par conséquent, s'appliquer à froid. Si le lieu d'application était très humide, la quantité de colle serait portée à 100 grammes par litre d'eau, et la pose, en ce cas, aurait lieu à chaud. Ce nouvel encollage s'applique à une ou deux couches, suivant le besoin, et comme il pénètre entièrement la pierre ou toute autre matière, la peinture qu'on applique ensuite trouve une base solide et n'est exposée ni à la gerce ni à la chute⁶⁸. » Ensuite « [...] la peinture se fait à froid, ce qui procure aux entrepreneurs un intérêt réel. Personne n'ignore le peu de solidité des couleurs en détrempe. Le frottement, l'humidité, les variations de température sont pour elles des causes de destruction ou au moins d'altération très rapides [...], on obtient une peinture qui résiste au frottement et même à un léger lavage à l'eau, et qui peut être exposée aux intempéries de l'air pendant un temps assez long sans subir aucune détérioration. Il y a une garantie de durée et par conséquent une économie qui ne peut manquer d'être appréciée⁶⁹. »

Les peintres de Pierrefonds débute logiquement le décor par les plafonds, puis par les culots avant de réaliser la frise supérieure des parois. Ensuite ils réalisent les bandeaux périphériques des baies puis, enfin, ornent les murs. Ils exécutent leur travail en plusieurs passes. Une première couche de couleur est appliquée sur le plâtre des voûtes ou celui des entrevous, puis dans un second temps, les motifs ornementaux sont peints. Il est difficile de définir le degré de liberté technique des praticiens, mais le constat d'une assez grande diversité des méthodes entre les chantiers de Reims, Paris et Amiens laisse envisager que si la technique est choisie par l'architecte, dans le détail, sa maîtrise est laissée à la libre appréciation des peintres⁷⁰. Sur le plan esthétique, ces derniers travaillent sur le fondement des dessins et des poncifs produits par l'architecte, tandis que les couleurs sont définies par des nuanciers élaborés à même les murs. Il est probable que Viollet-le-Duc a participé à l'exécution de certains décors tels que la frise de « L'Education

⁶⁸ « Peinture industrielle, procédé Borromée », *Gazette des architectes et du bâtiment*, n°2, 1867, p. 25.

⁶⁹ *Ibidem*, n°2, 1867, p. 26.

⁷⁰ C. Durox, *op. cit.*, 2009, vol. 1, p. 64-65. V. Aspart, *op. cit.*, vol. 1, 2006, p. 29.

d'un jeune seigneur » dans la chambre de l'Empereur⁷¹, dont il semblerait avoir directement tracé certaines scènes⁷². La relative pauvreté de la documentation figurée dont nous disposons provient certainement de cette étroite collaboration entre l'architecte et les ornemanistes. Au deuxième étage du logis, la présence des esquisses en grandeur des motifs d'ornementation témoigne, autant que les nuanciers, d'un décor aux tracés et couleurs élaborés progressivement, en concertation et dialogue avec les peintres.

L'expérience des chantiers de restauration, la réalité archéologique d'une architecture médiévale peinte et la mise en couleur d'édifices contemporains placent Viollet-le-Duc à la croisée des temps et des chemins.

Dans l'exercice de son métier de restaurateur, s'il peut parfois être pris en défaut, l'architecte a un évident respect des textes de 1843 (Rapport de Notre-Dame), de 1849 (Instruction) et des préceptes publiés dans le dictionnaire (articles « Badigeon », « Restauration »). Dans son métier de bâtisseur et de créateur, Viollet-le-Duc produit des architectures totalement polychromes (Pupetières) ou usant de subtiles nuances (Pierrefonds). Chez lui l'analyse archéologique nourrit la production artistique ; la connaissance du passé devient un gage pour bâtir l'avenir. En tant que restaurateur, que constructeur – et par conséquent créateur – il matérialise ainsi « la vision » de Vitet et reconstitue, autant qu'il achève, un Moyen Âge aux monuments chamarrés. Dans la France du troisième quart du XIX^e siècle, faite d'édifices blanchis par le néo-classicisme ou lessivés par la rigueur du temps, ce qui aujourd'hui est une évidence, relevait alors de la révolution archéologique et plastique⁷³.

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⁷¹ Fr. Loyer, « Pierrefonds : le décor mural », *Viollet-le-Duc, op. cit.*, 1980, p. 327.

⁷² A. Timbert, *op. cit.*, 2016, Annexe III : n°11.

⁷³ E. Jeannest, *op. cit.*, *In Situ*, 22, 2013, consulté le 28 novembre 2016 URL : <http://insitu.revues.org/10832>.

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SUCEVIȚA MONASTERY. THE OVERPAINTING FROM NARTHEX AND EXONARTHEX. TECHNIQUE OF EXECUTION AND THE METHODOLOGY OF REMOVAL

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Abstract: The overpaintings found on the frescoes from Sucevița Monastery, date from periods that remain uncertain due to the rarity of written documents. Probably they were made because of the degradations that occurred in time or because of tastes. These interventions are made in oil technique or tempera, for that reason we can date them around the 19th century when there was this tendency of painting Orthodox churches in oil. The overpaintings are placed in key position, on the lunette, facilitating access from exonarthex to the narthex or from narthex to the tomb room. In terms of iconography, the overpaintings covered representations like: *Anastasis / the Resurrection; The Holy Trinity of the New Testament and Virgin Mary with the thief represented in heaven (detail from the Last Judgement)*. The present paper tries to make a comparison among the three surfaces with overpainting, bringing technical arguments regarding the differences between them. At the same time, the paper presents details about the methodology applied to cleaning the overpaintings and it highlights the original image that can bring nuances in the iconographic interpretation.

Keywords: Mural painting, Middle Ages, Sucevița Monastery, a fresco, oil painting, iconography, Descent from the Cross, Anastasis / Resurrection, the Trinity, the Last Judgement

Narthex, the east wall – *Anastasis / the Resurrection*

The research on the surfaces covered by overpainting began in 2011, when the restoration process started in these areas. At that time, the iconostasis that covered the eastern wall of the narthex was dismantled and on this occasion, a research¹ team started to discuss about the painting placed above the door that facilitates the entrance to the tomb room (Fig. 1). It is worth mentioning that this picture, having the representation of *the Descent from the Cross of Jesus Christ* (Fig. 2), at that time we believe that the overpainting from the “a fresco” surface has the same author with the iconostasis that dates from 1805².

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¹ The restoration of Sucevița's painting is done by CERECs ART SRL –directed by Phd Prof. Oliviu Boldura. The author is the coordinator of the restoration team. The chemical analyses are made by eng. Ioan Istudor, eng. Gheorghe Niculescu

² The inscription with the date was identified by the art historian Marina Sabados. It is written the documentation made for iconostasis (unpublished)

From the investigations carried out using direct and indirect light or UV, we observed original elements under the overpainting. It could be identified technological details specific to the “*a fresco*” technique: incisions of the first preparatory drawing and compass points which delimitates the groups of characters with halos.

As a result of physicochemical analyses, it was concluded that the overpainting on the mural surface was made in the “*a secco*” technique and has oil as a binder in which pigments like: iron oxide red, lead red, yellow and green copper, Prussian blue, and white lead were immersed. A comparative analysis of the pigments from the mural overpainting and iconostasis revealed that the colours used for the icons are different from those used on the “*a fresco*” painting. For this reason, we considered that the two works of art belongs to different authors. Although, the two interventions are different from the stylistic point of view, we believe that the reason the “*a fresco*” overpaint was made is because of the Baroque iconostasis, placed in 1805 on the eastern wall of the narthex and the date can be close to one another.

From the compositional point of view, the mural overpaint representing *the Descent from the Cross of Jesus Christ* is concentrated in the central plane, where Jesus is surprised in the dramatic moment when He is alight from the cross. At His feet, we can recognize the Holy Women with the Virgin Mary and also two soldiers (Fig. 3). On the one hand, the oil painting uses the *chiaroscuro* technique in which the portraits are treated very refined, with a divine light concentrated on the Virgin Mary and Jesus left as a very subtle detail of interest. On the other hand, the dark parts of composition were covered only partially and very carelessly.

In the first stage, we removed the deposits of dust and soot from the overpaint, to see the real chromatic scale of the oil paint. After a few cleaning test, it was decided that the best procedure is the one that combines the mechanical method using brushes, *wishab* and soft gums, and chemical solution – ammonia water or alcoholized water. Following these tests, we observed a discontinuity of the last layer of protection - varnish, that had consistent clumps due to a technical vice. Also, it has been observed that the 19th century paint layer was applied in a thin semi – transparent film. For this reason, the underlying paint layer was visible and we could see the original painting.

To remove the overpainting, we have made tests in the areas where we could see the presence of the original painting underneath. A favorable result was obtained using a mixture of solvents placed in a compress. The contact time for the compress depends on the state of the oil thickness that fluctuates from one area to another. To achieve a satisfactory result, the method of cleaning was alternated with compresses impregnated with a solution of ammonium carbonate. After a few cleaning tests, we agreed that the removal of the overpainting should be done differently, depending on the characteristics

of the oil painting but mostly of the original “*a fresco*” (Fig. 5). The strategy applied to remove the 19th century overpainting was influenced by the unaware of the conservation status of the “*a fresco*” painting and more specifically, if the color is detached from the support. For this reason, we preferred a cautious approach, progressing in the evolution of cleaning step by step, using a network of panels (Fig. 4).

In the end, after the removal of the overpaint, it was found that on the areas where the consistency of oil painting was big, the adherence to the original painting was much higher (Fig. 6). This phenomenon happened due to the differentiated impregnation of the surface that increased the absorption in the original paint layer. For this reason, it should be noted that the “*a fresco*” painting marked by the presence of the overpainting, will suffer degradations that are specific to oil painting (Fig. 7).

Finally, the restoration process managed to fully recover the original “*a fresco*” painting in which it was represented the feast icon of the church – *the Resurrection* (Fig. 8). Thus, if the overpainting from the 19th century presented *the Descent from the Cross*, an image to conclude that the events were dedicated to the Sacrifice of Jesus Christ, the 16th century painting brings to the community the representative image of the church that marks the transition from death to eternal life.

At Sucevița, the founders choose to represent the scene of *the Resurrection* in the version of *Anastasis* or the *Deliverance of Souls from Limbo*. Compositionally, the ample plan of the scene has as a focal point, Jesus Christ placed into *mandorla* and trampled on the gates of Hell. The gates are positioned in the shape of a cross, a symbolic element that is repeated in other areas of the scene. At the feet of Christ, it is represented Lucifer, flanked by angels with spears that stab him and keep him in chains. Unlike the depictions of the same kind from northern Moldavia where the same representation is in the nave on the register of *Passion*, at Sucevița, Jesus has the cross in his left hand as a clear reference to the sacrifice. Leaned to the left, Jesus is represented in the moment when he takes out Adam and Eve from the open grave with His right hand, a sign of victory over death and the original sin. Behind them, the proto parents are represented by extension, all saved by Jesus Christ through His deliverance from limbo. On the other side of the group, with a common gesture of movement towards Christ, there are represented the righteous of the Old Testament. Between them, stands Saint John the Baptist (Fig. 6). The novelty of this scene is represented, however, by the gold crowns hold by the characters that surround Jesus Christ.

Exonarthex – *The Holy Trinity*

Located at the crossing point from exonarthex to the narthex, on the lunette above the door, the icon of the Holy Trinity, in its New Testament version, was closely examined at the end of 2015, when the restoration process

started in this room (Fig. 9). Placed in the ample context of the *Last Judgement*, the icon of *The Holy Trinity* marks the moment when the believer passes from the preparatory to the sacred space, marking himself with the sign of the cross. Placed where it is generally painted the feast icon, at Sucevița, the founders choose to represent the icon in narthex and not in exonarthex.

After analyzing the scene from the scaffold, it has been observed that in this case, just as in the feast icon, the surface was covered with overpainting. This type of intervention in these areas is common in the churches from northern Moldavia and has been a predisposition in the 19th century, when the beneficiary tried to refresh the image.

Compositionally, the western representation from the 19th century of the Holy Trinity, presents two characters – Father and Son – standing on a banquette sustaining together the cross. At the intersection of the tow bars, it is represented the Holy Spirit as a dove, accompanied by the monogram of Christ and framed in a circle that scatters light rays. Behind each person on the banquette, it was painted a seraph with six wings and a human body (Fig.10).

In the lower part of the scene, at the base of the cross, we could distinguish the presence of an inscription that tried to date the intervention. Unfortunately, when the restoration started, only the last two digits were visible – 10 (Fig. 11).

Also, we could see that the overpainting from the representation of *the Holy Trinity*, has the same technique with the one from the narthex where it was painted *the Descent from the Cross* over the feast icon – *The Resurrection*.

In this case also, the overpaint was done directly on the original painting, without any other intermediate layer. The faces of the characters were partially covered: forehead, nose, cheekbones, preserving the original anatomy and drawing (Fig.12). Also, at the edge of the scene we could see clear areas with “*a fresco*” painting, just as in the narthex (Fig.13).

Chromatically, the pigments used for overpainting are the same as those from the “*Descent from the Cross*” in the narthex. All these pieces of information lead to the conclusion that the two overpaintings (*Descent from the Cross* and *Holly Trinity*) belong to the same author.

The methodology applied to clean the overpainting is the same as the one used for the feast icon in the narthex. At the beginning, the surface was cleared of suspension of dust and sooted to distinguish better the colors of the overpaint and after that it was removed the overpaint using the same network of panels. As the overpainting was removed from the surface, the original composition started to be more visible. In the end, it was found that the overpaint followed the original composition and color. Major changes were found on the right character (Father); if before, He was wearing a green cloth with black shadows, after restoration it was discovered that He was wearing white clothes with blue smalt drawing. Also, the halo was modified, in the representation from the 19th century, Father was depicted with an equilateral

triangle around his head. In the original “*a fresco*” painting, He appears with a halo framed by a star, such as *the Ancient of Days* (Fig. 14).

The character from the left side of the viewer who represents Jesus Christ, did not had chromatic changes, instead, after restoration He appeared with a cross inscribed in the halo.

A new detail that the representation of the Holy Trinity brings after restoration, are the seraphs that surrounds the three characters. Their presence makes the whole composition more dynamic. An additional element is that the entire composition is inscribed in a mandorla. All these elements make the whole composition gain an eschatological interpretation (Fig. 15).

Another novelty is the inscription that accompanies the representation. Thus, around the oversized cross and the two characters is written: “*In the name of the Father and the Son*”³ a reference to the beginning words of the prayer that summarizes the dogma of the Holy Trinity and it is less appointed to the characters in the image. The prayer is also the one that accompanies the sign of the cross that every Cristian makes at the entrance to the church. In this way, the accent in the composition is put on the symbol of sacrifice – the cross. A similar representation can be found at Sucevita on the triumphal arch that connects the chancel with the nave (Fig. 16). Here, the New Testament Trinity is placed in the middle of the Akathist Hymn and illustrates the verse 15, as the historian Constanța Costea says (*While fully present amid those below ...*)⁴. The composition in this case occupies a double space related to the other 16 scenes from the Akatistos, detaching itself from the context. If we look closer, the scenes repeat the same figurative composition. We have two characters seated on the throne, to the left is Jesus Christ with a cruciform halo and on the right is the Ancient of Days, dressed in white wearing a stellate areola and the inscription of Jesus Christ. The composition repeats the liturgical rite that takes place in the chancel and is connected with what is happening on the altar table, assuming a liturgical character.

Thus, if the scene is represented above the altar table, where bread and wine are transformed into the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ, we can say that we have a scene in which Jesus Christ is represented as a Messiah (left) and like a Judge (right).

An important detail that underlies this interpretation is represented by the gestures of the two characters. Thus, with an identical act, they support the cross as if they want to underline the presence of the cross. In this way, the cross becomes the altar upon Christ *was offered once for all times to bear the sins of many; and the second time that He appears it will be apart from sin...*

³ The interpretation of the inscription belongs to PhD Prof. Tereza Sinigalia

⁴ Constantin Ciobanu, *Text și imagine în pictura românească din secolul al XVI-lea, Raport științific sintetic pentru întreaga perioadă de realizare a proiectului*, Bucharest 2016, www.medieval.istoria-artei.ro, 28.10.2016

(Hebrews 9, 28). The moment is present and repeats itself at each liturgy until *Parousia* like it is said in the Cherubic Hymn.

A similar form of representation of the Holy Trinity at Sucevița, was signaled by Victor Brătulescu⁵ in the Votive Painting in the north – west side of the nave, where the *Eucharistic* image is represented (Fig.17). Following the iconography, he saw in the upper plane the moment that depicts *epiclesis*. The composition is the same with the one from exonarthex.

In the Votive Painting we find the Holy Trinity painted as the Ancient of Days⁶ on the right side of the viewer, on the left there are Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit, Who is at the intersection of the bars of the cross. The presence of seraphs within the composition refers to the Revelation⁷ where it says: *they have no rest day and night saying: Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come.*⁸

In this way, we can talk about a composition which seems to be a classic scene of Holy Trinity where the person of God the Father is signified by the Ancient of Days and the iconographic meaning is concentrated around the cross as a path to deification of man.

Exonarthex – *Virgin Mary and the thief in Heaven (detail from the Last Judgement)*

The last area covered with overpainting within the Church of Sucevița occupies only a part of the large scene of the *Last Judgement*. It is located in the part where it is represented the entrance to heaven (Fig.18).

Placed at the level where the viewer has access, the area has suffered from large degradation caused by the human factor. Although the entire area presents many losses of color, the overpainting covers only two characters: Virgin Mary and the Thief (Fig. 19).

If *the Descent from the Cross* and that of *the Holy Trinity* were made directly on the original surface, this time, the technique and the color range is different. Following the analyses made by the engineer Gheorghe Niculescu, it was found that over the “*a fresco*” painting there is an “*a secco*” one. Before they started to paint, they applied a thin layer of ground and afterwards, they painted in tempera (Fig. 21).

The chemical analyses have shown that the layer of ground is in fact a pigment – white lead, applied on the surface and over it they used a small range of pigments: blue ultramarine, iron oxide, green copper, black coal. Even from

⁵ Victor Brătulescu, „*Portretul logofătului Ioan Movilă (Monahul Ioanichie)*”, Ed. Mușatinii, 2013, p. 220-243

⁶ I.D. Ștefănescu, *L'évolution de la peinture religieuse en Bucovine et en Moldavie depuis les origines jusqu'au XIXe siècle, Nouvelles recherches. Etude iconographique*, Librairie orientale Paul Geuthner, Paris, 1929, p. 151

⁷ Apocalipsul, IX, 8

⁸ Victor Brătulescu make an analogy between the liturgical ritual and iconography of the Votive painting. *Ibidem* p. 255

the early start of restoration, it was noticed that the state of conservation of the painting is bad and the phenomenon of degradation is affecting both stages of painting.

After a visual examination of the surface, it has been found that within the “*lacuna*” formed in the overpainting layer, there are elements of the original composition and the color range is significantly different. Also, the proportions of both characters were quite different from those of the overpainting. This was more evident at the thief; in the 19th century version, he was constructed with a bad anatomy and untowardly.

The removal of the overpaint was done mostly using mechanical methods because of the thin ground applied as a support for the overpaint, for that reason we could easily detach the painting.

The operation started in the neutral area, between the two characters. During the process of discovering the original painting, we started to observe elements of drawing and colour. In the first stage, it was uncovered the grey background applied over the white, the one that symbolizes Paradise (Fig.20). In the case of the thief, we rediscovered a slightly oversized character with specific colors from Sucevița. In the upper area, he conserves the overlays of the base tone and middle tone and the lower part preserves a sensitive preparatory drawing with the base tone.

The overpainting of the Virgin Mary was removed applying the same methodology and in the end, the restoration process put in value a garment that respects the natural proportion, with a drawing that places the original painting in the post – Byzantine style (Fig. 22).

A particular detail of the scene is the crown worn by the Virgin Mary on Her head. As morphology, it falls in the same style found in Byzantine painting. The presence of the Virgin Mary with a crown on Her head in the scene of Heaven is an innovation of the founders from Sucevița. The idea of coronation of the Virgin Mary is repetitive in several scenes in the church: *The Ascension* in the chancel, *the Hymn* – “*They Enjoy You*” in the nave on the west wall and *Glorification of the Holy Virgin* represented at the exterior on the south wall.

The reason why the Virgin Mary has a crown on her head only in some scenes is closely linked to the idea of incarnation of Jesus Christ from Virgin Mary or to the idea that God emended the tree of life in Virgin Mary. The idea is sustained by a detail found after the present restoration, namely, in the center of the crown is painted the development of a grapevine. The argument is the same as that of the *Tree of Jesse* (exterior, south wall) or the representation – *Christ as a Vine Plant* (inside, nave, north wall).

In this way, we can say that the current restoration puts in value the original painting and in the same time brings new elements for the iconographic interpretation and completes the general image of the painting from Sucevița.



Fig. 1. Sucevița Monastery, narthex, general view with the iconostasis from the eastern wall, before restoration.



Fig. 2. Sucevița Monastery, narthex, image with the representation "The Descent from the Cross of Jesus Christ".

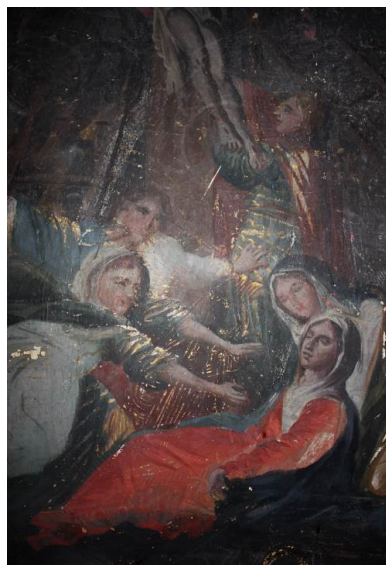


Fig. 3 "The Descent from the Cross of Jesus Christ". Detail



Fig. 4. Sucevița Monastery, narthex, detail during the work



Fig. 5. Sucevița Monastery, narthex, the representation “the Descend from the Cross of Jesus Christ” detail during the work.



Fig. 6. Sucevița Monastery, narthex, a comparative image with areas covered by overpainting and with the original “a fresco” painting.



Fig. 7. Sucevița Monastery, narthex, a comparative image with areas covered by overpainting and with the original “a fresco” painting – rediscovering the original image of Jesus Christ.



Fig. 8. Sucevița Monastery, narthex, image with the original painting.
The feast icon – Anastasis / the Resurrection.



Fig. 9. Sucevița Monastery, exonarthex, general view with the entrance to narthex



Fig. 10. Sucevița Monastery, image with the Holy Trinity, before restoration



Fig. 11. Sucevița Monastery, exonarthex, detail with the inscription from the overpaint of the Holy Trinity.



Fig. 12. Sucevița Monastery, exonarthex, image with the overpaint of the Holy Trinity



Fig. 13. Sucevița Monastery, exonarthex, at the edge of the scene
we could see clear areas with “*a fresco*” painting



Fig. 14 Sucevița Monastery, exonarthex, rediscovering the original image of the Father



Fig. 15. Sucevița Monastery, exonarthex, , the original image of the Holy Trinity



Fig. 16. Chancel (left) the triumphal arch that connects the chancel with the nave. Fig. 17. Nave, the north-west wall, the Votive Painting.



Fig. 18. Sucevița Monastery, exonarthex, detail from the Last Judgement



Fig. 19. Sucevița Monastery, exonarthex, detail with Virgin Mary and the thief in Paradise, with overpainting.



Fig. 20. Sucevița Monastery, exonarthex, detail during work.



Fig. 21 .Sucevița Monastery, exonarthex, detail from the clothes of Virgin Mary



Fig. 22 Sucevița Monastery, exonarthex, Virgin Mary and the thief in Paradise, after restoration.

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A NOVEL PAINTED MONUMENT. BYZANTINE ART BETWEEN AESTHETIC REDEFINING AND DOGMATIC PERENNITY. THE CHURCH “SAINT JOHN THE BAPTIST” OF BÂRNOVA

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Abstract: Being remarkable through the monumentality and elegance of proportions, the architecture of the Church “Saint John the Baptist” from Bârnova derives from the so-called old Wallachian style, skillfully reshaping a structure which combines elements which are specific to Byzantine Balkanic ecclesiastical buildings. The unseen pictorial work of Ștefan Constantinescu is characterized by the attempt to associate the results of experiencing freedom of interpretation and expression with the rules of the iconographic canon, inside the same ensemble. Its representations do not reproduce the traditional Byzantine manner, nor it is delivered as a form of quoting reality, but it is filtered and interpreted. From a theological point of view, the author respects the iconographic program, except for the topographic placement of some episodes, adapting the discourse according to the configuration and features of the liturgical space. We are in front of a case which places us in the position of managing the relationship between the value of artistic creation and the meticulousness of theological involvement. Neither Byzantine, nor realistic, the artistic solution of the mural painting from Bârnova is closer to the manner of iconic transfiguration than to the one of improvisation or artistic intermediation through which the daily tridimensional world is reflected.



The Church "Saint John the Baptist" of Bârnova

Keywords: church, painting, Byzantine, modern, canon, tradition

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Without visiting the old Christian catacombs and walking the rooms of the great museums, the painting of the church “Saint John the Baptist” of Bârnova may suddenly be an invitation to rediscover the original cultic Christian image and, at the same time, a direct contact with the experiences of modern art of painting dating from the 20th century. From the outside, the lean silhouette of the monument with a single steeple does not do anything to betray the unusual contrast that the visitor will notice between the architecture of the church and its interior painting. Naturally, this is because we are used to associate Byzantine architectural edifices to a painting garment accomplished in the same style.

What stirred the interest and drew attention to the monument is the type of painting and the particular way in which it was accomplished; despite being slightly different from the homologated one in compliance with the demands of a respected literal explanation, it does not depreciate in any way the aesthetic quality or influences the message of the Gospel of the scenes usually painted on the church walls. It is important to mention that when the church of Bârnova was painted in the Romanian Orthodox space, the technique of fresco painting and the practice of embellishing churches based on the guidelines of the iconographic canon of the Byzantine tradition were almost forgotten. The preference for the Western realist-naturalistic painting broke the traditional lines of Byzantine painting for a while in our country. In the larger context of a transition period in which the renewing of tradition and remastering of the work technique was aimed at, the present example is unique and unrepeatable, in our opinion, by its kind, content, and artistic expression.



Fig. 1. Pisanije above the entry door

The church “Saint John the Baptist” was built between 1942-1947 by the brothers Ionel¹ and Georgel Inculeț to fulfil their parents’ desire, Ion C.

¹ One of the founders, the scholar Ionel Inculeț died in 2011 at 91, leaving behind an important inheritance (27 industrial patents) in the field of electrostatics. He was a consultant for the NASA missions on the Moon and Mars and *Doctor Honoris Causa* of Western Ontario University, Canada, where he founded the department of *Environmental Engineering and Applied Electrostatics*. Physician and worldwide reputed engineer, he was named member of honour of the Romanian Academy in 1992.

Inculeț and his wife Ruxandra's (princess Ruxandra Bașotă-Cantacuzino before marriage) who died before its accomplishment. Built not far from the city of Iași on a property where the summer residence of the family was located, the church was aimed at a necropolis of the founders; however, since the building of the church was not final when they died, their relics were brought from Bucharest and reburied in the nave on June 7, 1942. The church was dedicated in 1947, immediately after the painting was finished and after a year, as a result of the founders' will, the church and the land owned by Inculeț family were donated to the Metropolitanate of Moldova and Bukovina. During the period of the communist regime, the settlement was closed and service performed only on the feast day of the church; in 1992, the holy house became a parish church.

Remarkable by its leanness and the elegance of proportion, the architecture of the church "Saint John the Baptist" of Bârnova draws on the so-called old Wallachian style; it brilliantly reshapes a structure that combines specific elements of Byzantine-Balkan ecclesial buildings. The church is built in brick and stone, having the roof covers in clay tiles. The decoration of the façade parament is accomplished in large granular stone dust which gives an aspect of subtle plasticity. The uniformity of parietal surfaces emphasizes the contrast between the plastering of the masonry and the dynamics of the sculpture ornament in stone, the door and window frames and amplifies the effect obtained by the juxtaposition of the open cold grey of the walls with the brick-like warm shades of the roof tiles.

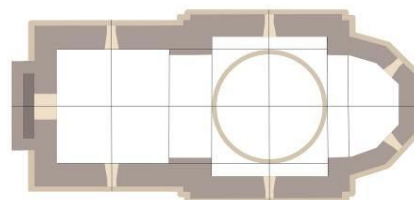
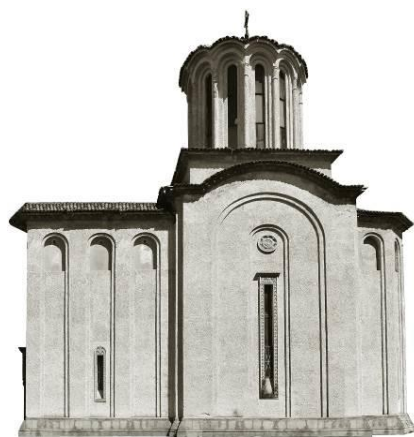


Fig. 2. Plane of the Church "Saint John the Baptist" of Bârnova.

From a planimetric viewpoint, the monument subscribes to a rectangular surface with one of the small legs in a curve, a form resulting from the suppression of the lateral apses of a trefoil plane. The building seems like a ship consisting of an altar, naos and pronaos.

The apse of the altar is semicircular on the inside and polygonal on the outside, having five facets and two windows. Over the naos, on a square base, a cylindrical dodecagonal tower rises, high, yet well proportionate, giving added value in monumentality to the building. The facets of the tower are

pierced by twelve narrow windows, framed by arcatures with profiles in successive withdrawals, guarded by twelve spacers. The tower is supported on the inside by four big arches which unload their weight on the pilasters engaged in the walls they are one and the same body with, thus leaving free the entire space of the naos.



Fig. 3. One of the funerary stones along the founder's tombs

The naos has two high and very narrow windows, framed on the outside by a rectangle in stone embellished with vegetal motives (Fig. 5). Over the windows there is a stone rosette with flower motives. In the naos, along the pseudoapses there are the founders' tombs paralleled by funerary stones with richly embellished borders. The floral and vegetable bas-reliefs are framed at the two ends of the plaque by two lions accompanied by the symbolic representations of the sun and moon (Fig. 3).

The passage from the naos to pronaos is made under an arch that is supported by two engaged parallelepipedic pillars. The pronaos, with an almost square base is enlightened by two small narrow windows. The ceiling is a circular archway in which the Holy Trinity icon is painted (Fig. 17). The entrance door and the lectern furniture are in excellent carved wood. On the outside, under the cornice, the pronaos is surrounded by a row of nine painted niches, three on each side. The same row of alcoves, five in number, continues on the upper side of the face of the wall under the roof of the altar apse. From the painting, due to heavy rain and snow, there is hardly any colour left, as well as some traces from the shape of the characters.

A massive faceted stone socle surrounds the church. The portal frame from the church entrance is sculpted in stone in a high relief, with baroque allusions and echoes of the neo-Romanian style, representing flower and vegetable motives linked between them by spiral stalks (Fig. 4). The two column capitals that support the gable are embellished with acanthus leaves twisted at the top. In the tympanum, the icon of "Saint John the Baptist" in his winged version is shown by means of the mosaic technique (Fig. 6).

If the first visual impact when entering the church seems to announce a boring atmosphere (perhaps because of the smoke imprinted in the painting stratum along time), after a short adjusting, the eye is rewarded with a novel painted show. Parietal surfaces covered in monumental art directions with long hagiographic narratives are playing against the background by the warm composed chromatics. The message of the Gospel, illustrated in parables that carry on horizontally and vertically in registers which seldom cross in serpentine structures visually engage both characters and architectural elements in a discursive continuity and an original stylistic unity (Fig. 8, 12).

The atypical painting structure unveils an author of an artistic formation and an extraordinary plastic culture of what is usually considered to make the ideal profile of the icon or church painter. Taking part, along with reputed figures of Romanian art such as Constantin Brâncuși, George Enescu or Maria Tănase in the Universal Exhibition of New York (1939), one of the major representatives of our culture to the Romanian Pavilions of Paris (1937) and Barcelona (1929), university professor at the Institute of Plastic Arts "Nicolae Grigorescu" of Bucharest, Ștefan Constantinescu is the painter asked to decorate the foundation-necropolis of the academy member Ion C. Inculeț, a great figure of Romanian politics². Recommended by his rich work, confirmed within the university artistic association, the quality and value of the monumental art works signed by Ștefan Constantinescu is founded on the experience on site in painting churches in fresco.



Fig. 4. Portal at the church entrance (left). Fig. 5. Frame of the pronaos window
Fig. 6. Icon of Saint John the Baptist in the tympanus achieved in mosaic (right)

² Ioan Scurtu, *Istoria Basarabiei de la începuturi până în anul 2003 (The History of Bessarabia from Its Beginnings to the Year 2003)*, ed. Tipo Moldova, Iași, 2010, p. 128. Ion Inculeț (1884-1940) was president of the Country Council of Bessarabia – in the period in which its union with Romania was decided – and that of vice-president of the Council of Ministers of Great Romania between 1936-1937. He was member of the Romanian Academy.



Fig. 7 a,b. The southern wall of the naos. Details. 7 a. Left: Under the abbreviated text of verse 10 in Psalm 45: “Listen, daughter, and pay careful attention: Forget your people and your father’s house.” Scenes of the life of Virgin Mary are depicted. From top to bottom: *The Entry of the Holy Mother of God into the Temple*, *Baby Mother of God in the Saint of Saints*, *Visit of Saint Elisabeth*, *Annunciation*. 7 b. Right: Scenes with Old Testament prophets praising the virginity of the Mother of God accompanied by the abbreviated text of verse 8, Psalm 131: “Arise, Lord (...), you and the ark of your might”.

Ștefan Constantinescu was born in the town of Târgu Ocna on March 14, 1898 and died on February 22, 1983. He studied at the Academy of Fine Arts in Bucharest between 1913-1916 and at the Academy of Fine Arts "J. Pascin" in Paris. In the First World War he served in the army and in 1918 was wounded on the front and declared incapable of military service³. He travelled a lot and acquired great artistic experience. He mastered the canons of plastic art, as well as the creations of reputed masters. As a multifaceted personality, he approached monumental art and especially painted and drew portraits, landscapes and still nature⁴.

In the field of monumental art he achieved a series of compositions characterised by large narrative development such as: the ones from Casa Scânteii and the hall of the Great National Assembly in Bucharest, the one at the UNESCO Palace in Geneva and from the Culture House of Reșița, collaborating to numerous collective works. He exposed painting and graph in the country and in almost all European capitals, being awarded several prizes and awards: *Emerit artist* (1957), *Emerit art master* (1964), *State Prize of 1957*, etc⁵. He carried out book illustrations and since 1950 for more than two decades, taught painting at the monumental art department of the Institute of Fine Arts "Nicolae Grigorescu" of Bucharest.

Between 1937-1941 he painted the church "Holy Sovereigns Constantine and Helen" of Hunedoara⁶. He painted several churches (either by himself or with others): the one from "The Lady's Lime Tree" in Bucharest, the church of the Bogata commune, Brașov county, one from Amărăștii de Sus, near Caracal, and another one near Negrești-Oaș. He carried out a mosaic work

³ Al. Bojin, *Scrisori inedite ale lui Vlahuță (Original Letters of Vlahuță)*, in *Viața Românească/ The Romanian Life*, 12, no. 11, November 1959, pp. 145-149. In a letter of 21 April 1918 addressed by Alexandru Vlahuță to Nichifor Crainic, he took an interest in Ștefan Constantinescu's health condition who was ill and offered to pay for the medical costs incurred.

⁴ Barbu Brezianu, *Cuvânt la expoziția retrospectivă Ștefan Constantinescu (Speech at the retrospective exhibition of Ștefan Constantinescu)*, Art Museum of Romania, June-July 1986. In *La vie en rose with Clody Bertola*, by Ludmila Patlanjoglu, ed. Humanitas, Bucharest, 1997, p. 59, note 1.

⁵ Octavian Barbosa, *Dicționarul Artiștilor Români Contemporani (Dictionary of Contemporary Romanian Artists)*, ed. Meridiane, Bucharest, 1976, pp. 128-129.

⁶ Ludmila Patlanjoglu, *La vie en rose with Clody Bertola*, ed. Humanitas, Bucharest, 1997, pp. 23, 69-72. In a book of memoirs of his wife's testimonies are gathered; the actress Clody Bertola, that described him as a man truly devoted to his art, a modest and an introvert: "He was a great painter who did not know how to value himself accordingly. He did not like exhibitions, he did not sell his paintings, he preferred to make them gifts to his friends and acquaintances. He liked to spend time in the company of those he loved. The nights in his studio in Băneasa gathered Mihail Sadoveanu, Tudor Vianu, Boris Caragea, George Georgescu, Sviatoslav Richter, Maria Tănase etc." In 1941, Ștefan Constantinescu was in Hunedoara, where he painted the church of "Saint Constantine and Helen". In a letter of 31 March 1941, Clody asked whether he was satisfied with his work for the church, telling him: "I pray to God for no obstacles and to see your work done. It will be the most beautiful church in the world!". "You should be more aware of your value!".

for the Nautical Club of Snagov and the external mosaics of the church „Saint Spiridon” of Bucharest and Cernica monastery. Among his technical innovations in the field of mural painting, we signal the use of magnesium oxide binding agent of the plaster in the fresco (procedure that gives hardness and a dolomite visual effect)⁷.



Fig. 8. Scenes painted on the north wall of the pronaos

⁷ Mircea Grozdea, Ștefan Constantinescu, ed. Meridiane, Sibiu, 1978, pp. 9-10. It seems that on the outside this technique did not resist bad weather, hence the erosion of the painting stratum to its vanishing.

Neither Byzantine, nor realistic, the character of the painting of the church "Saint John the Baptist" in Bârnova would be hard to classify in any of the traditional stylistic columns. If the painting had been achieved in Byzantine or realistic style, the subject would not have been of too much interest. The naturalist-realism of Orthodox church painting has been no novelty for quite some time now, and traditional Byzantine painting passes unobserved, when the value of representation is not distinguished in any way. Curiosity comes from the fact that Constantinescu's novel plastic language, despite its incongruity with pure Byzantine tradition, does not perfectly identify with the realism practised by Tatarăscu or Grigorescu, seems much closer to plastic iconic transfiguration than some pretended contemporary neo-Byzantine representations. The superficial or bashful miming of Byzantine painting style cannot rescue traditional iconography, convince or transmit to the viewer the plenitude of the message in the Gospel. In addition, a too obvious distancing in artistic interpretation from the guidelines of explanations in Byzantine painting is under the peril of subjectivity with its undesirable consequences. Drawing on Byzantine features, the personal, unconventional style of Ștefan Constantinescu is characterised by the attempt to associate the same compositional framework to what resulted from the experience of the freedom in interpretation and expression with the rules of the iconographic canon. For him, there is no decisive disjunction between the iconic characteristics and the other means of plastic language, despite the fact that the icon itself is more than a language. With an eye it contemplates the synthetic constructions of iconically transfigured forms, analysing the revealed and revealing plastic conventions, and with the other it admires the lessons of great masters of universal painting.

The interpretative variant accomplished by Constantinescu, starting from the iconographic formulae deeply rooted in tradition, is a product made of several concepts and artistic visions. Expression of remembrance of the investigating approach to the origins of Christian art, his formal resolutions attain the simplicity of the primary "canon", at the same time valuing the experience acquired during centuries of profane painting.

Elongated silhouettes, draped according to ancient fashion, faces barely suggested, simple ornament and sobriety of the colours obviously relate to early Christian painting of the catacombs (Fig. 9, 10, 11). Similar to the first Christian images that were mainly anecdotal or symbolic, Constantinescu does not insist on the individuality of the figures or the study of portrait. The faces are treated in a lapidary manner, with large transparent touch lines, discrete tones; some surfaces are left at an underpainting stage with vaguely sketched shapes.



Fig. 9. “The Good Shepherd”, fresco from the Catacombs of Saint Callistus, Rome.
 Fig. 10. Saint Luke, fresco from the 6th-7th centuries, Commodilla Catacomb of Rome.
 Fig. 11. Abel and Cain offering to God their sacrifice, Catacomb on Via Latina, *cubiculum*-ul B, Rome, fresco, 4th cent.

The compositions, sometimes with a large number of characters, pertain to an atmosphere whose hidden source of light makes it distribute in equal intensities within all images painted, without shades or *chiaroscuro*. With a sensibility towards contrasting chromatic effects and lighting, the painter masters the harmony of colour masses and the balance between full and empty, hot and cold, rhythmically alternating the silhouettes painted in dark tonalities on bright backgrounds, with those in open values showing on dark surfaces (Fig. 12,15).

The chromatic dominant of the painting ensemble combines the harmonies of the complementary red-green colours out of which a range of coloured greys develops. Among these the following can be distinguished: ochre, red, chrome green and white, amplifying the tonal register by a large variety of shades. Here and there one can notice blue-greenish backgrounds interrupted by the silhouettes of richly dressed characters similar to bright archipelagos that remind of Giotto’s frescos in their composition and the echoes of his “primitive” predecessors (Fig. 7).

By superposition and unusual mixtures, by juxtaposition of broken hues, the painter accomplishes well-dosed monochrome structure that supports the formal and content unity of the ensemble, a reduction of chromatic intensity that induces a note of gravity and lyrical expressivity and sometimes a monotone ambient, as side effect.

The tempered chromatics, the modulation of colours in shades of a composed musicality, the passages that melt one another create a surrealist atmosphere, a vision that, despite its lack of formal and conceptual identification with the features of Byzantine painting, displays the exiguity of the iconographic canon in the prefiguration of another reality, with that of the new world to come, in this particular case.

Either it agglutinates the silhouettes of a crowd in a collective character, symbolically circumscribed to a volume in a single tonal voice or it gives up the finishing of details, the acuity and subtlety of notation; this is what the line of the drawing cuts and brings together volumes with, so that the suggestion or the allusion of a subject becomes more alive and full than the description of the same subject in minute detail.



Fig. 12. The south wall of the pronaos

With little means, synthesizing the form without attaining schematism, the author makes a relief from the apparently spontaneous features of sketches, buildings and characters similar to the facets of enormous crystals, and configures a performance of a plastic polyphony (Fig. 15).

Against the background of scenographic constructions especially conceived to plastically express the biblical narrative, the painter illustrates – via a “page” repositioning of themes – lives of saints and events less tackled in the Byzantine iconographic program such as: “Blinding of Elymas the sorcerer” (*Acts of the Apostles 13, 12*) (Fig. 26) or novel scenes of the life of Saint Anthony the Great. Hagiographic sequences or evangelical parables sometimes run vertically and are read similar to over dimensional Asian engravings.

The scenographic vision of lean compositions, developed on the narrow lateral pseudo-apses, populated by elongated characters somehow neighbours the plastic universe of El Greco, an artist whose baroque vision is partly rooted in Byzantine painting. Similar to El Greco, but without the same dramatic expression of the compositions’ dynamism, Constantinescu often prefers the vertical representation of movement to the perspectival deepness, thus getting closer to the bidimensional vision of space approach in Eastern iconography much easily (Fig. 13).

We note the artist’s preference for the theatrical setting, developing on parallel diagonals, we guess the paths of zig-zag stairs which intertwine in planes that melt in each other or contrastively superpose, oblique ramps on which vertical statues seem to float and whose gestures and movements are arrested in a solemn attitude. Adjusting to the topography of surfaces destined to painting, it projects an architectonics that gives the feeling of imponderability due to the frozenness of compositional structure.

Subscribing to El Greco’s conception that deformed nature for stylistic purposes⁸, Constantinescu simplifies form and undresses it from what is insignificant, thus revealing in a certain manner a hypostasis of El Greco that uses the opposite approach, departing from profane realism to the Byzantine traditional synthesis (Fig. 13, 29, 30).

The coloured thin strips (in dark red and white), usually borderlines of compositional areas, are replaced by long writings from names and titles. Most often developed on a single horizontal row, without pauses between words, these texts delimit registers from top to bottom and are mostly decorating, rather than informative in purpose (Fig. 12, 23). The vertical fasciae are substituted by architectural elements or by a character that frames the lateral sides of compositions, rhyming the spaces surrounding the scenes left larger on purpose so as to draw attention to the illustrated subject. Thus, the scenes

⁸ Andrei Pleșu, *Ochiul și lucrurile (The Eye and Things)*, ed. Meridiane, Bucharest 1986, p. 222. El Greco stated, in a letter, that: “to be dwarfed is the worst that can happen to any kind of form”, a testimony as strong as an artistic credo proved by most of his works.

follow each other as in the development of a film; even without the traditional delimitation of the fasciae, each episode may be clearly distinguished and followed easily.



Fig. 13. The north wall of the naos. Scenes illustrating events after "The Resurrection of the Lord". Fig. 14 a. On top: El Greco, "Adoration of the Shepherds", oil on canvas. Painted approximately between 1596-1600; National Museum of Art Romania, Bucharest. Fig. 14 b. Bottom: El Greco, "Visitation of Saint Elisabeth to Virgin Mary", oil on canvas, Dumbarton Oaks, Washington, USA. Painted between 1610-1613. Fig. 15. The south wall of pronaos. Scenes from the life and wonders of Saint Anthony the Great. Detail (right)

In the same "minimalist" note of mural paintings and their characteristics, the iconostasis reveals itself to the eye of the believers in an architecture comprising four rows of icons, all in golden carved wood (Fig. 19, 20). The entire visual information, with its aesthetic value and catechetical sense displays itself to the viewer with a minimum of signs and graphic and painting expressions; despite their abbreviated and synthetic character, they facilitate the integral reception of the Gospel's message in its perfect legibility.

With a simplicity of notation and the rudimentary use of painting matter (often reduced to the pencil sketch of the subject), the painter proposes us, with the help of the sanctifying and sanctified chromatic interface, the possibility of contemplating the other world, in its immateriality and eternity, confirming that church is, similar to its cult, “the expression of infinite in the scarcity of its gestures and forms”⁹.

There is in the painting of Bârnova a paradoxical combination between Byzantinism and modern spirit, mirrored in robust and diaphanous forms, yet unregimented in the habits of iconography. The most rigorous ones could judge such abilities as a deviation from the purity of traditional canonical style, accusing the artist of too much originality. On the contrary, others would remind us that there are many churches painted in neo-Byzantine style, of a quality that does not reach the artistic value of the one in Bârnova. From the perspective of both opinions, the following question arises: shall we opt for the canonicity of the style for the sake of style only, heavily ignoring the awkwardness of drawing and the chromatic disagreement of several icons that sometimes attain the grotesque and caricature or shall we embrace (as heavily as above) a novel structure of a remarkable aesthetic bearing and artistic value, but without all the artistic ingredients of Byzantine painting?



Fig. 16. Icon of the “Pantocrator” from the steeple. Fig. 17. Arcade of the pronaos, in which the icon of the Holy Trinity is shown at Mamvri’s Oak Tree (*The Hospitality of Abraham*).

⁹ Christoph Schönborn, *Icoana lui Hristos (God’s Human Face: The Christ-Icon)*, translated and prefaced by rev. PhD. Vasile Răducă, ed. Anastasia, 1996, pp. 184-185. What they have in common is the fact that art and the cult result from the encounter between sky and earth. There is a strong connection between the artistic conception and theandric conception of Christ’s mystery. Even the artists’ activity was touched by the power of attraction in this mystery. The embodiment changed not only the means to know God, but also how man looked at the world.

We are witnessing a case that positions us so as to manage the relation between the value of artistic creation and the scrupulosity of theological engagement. In Constantinescu, the image neither calques the traditional Byzantine manner, nor offers itself under the shape of a quote of reality, - similar to Grigorescu's painting in Agapia, for instance -, on the contrary, it is filtered and interpreted. From a theological and dogmatic viewpoint, the author only wanders from the iconographic program by the topographic repositioning of certain episodes, adjusting his discourse to the configuration and specifics of the liturgical space.



Fig. 18. Iconostasis and the apse of the altar. Fig. 19. Doors to the Kingdom

For this reason, the plastic resolution of mural painting at Bârnova is, as already mentioned, much closer to the manner of iconic transfiguration as to improvisation or artistic intermediation through which the tridimensional mundane world is reflected. Out of all the churches painted by Ștefan Constantinescu, the interpretative variant of the wood church of "Saint John the Baptist" of Bârnova is the most unitary from a stylistic viewpoint and remains, by its uniqueness and artistic value, a novel pictorial monument.



Fig. 20. Iconostasis, detail. Golden carved wood



Fig. 21. Apse of the altar: Icons of the Holy Hierarchs Basil the Great and Saint John Chrysostom.



Fig. 22. Developed frieze of the scene "Wonder of the Multiplication of the Loaves".



Fig. 23. Detail



Fig. 24. North-West corner of pronaos



Fig. 25. Sequences of events from the lives of Apostles Peter and Paul.
West wall of pronaos



Fig. 26. West wall of pronaos. Saint Paul, lying before the proconsul Sergius Paulus, punishes sorcerer Elmas by blinding him (*Acts of Apostles 13,12*)



Fig. 27. West wall of pronaos. Scenes from the life and wonders of Apostles Peter and Paul. Detail. Fig. 28. Episode of Saint Peter's liberation from prison by God's Angel (*Acts of Apostles 12, 8*)



Fig. 29. South wall of pronaos. Scenes from the life and wonders of Saint Anthony the Great. Detail.



Fig. 30. El Greco, "The opening of the fifth seal", oil on canvas, (1608–1614), dimensions: 225 × 193 cm, New York, Metropolitan Museum.

Fig. 31. El Greco, "Engagement of the Virgin", oil on canvas, (1614-1615).
National Museum of Art Romania, Bucharest

Appendix :



Fig. 32. Ion C. Inuleț (father). Fig. 33. Ionel Inuleț (son)



Fig. 34. Act of Union between Romania and Bessarabia in 1918. The document is signed by Ion C. Inuleț as president of the State Council



Fig. 35. Ștefan Constantinescu, "selfportrait", oil
Fig. 36. Wife of the artist, the actress Clody Bertola

Works painted by Ștefan Constantinescu :

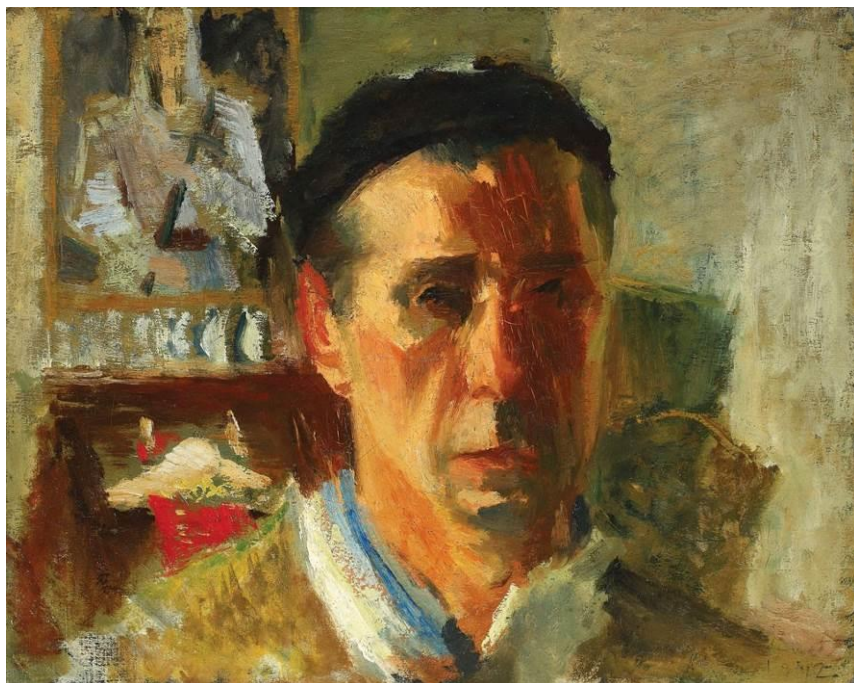


Fig. 37. Ștefan Constantinescu, "Selfportrait in studio", oil on canvas



Fig. 38. *Peasants of Oaș*, oil on canvas, 100x85cm, National Museum of Art, Romania. Fig. 39. *Young Man of Oaș*, oil on canvas taped on cardboard, 1926, dimensions 63,5x53cm.



Fig. 40. "Work", composition sketch, tempera on cardboard. Artist's collection

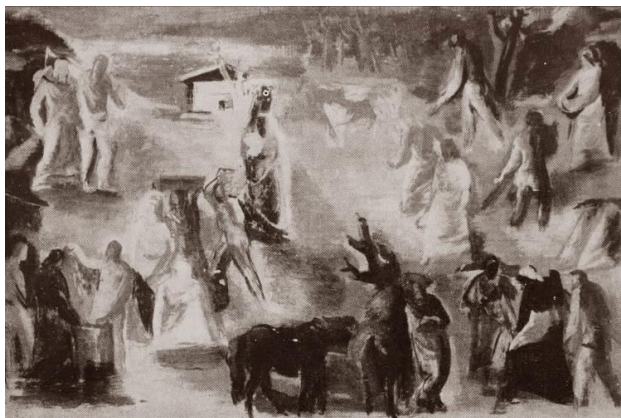


Fig. 41. "Working the Field", project for fresco, tempera on cardboard. Private collection



Fig. 42. Composition, project for fresco



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Fig. 10. Saint Luc l’ évangéliste, fresque (668-685), Catacombes de Commodille. Roma. In *Les Catacombes romaines et les origines du christianisme*, Fabrizio Mancinelli, Scala, Firenze, 2004, p. 30.

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[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:El_Greco,_The_Vision_of_Saint_John_\(1608-1614\).](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:El_Greco,_The_Vision_of_Saint_John_(1608-1614).)
Retrieved September 2016;

Fig. 31. El Greco, "Engagement of the Virgin", oil on canvas, (1614-1615). National Museum of Art Romania, Bucharest,
https://ro.wikipedia.org/wiki/El_Greco#/media/File:EL_GRECO_-_The_Marriage_of_the_Virgin, Retrieved September 2016;

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Fig. 32. Ion C. Inculeț (father)
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Fig. 33. Ionel Inculeț (son).
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Fig. 34. *Act of Union* between Romania and Bessarabia in 1918. The document is signed by Ion C. Inculeț as president of the State Council.
<https://www.google.ro/search?sa=G&hl=ro&q=actul+unirii+basarabiei+cu+romania&tbm>. Retrieved September 2016;

Fig. 35 Ștefan Constantinescu, "selfportrait", oil
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Fig. 36. Wife of the artist, the actress Clody Bertola, In *La vie en rose cu Clody Bertola*, Ludmila Patlanjoglu, ed. Humanitas, București, 1997.

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Fig. 37. Ștefan Constantinescu, "Selfportrait in studio", oil on canvas
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Retrieved September 2016;

Fig. 38 Țărani din Oaș / Peasants of Oaș, oil on canvas, 100x85cm, National Museum of Art, Romania

În *Dicționarul Artiștilor Români Contemporani*, Octavian Barbosa, Ed. Meridiane, București, 1976, p. 129.

Fig. 39. *Flăcău din Oaș / Young Man of Oaș*, oil on canvas taped on cardboard, 1926, dimensions 63,5x53cm.
<http://www.artmark.ro/catalogsearch/result/index/?q=constantinescu&limit> Retrieved September 2016;

Fig. 40 *Munca / Work*, composition sketch, tempera on cardboard. Artist's collection. In: Ștefan Constantinescu, Mircea Grozdea, Ed. Meridiane, Sibiu, 1978.

Fig. 41. *La munca câmpului / Working the Field*, project for fresco, tempera on cardboard. Private collection. In: Ștefan Constantinescu, Mircea Grozdea, Ed. Meridiane, Sibiu, 1978.

Fig. 42. Composition, project for fresco. In albumul: Ștefan Constantinescu, Mircea Grozdea, Ed. Meridiane, Sibiu, 1978.

Fig. 43. "The Judgement of Paris", tempera, private collection. In: Ștefan Constantinescu, Mircea Grozdea, Ed. Meridiane, Sibiu, 1978.

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MODALITIES OF VISUALLY LOCATING THE INTERVENTION AREAS IN THE RESTORATION DOCUMENTATION

Bogdan Gavrilean*

Abstract: The aim of the present article is to present modalities of visually locating the areas of specific intervention within heritage buildings, using vector graphics and bitmap image software, employed in the framework of preservation-restoration documentation.

Keywords: digital technologies, heritage buildings, mural painting restoration, visual documentation

The preservation-restoration interventions on heritage artworks are always complemented by adequate specific documentation, which records all the data pertaining to the specific heritage building, from general information (location, history, architecture presentation, style and iconography analysis of the painted decoration, technique of execution etc.), through the identification and analysis of the state of preservation and the prior interventions, and then, to the methodology of restoration intervention, established following the specialist scientific investigations.

After Paolo and Laura Mora, the restoration documentation is required to “establish the results of the examinations, diagnoses and interventions in an objective form, which ensure, in a manner as possible clear and complete, the transmission of such results, for the future benefit of all specialists interested in such information¹”.

From this point of view, one important section of the restoration documentation, which has not always received its deserved importance, regards the precise visual location of the intervention area within the church that is a heritage building. In a first stage, the wall painting decoration that will be restored is located, in relation to the cardinal points, in one of the distinct areas of the religious building (sanctuary, nave, narthex, exonarthex etc.), followed then by the location in registers, relating to the distance to the floor level and, finally, the identification by stylistic and iconographic means, if possible.

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¹ Laura & Paolo Mora; Paul, Philippot, *Conservarea picturilor murale* [Conservation of Mural Paintings], Meridiane Publishing House, Bucharest, 1986, page 50.

The registration of the scene within the framework of the whole church communicates to the restorer important clues regarding the state of preservation of such work of art, the micro-climate influence it is subjected to, as well as the predisposition to certain types of degradation and certain specific activity mechanisms, which might be well explained by the relative location. The recording of such information in as precise a manner as possible, including in visual form, by the specific documentation, is highly important towards facilitating the subsequent access of the restoration specialists to the essential data of the heritage building².

The general location of the intervention area is carried out, usually, by means of written documentation, while the visual location might be carried out on one hand, by means of photographic documentation, and on the other hand by means of graphical documentation, which is able to record also the restoration intervention carried out unto the heritage building.

The most effective form of visual location is, however, a composite method, which combines the advantages of both photographic and graphical methods, although somehow more difficult to execute: the entire image of the wall painting decoration undergoing restoration interventions is located in relation to the cardinal points within a cross-section type drawing or a ground-plan drawing.

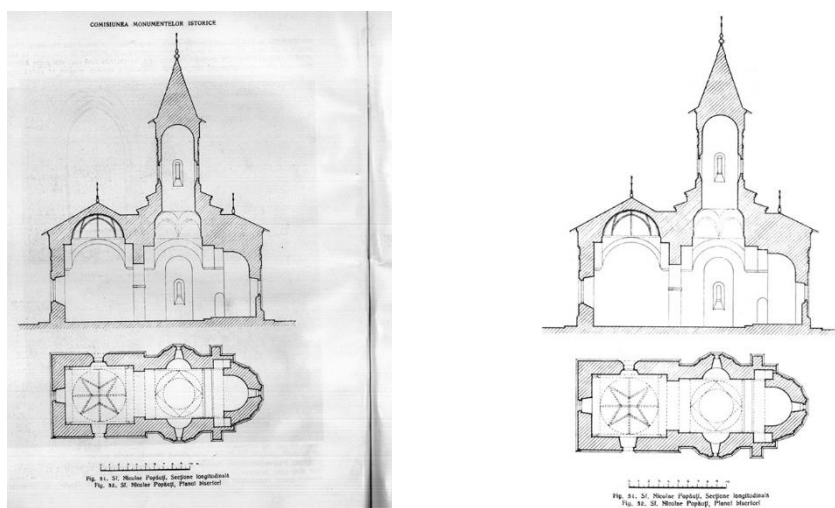


Fig. 1, 2. The church of Popăuți, Botoșani (15th century)³.
Ground plan and axial cross-section.

² “[...] the whole process undertaken by such specialist [restorer – n.n.] remains enclosed inside the specialist documentation, with data recorded as written, graphic and photographic, digital and film, documentation” - Carmen Solomonea, Voroneț, Popăuți, Probota și Moldovița. Metode tehnice ale picturii murale, Editura Artes, 2009, pag. 11.

³ Balș, G., *Bisericile și mănăstirile din veacurile al XVII-lea și al XVIII-lea*, vol. 3, Institutul de Arte Grafice „E. Marvan”, București, 1933, fig. 51, 52.

In a first stage, the printed images of the cross-sections and ground plans are digitized by high-resolution scanning⁴, an example of such scanned and non-processed image is illustrated in Fig. 1. The images are then processed by means of bitmap image processing software such as Adobe Photoshop, which allows the rotation of the image, the cutting-out of the irrelevant areas and the blotting out of as much noise as is possible out of the background⁵, as illustrated by Fig. 2.

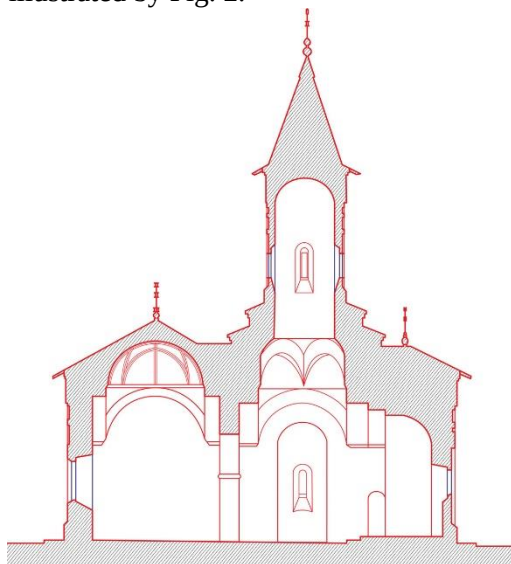


Fig. 3. The church of Popăuți, Botoșani (15th century).
Axial cross-section redrawn using Coreldraw

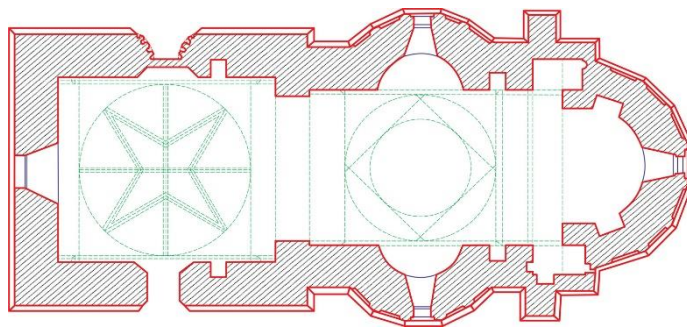


Fig. 4. The church of Popăuți. Ground plan, redrawn using CorelDraw

⁴ If the resolution is too small, the image quality will be lower, and “the pixels composing the image will be visible, and one will say about the image that is pixelated” - Galer Mark, Les Harvat, *Imaginea digitală. Aplicații*, Editura Ad Libri, București, 2004, pag. 18.

⁵ Gavrillean, Bogdan, *Modalități de valorificare a intervențiilor de restaurare cu ajutorul informației digitale*, în „Monumentul-Tradiție și Viitor”, Ediția a VII-a, Ed. Fundației Axis, Iași, pag. 353.

The corrected bitmap image is then used as model for the precise redrawing of both the ground plan and the axial cross-section, using the CorelDraw software (see Fig. 3 and 4, which illustrate the vector graphics of Popăuți church, drawn by the author in CorelDraw), achieving in the end a detailed vector graphic.

The main advantage of this type of images is the small storage space it takes, as well as the fact that the information is easy to correct and to update compared to hand-drawings, which, on any modifications must be practically redrawn completely from zero. Another advantage is the fact that the vector graphics can be scaled to any physical dimensions, the resulting image being of the same print quality, both in small and in very large formats, compared to the bitmap images, where the aliasing effect shall appear eventually, regardless of the resolution⁶. Fig. 5 and Fig. 6 illustrate the difference in quality between images, both presenting a detail of the ground plan of the church of Popăuți monastery, both zoomed up to 2100%: bitmap (left) and vector (right).

The main disadvantage of vector graphics is the large amount of time required in the beginning for the elaboration of the drawings, which are effectively made using the mouse of the computer or a graphic table, as well as the required acquiring of knowledge in operating a specialist software, which disadvantages are mitigated in time, after the digital technology competences are acquired.

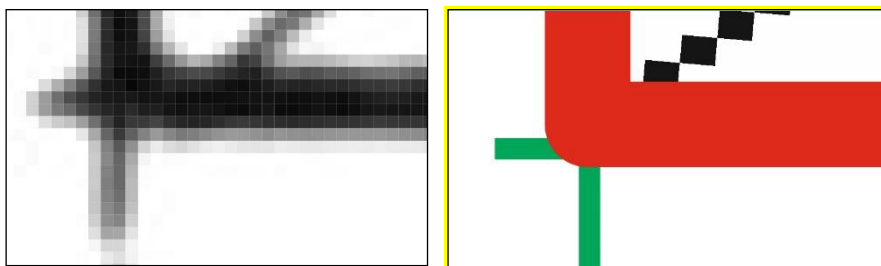


Fig. 5, 6. 300 dpi – scanned bitmap image (left) and vector graphic drawn in CorelDraw (right)

The second phase is aimed at obtaining an integral image of the wall painting decoration, which will allow the general visualization of the scene.

In order to obtain such image, one must observe though the fact that in case of scenes located in the upper areas of the building, clear photographs of the whole scene are impossible to take from ground level, either due to the insufficient light inside the church, or the architectural particularities of each building.

⁶ “[...] the vector images consist of graphical objects described by mathematical formulae and have the advantage, among others, of resizing (scaling up or down) without aliasing effects” - Grigoraș, Florin, *Procesarea computerizată a imaginii*, Editura Artes, Iași, 2002, pag. 23.

When the wall painting decorations are undergoing restoration, the obtaining overall scene photographs of high quality is more difficult, as the presence of the scaffolding obscures almost entirely the visibility of such scenes, e.g. the scaffolding erected in the nave of Golia monastery church for the restoration interventions (see Fig. 7).

Most of the time, the only effective option is to take images on each scaffolding level, although, in this case one must consider the fact that the levels of the scaffolding erected for interventions inside the church are up to 2 meters high, while the decks are up to 2 meters wide.

In these conditions, obtaining a single contiguous image of the work area is difficult, due to the extremely tight photographing angles onto the work area from the decks of the scaffolding, as the scaffolding “cuts” the image in several horizontal or vertical sections, the larger scenes being sometime located on even two or three registers). Fig. 8 illustrates the repartition on two registers of the “The Denial of Peter” scene in the church of Popăuți monastery, Botoșani, while the detail in Fig. 9 outlines the area between two registers, covered by scaffolding, and only visible from a very tight angle.

In the most frequent situations, though, the various scaffolding members interfere with the view of the scene, as illustrated by the examples in Fig. 9 – 11 and 13, showing the metal members of the scaffolding.

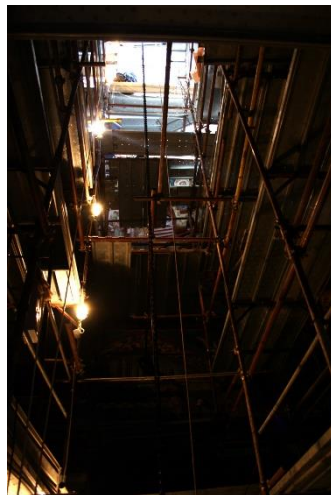


Fig. 7. Scaffolding inside Golia monastery church



Fig. 8, 9. The scaffolding inside Popăuți monastery church – general view of the “The Denial of Peter” scene – which is located on two decks of the scaffolding (left) and detail of the scene (right).

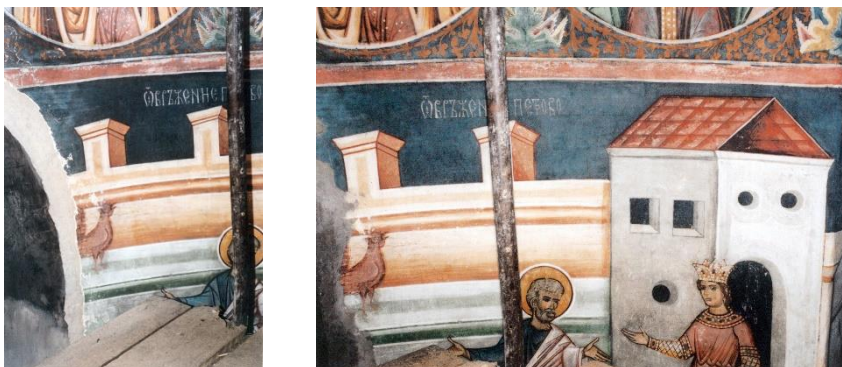


Fig. 10, 11. Popăuți monastery church – “The Denial of Peter” scene.
Metal members of the scaffolding



Fig. 12, 13, 14. Popăuți monastery church – “The Denial of Peter” scene.
Scanned images of the photographs taken on the upper (left)
and lower half of the scene (center and right)

The only effective option in this situation remains the photographing of the scene from multiple angles (Fig. 9 - 14), followed by the digital stitching together of the images using Adobe Photoshop. The preliminary procedures are identical to the first phase, with the difference that in this latter phase, the images are processed, both to eliminate the perspective distortions (due to the atypical photographing angles, as illustrated by Fig. 9 – 14, on “The Denial of Peter”) and to eliminate the chromatic aberrations generated during the image acquisition (photographing and then scanning).

Following the rescaling to the same size and the correction of perspective deformations for each image individually, the image segments are juxtaposed in Adobe Photoshop to obtain the general image of the work area. The assembled image in Fig. 15 illustrates the state of preservation of the scene before restoration, while Fig. 16 illustrates the scene close to the end of restoration operations.

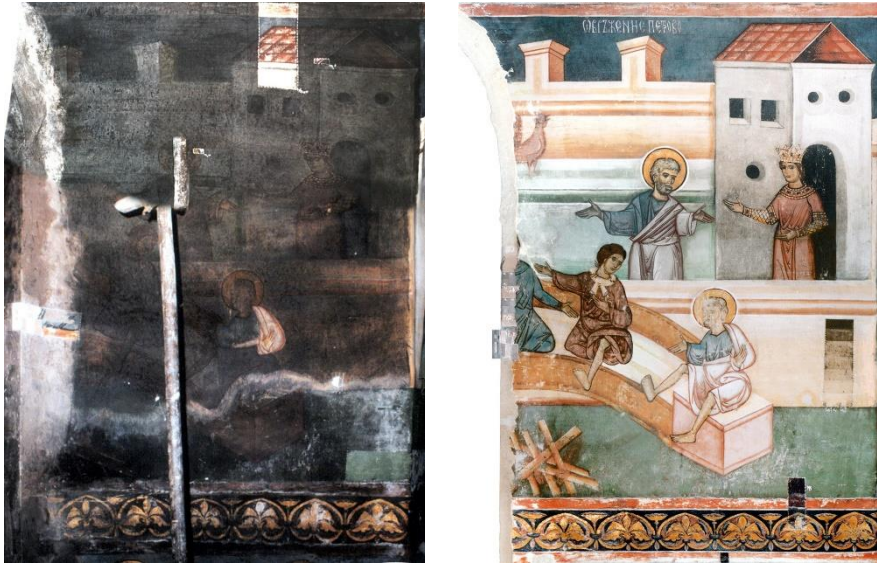


Fig. 15, 16. “The Denial of Peter”. Images stitched in Photoshop.

One must mention that, although the final assembled images are superior to the hand-drawings of the scenes, these do not have an absolute degree of precision, as certain error are inevitable, either from a chromatic point of view or in relation to certain dimensional reference points. However, the digitally assembled images fulfil the purpose, i.e. to provide a whole-picture image without the interference caused by the scaffolding.

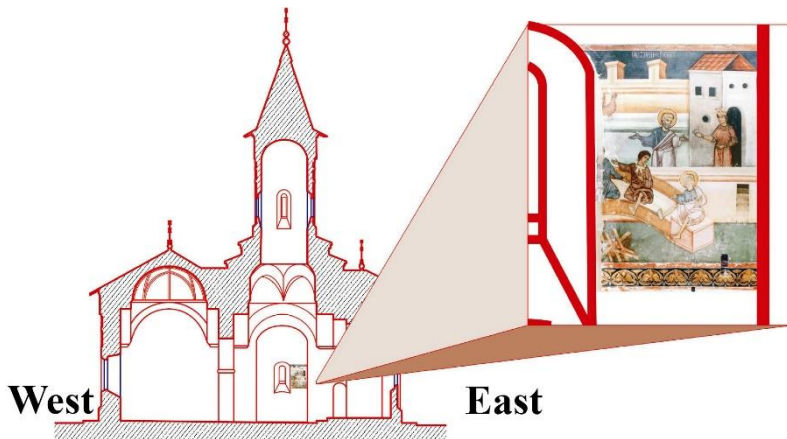


Fig. 17. The location of the wall painting decoration using the axial cross-section.

The assembled bitmap image is then resized and located within the vector drawing of cross-section (as illustrated by Fig. 17) and the ground plan (Fig. 18) of the church.

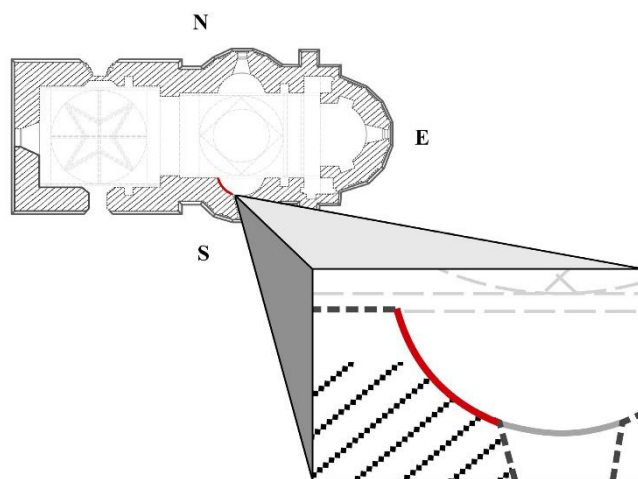


Fig. 18. The “Denial of Peter” scene, located using the ground plan

The composite method of visual location for the specific areas of intervention, within the whole church heritage building, is presented by the image in Fig. 19, in which the contiguous images of the restored wall painting decorations are illustrated using the cardinal points within the axial cross-section, while Fig. 20 shows a detail with the repartition of scenes on registers. This method can also be extended to the graphical documentation that are always attached to the restoration documentation.



Fig. 19. The visual location on registers, using the axial cross-sections

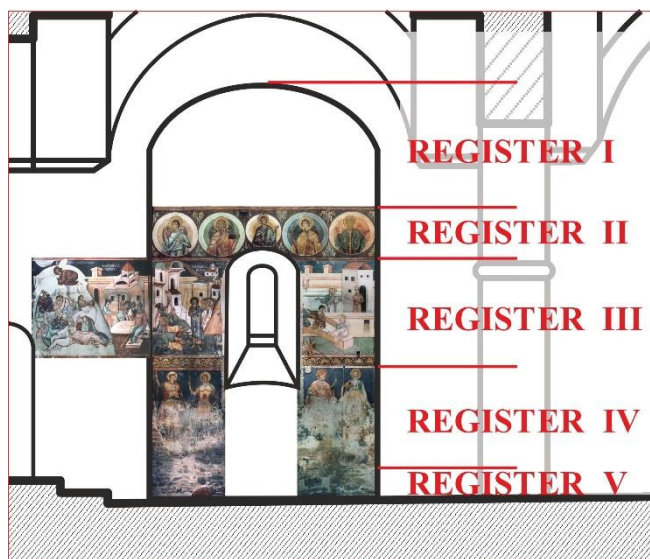


Fig. 20. The visual location of the frescoes, using the axial cross-sections (detail).

Moreover, the location of a certain scene in the general framework of the heritage building might be carried out by means of outline drawings, with either hand-drawn modulated lines, on tracing paper, overlaid on an image printed at standard scale, or directly as digital graphic. The main advantage of this type of drawing is allowing the focus on stylistic or iconographic typologies particular to the scene.



Fig. 21. Hand-drawn outline representation of the “Ascension of Jesus” scene

Fig. 21 represents a measured outline hand drawing, of the “Ascension of Jesus” scene, St. Nicholas church, Popăuți, Botoșani, which was subsequently scanned and assembled in Adobe Photoshop.



Fig. 22, 23, 24. Image used as background (left), outline drawing (center) and digital graphic representation of the state of conservation (right) of an extracted wall-painting decoration

Within the preservation-restoration documentation, the graphical reliefs present, along the outline drawings of the scene, certain other specific aspects, such are: *Execution Technique*, which records the materials that constitute the wall painting decoration, the technologic and chromatic particularities of the scene; *State of preservation* – which records the types of degradation, at masonry, preparation and paint level; *Previous interventions*, which records the destructive prior interventions, either “restorations” or vandalisms; and finally *Restoration interventions*, which records all activities of the restorer. All these graphical reliefs, accompanied by explanatory captions, are the fastest and most effective form of visual documentation for recording and presenting the restoration interventions on heritage buildings, available to both specialists and general public⁷. After Paolo Mora & Paul Phillippot, “the drawn reliefs constitute a form of documentation that is essential to the restorer, as it is the only one that allows the clear and systematic understanding of a complex assembly, of its state, as well as the nature of the interventions it had undergone”⁸.

To conclude, we exemplify the two main types of elaboration of graphical reliefs: the elaborations that use integrally digital technologies are presented in Fig. 22-24⁹, while the elaborations that use hand-drawings on tracing paper are illustrated in Fig. 25-29¹⁰.

⁷ An eloquent example for this is the graphical representations of the outline drawings of the scenes, as well as the methodology stages of the restoration interventions is *The Restoration of the Probota Monastery*, UNESCO, 2001.

⁸ Laura & Paolo Mora; Paul, Philippot, *Conservarea picturilor murale*, Editura Meridiane, București, 1986, pag. 52.

⁹ Fig. 22-24 illustrate examples of the study works of students, for the Specialization Course “The Preservation and Restoration of the Work of Art” Iași, the specialty *Computer processing of images*.

¹⁰ Fig. 25-29 are graphic representations of the restoration interventions carried out on the “Deisis” scene, Moldovița (images of the graphic representations portfolio of the License

Both types of elaborations are accompanied by explanatory graphical captions, which are located, in Fig. 22-24 below the drawing, while in Fig. 25-29 on the right side of the drawing.

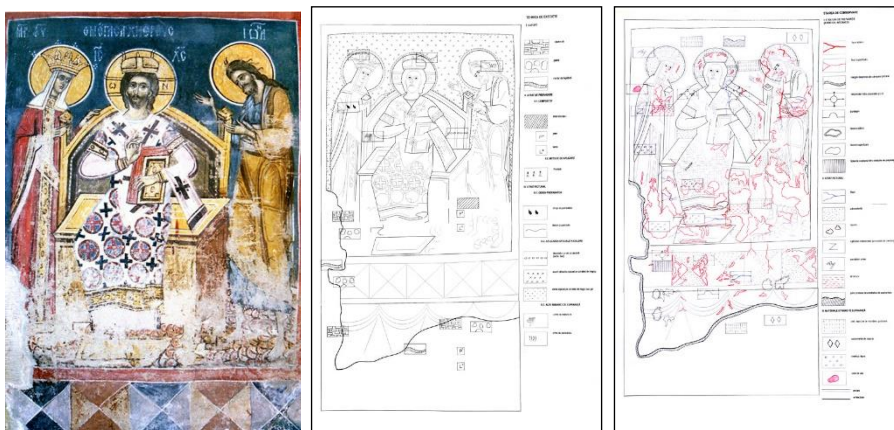


Fig. 25, 26, 27. The general image of the “Deisis” scene, the church of Moldovița Monastery (left); Hand-drawn graphic representation illustrating *The Outline drawing of the scene and the Execution technique* (center), and *State of preservation of the preparation layers* (right)

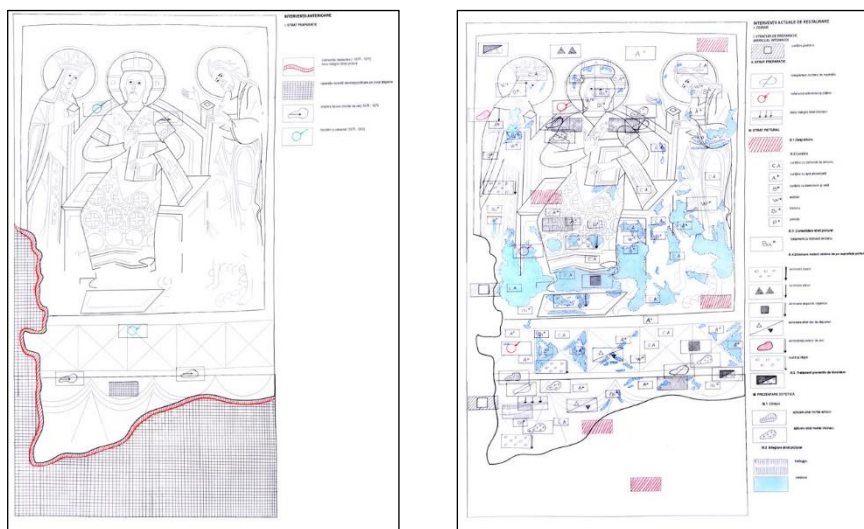


Fig. 28, 29. Hand-drawn graphic representation of the “Deisis” scene, illustrating the *Prior interventions* (left) and the *Current restoration interventions* (right).

Dissertation “Preservation and Restoration interventions on the wall-painting decoration in the church of Moldovița Monastery”, of the student Dumitraș Raluca, for the Specialization Course “The Preservation and Restoration of the Work of Art”, F.A.P.D.D., Iași, 2004).

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7. *******, *The Restoration of the Probota Monastery*, UNESCO, 2001.

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- Fig. 25-29. student Dumitraș Raluca, graphic representations of the restoration interventions carried out on the “Deisis” scene, Moldovița (images of the graphic representations portfolio of the License Dissertation “Preservation and Restoration interventions on the wall-painting decoration in the church Moldovița Monastery”, F.A.P.D.D., Iași, 2004).

SPATIAL REPRESENTATION METHODS IN BYZANTINE ART

Daniel Sofron*

Abstract: This article proposes an analysis of the issue of spatial representation in Byzantine art. In the first part, we identify the reasons leading to the elimination of three-dimensionality effects in Byzantine imagery. The idea that Byzantine artists intentionally gave up three-dimensional representation is supported with arguments. Even though Byzantine art systematically rejected representing the third dimension, we can definitely discover certain ways of rendering spatiality. These methods are briefly analysed in the second part of this work.

Keywords: Byzantine art, perspective, space, overlapping, hierarchical perspective, inverted perspective

Ancient Greek and Roman art represents a moment of relative development of the spatial representation principles. There is a time interval of almost a millennium and a half between this period and the Renaissance, when perspective is developed. Surprisingly enough, during all this time, the representation of space seems to be abandoned or neglected.

Both Byzantine and Romanesque art promote an artistic style where the third dimension is not desired, the rules of perspective representation being ignored. The artists are no longer interested in the laws of geometry or in the proportions between objects and their placement in space.

The first elements of the Byzantine style emerge during a difficult period of time, characterised by serious social, political and economic crises, when rationalism and sciences are no longer trusted. This unstable climate generates the alienation from the material world, people tending to embrace the spiritual side of life. Divinity is placed far away from the sensible world, which becomes less important than the suprasensible one. Almost all interests of the society gravitate around religious research, which is the central issue.

Art gradually transforms itself into a powerful instrument of religious influence, aiming at taking the faithful people away from the material world and making them get closer to the transcendental existence. The main goal of Byzantine art is to render the essence of a supernatural world. For the Christians of those times, the invisible reality becomes more important than the visible one.

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Byzantine art has a programmatic, instructional and perceptual approach, with the Court and the Church totally controlling it and conditioning all its themes, down to the last detail. As art historian Charles Delvoye states, Byzantine art does not belong to reason or reality, but rather to transcendence and ostentation, its main purpose being that of astounding and infusing respect into the submissive people and the neighbouring nations¹.

The Byzantine artist does not intend to accurately depict reality or to awaken admiration through a naturalistic approach; his goal is to make the Christian soul turn to God. The Byzantine painting is meant to present religious themes in a precise and accessible manner, stimulate memory and orient imagination towards a pre-established direction. Art historian Viktor Lazarev believes that the artistic image had to make the Christians think about God and urge them to contemplate purity. And the icons represent the only way for the believers to detach themselves from the earthly possessions².

Byzantine art has a slow evolutionary process, artistic revolution being practically impossible due to the same strict control exerted by the Court and the Church, the slightest deviation from the religious theme being immediately eliminated, as Viktor Lazarev asserts³. The freedom of Byzantine artist is limited, as his themes are established in detail and he also has to follow a series of rigid canons. Because of this authoritarian character of power, art turns into an instrument of propaganda.

After having briefly clarified the context in which Byzantine art emerges and develops, its role within the society of those times and its characteristics, the decision of the Byzantine artists to opt for the elimination of the spatial representation effects seems totally justified. The fact that this exclusion of three-dimensionality from the Byzantine iconography happens during all stages of its existence helps us conclude that the artist's intentions can be considered as being premeditated. As art historian Nadeije Laneyrie-Dagen⁴ states, from Paleochristian times to the Romanesque period, artists have avoid any form of *trompe l'oeil* and any illusion of depth, placing characters and motifs at levels that have no significance to their relative position, filling the background with horizontal stripes and creating ambiguity, and there is no way of telling if the figures are located inside or outside.

Therefore, the entire Byzantine iconography – with rare exceptions – is marked by a pronounced two-dimensional character. Since Paleochristian times, the artistic creation has presented a tendency of geometrically stylising the forms that populate the plastic space, depicting them unrealistically and

¹ Charles Delvoye, *Arta bizantină (Byzantine Art)*, Meridiane Publishing House, Bucharest, 1976, p. 30.

² Viktor Lazarev, *Istoria picturii bizantine (The History of Byzantine Painting)*, vol. I, Meridiane Publishing House, Bucharest, 1980, p. 71.

³ *Ibidem*, p. 52.

⁴ Laneyrie – Dagen, Nadeije, *Pictura-secrete și dezvăluiri (How to Read Paintings)*, RAO Publishing House, Bucharest, 2004, p. 79.

making them seem extremely rigid. The human body, for instance, is drawn by ignoring all physical parameters; it is spiritualised and becomes an abstract symbol standing against a flat, two-dimensional background. While painting cloths, the painters render creases in a way that totally contradicts the logic the volumes of the human body, without emphasizing the anatomical shapes. All objects are represented in a space with no gravitational attraction. The depiction of figures follows the rules of a severe form of ascetism, as they have no volume, looking like shadows without a body that do not belong to the concrete reality. The landscape is as schematic as the rest of the elements: the hills are flat, the cliffs are stylised to such an extent that they become unrecognisable, the trees and the plants seem mere geometric motives.

In the case of icons, mosaics and mural paintings, the genuine three-dimensional space is replaced by an abstract golden background or a monochrome one – usually blue. Depth is neglected, and so is the placement of the elements in space. In the scenes with a pronounced narrative and illustrative character that present biblical events, the space is adapted to the story line necessities without any rules, thus resulting an ideal world, with no connections to the earth and its physical laws. All material elements are excluded in order to reach a maximum level of spiritualisation, the artistic image achieving a transcendental character.

Even if Byzantine art systematically rejects the rules of linear perspective, we can still identify certain “traces” of spatial representation, if we are to take into consideration Rudolf Arnheim's opinion that “there is no such thing as a strictly flat, two-dimensional image”⁵.

Overlapping

One of the simplest methods of creating the illusion of depth is by overlapping two or more shapes. If their contours touch or intersect each other without interruption, the effect of spatiality is barely visible or even absent. But when one of the shapes eliminates a part of the other, the overlapping is strongly perceived, the eye and the brain recreating the incomplete shape.

Overlapping is a method of spatial representation that is typical to decorative arts schools. As Rudolf Arnheim states, “overlapping is particularly useful in creating a sequence of visual objects in the depth dimension when the spatial construction of the picture does not rely on other means of perspective”⁶. Overlapping is usually combined with the multi-storeyed perspective, the former being an improved version of the latter in what illusion is concerned⁷. Spatiality is achieved through a figure that is partially

⁵ Rudolf Arnheim, *Art and Visual Perception*, University of California Press, Berkeley, Los Angeles, London, 1974, p. 219.

⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 250.

⁷ Zamfir Dumitrescu, *Structuri geometrice, structuri plastice (Geometric Structures, Plastic Structures)*, Edit. Meridiane, București, 1984, p. 163.

overlapping another one or through a group of elements that are slightly higher than the ones in the foreground. The elements are placed in successive registers, without reducing the proportions in accordance with the spatial depth. This method is highly used when there is an intention to represent a group of figures or elements, the ones in the second and third plane being somewhat elevated than the ones in front of them, thus leaving visible certain parts of their surfaces. The shapes with continuous contours are perceived as being placed in front, while those with interrupted margins appear to be situated somewhere in the back. The elements placed in overlapped frontal planes imply the existence of a minimal space. This way, although the space is perceivable, the distance between the elements is reduced to the maximum, the image keeping its two-dimensional character.

Overlapping is a very common element in Byzantine painting, being present in icons, as well as in mural paintings and mosaics. In the image bellow (Fig. 1), *The Forty Martyrs of Sebaste* form a compact group of characters. The martyrs in the foreground are presented entirely and partially cover those in the back. But the dimension of the characters is not reduced in proportion to their distance from the plane of the observer. The same effect occurs in the second image (Fig. 2), which presents a fragment from the scene of *The Last Judgement*. The characters are represented staying side by side, their heads having the same size (isocephaly), and are partially overlapped, the ones in the back being present only through their halos.

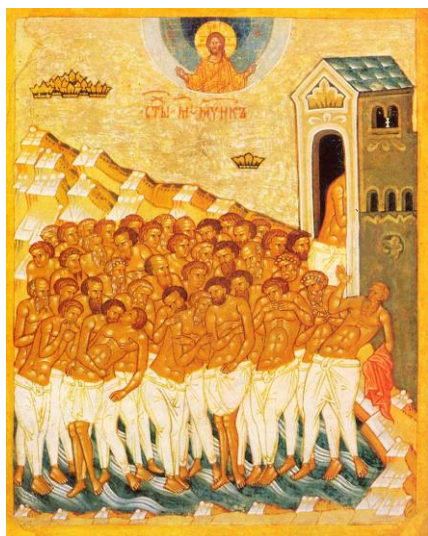


Fig. 1. *The Forty Martyrs of Sebaste* - Russian icon, 15th century



Fig. 2. *The Last Judgement* – fragment, Voroneț Monastery, 16th century

Byzantine art uses overlapping because it fits the plane vision. By means of this simple, yet suggestive method, the Byzantine painters manage to

depict aspects of the three-dimensional space, at the same time keeping the two-dimensional character of the image, which is typical to the paintings of that period.

The hierarchical (affective) perspective

Another method of representing three-dimensional space on a flat surface in Byzantine iconography is the hierarchical (affective) perspective. This method also characterises the art of Ancient Egypt, as well as the Pre-Romanesque and Romanesque art.

According to this type of perspective, the characters and elements are visually represented by following a subjective hierarchical criterion, as they do not depend on perception, but rather on their relevance within the image. The Byzantine painter does not imitate mechanically the elements he observes and neither does he give much importance to the proportions between the elements he visually perceives. The dimension of the elements is represented according to the place they occupied in a certain official, religious, or personal hierarchy, and also to the visual logic.

In Byzantine imagery, the elements and characters populating the artistic space are represented on different scales, in accordance with the role they occupy in the story the painting depicts and not as a result of a decrease in perspective. The most important character occupies a privileged position and is depicted on a bigger scale than the characters that are given less consideration, even if the latter ones are located closer to the observing eye. Although this technique does not follow an aesthetic principle, but rather meets hierarchical demands, it proves to be very efficient especially in the cases of the large mural scenes painted inside the churches, where the central figure is immediately perceived. In many works, the figures of Christ, Virgin Mary or the emperor (the symbolic expression of the entire Byzantine state) appear much larger than the ones of the other characters.

Those who are very familiar with the rules of linear perspective may associate the representation of characters at different scales with perspectival diminution. But such an interpretation is far from the stylistic conception of the Byzantine iconography. Perspective representation implies depicting the world the way an observer sees it, thus expressing his or her subjectivity. It does not mean representing the objects the way one knows they are, but the way an observer sees them from a certain place (a single “point of view”). This approach, which favours the perception on the objective reality, was unacceptable for the theology of the Byzantine Middle Ages. In accordance with its principles, the perspective representation created a hierarchy that the Church did not want to establish. During that period of time, it was inconceivable to represent Jesus Christ or the emperor on a smaller scale than a simple earthling just because they were located farther from the observing eye. Space as a three-dimensional concept was not of any concern to the

Byzantine visual art. However, the architect P. A. Michelis considers that space can still be perceived due to the different levels suggested by the comparison of dimensions and the movements of the characters within the two-dimensional surface of the work⁸.

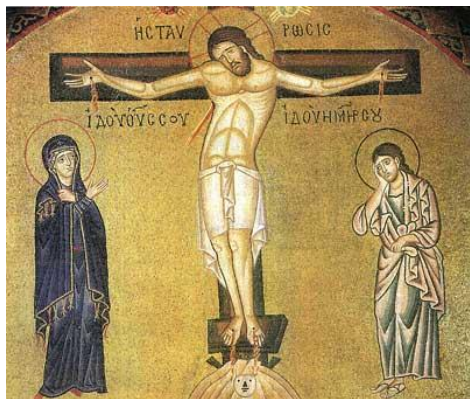


Fig. 3. *The Crucifixion*, Hosios Loukas Monastery, 11th century



Fig. 4. *Harrowing of Hell*, Cathedral of Santa Maria Assunta, Torcello, 12th century

The principle of the hierarchical perspective can be very well observed in the scene of *The Crucifixion* (Fig. 3), a simple composition, with three characters, that is representative for the 11th century iconography. The figure of Christ dominates the composition, due to its size. Virgin Mary and John the Apostle, much smaller than Christ, reticently share his sufferings. The symbolic importance of Christ crucified is emphasized by placing the action in an unreal, transfigured space. The figures seem to be floating in front of a golden background. There is no indication of the earth surface, the hill of Golgotha being reduced to a small spot, right beneath the cross. The same representation principle is applied in the scene of the *Harrowing of Hell*, presented above (Fig. 4). Christ dominates the composition through his stature, much bigger than that of the other characters, as well as through his central position.

Furthermore, in Byzantine art the proportions between the characters and the furniture or buildings do not comply with the visual perception. There are many images where people can be as tall as a building or where they can hold an edifice in their hands, the latter being the case of the church founders in the votive portraits (see figs. 5 and 6). Rudolf Arnheim argues that this example shows „how size differences arise in response to considerations of meaning, e.g., when the relation between creator and creature or saint and emblem is to be expressed”⁹.

⁸ Michelis, P. A., *Esthétique de l'art byzantin*, Flammarion, Paris, 1959, p. 185.

⁹ Arnheim, Rudolf, *Art and Visual Perception*, University of California Press, Berkeley, Los Angeles, London 1974, p. 196.



Fig. 5. The votive portrait of Stephen the Great, Voroneț Monastery, Romania, 15th century



Fig. 6. The votive portrait of Neagoe Basarab, Curtea de Argeș Monastery, 16th century

The seemingly incorrect proportions between the elements, often attributed to the lack of skills or attention, are explained by Arnheim as follows: „The basic irrelevance of visual size is shown most strikingly by our habitual obliviousness to the constant change in size of the objects in our environment brought about by changes in distance”¹⁰.

The reverse (inverted) perspective

In Byzantine there are also some sporadic attempts to represent depth, especially in the case of the objects with flat margins and straight edges, spatial proportions that contradict the rules of linear perspective. Polyhedrons and even objects with curved margins are sometimes represented with some of their parts or surfaces being completely visible, although they are not directly seen by the eye of the observer. The Byzantine painter does not hesitate to bring in the foreground sides of objects that are normally "hidden". Furthermore, the viewer is surprised by certain unusual shapes of architectural elements or mountains, for instance. The walls of the buildings and the sharp cliffs look like they are coming forward, towards the observer, instead of moving backwards to create the illusion of depth. The objects seem to be looked at from different points of view and not have a stable position in a space characterised by a reduced profoundness. At a closer look, we can notice faces and parts of the human body depicted in an apparently awkward way, as if the painter did not have enough knowledge about it.

On the other hand, a quick examination emphasizes the incontestable artistic and technical qualities of the works created by the Byzantine artists, as well as the originality and symbolic value of the frescos, mosaics and miniatures. In fact, these unusual shapes and forms are the result of a conscious

¹⁰ Arnheim, Rudolf, *Art and Visual Perception*, University of California Press, Berkeley, Los Angeles, London 1974, p. 201.

and premeditated artistic endeavour. They are elements of a visual language through which the Byzantine artist expresses the reality he wants to transpose into images.

The theologian Pavel Florenski considers that these "breaches" of perspectival rules are not accidental and that we are dealing with a specific system of representation and perception of reality in Byzantine iconography. He thinks that the Byzantine artists knew about the use of perspective, but chose not to use it, or better said, they wanted to apply another principle of representation than the perspective, because the masterminds of those times perceived and sensed the world in a way which immanently imposed that particular means of spatial representation¹¹.

Nonetheless, it is obvious that the spatial representation system used by the Byzantine painters contradicts the rules of the geometric perspective developed during the Renaissance period. Some researchers, such as Oscar Wulff¹², are trying to justify this peculiar spatial representation method, while others are considering it to be imperfect or even inexistent. Wulff is the first researcher who uses the term "reverse perspective" in an article published in 1907, saying that in the artistic space of the icon, the laws of the linear perspective are reversed. Pavel Floresky would later use the expression in one of his essays from 1920.

Art historian André Grabar¹³ tries to explain the way reverse perspective works by bringing into discussion the writings of the Greek philosopher Plotinus, in whose opinion the visual impression is created in the place where the object is, and not in the soul. Grabar considers that the Byzantine painter represents the image of an object as if he were in the place of that object, thus managing to depict it in all its greatness and from the right distance. In P. A. Michelis' opinion¹⁴, Grabar's hypothesis is implausible. As a matter of fact, Michelis thinks that reverse perspective is not systematic, not being able to explain the entire composition of a Byzantine work of art. Even if there had been a system, it would have obviously been based on subjective criteria, and the proportion of the distances between objects, as well as between the objects and the viewer, would have remained undetermined. The same opinion is shared by art historian Clemena Antonova, who defines reverse perspective as a principle of the spatial organisation of the icon. According to Antonova, reverse perspective refers to a simultaneous representation of several aspects of the image, regardless of whether they are being viewed from a fixed point or not¹⁵.

¹¹ Pavel Florenski, *Iconostasul (Iconostasis)*, Edit. Anastasia, București, 1994, p. 86.

¹² P. A. Michelis, *Esthétique de l'art byzantin*, Flammarion, Paris, 1959, pp. 179-180.

¹³ *Ibidem*, pp. 183-184.

¹⁴ *Ibidem*.

¹⁵ Clemena Antonova, *Space, Time, and Presence in the Icon*, Ashgate Publishing Company, 2010, p. 169.

However, it is almost certain that the Byzantine artist does not conceive reverse perspective as a spatial representation system. Michelis¹⁶ considers that the Byzantine perspective is of value only to us (from an aesthetic and cultural point of view), as we judge it by comparing it to the classical theory of Renaissance perspective. For the Byzantine artists, this type of perspective could not have been a system, as they were not interested in representing appearances. In addition, as Michelis rightfully asserts, reverse perspective contests the visual appearance, which implies a denial of the essences of reality, but instead it highlights the real values of the represented figure.

The principle of reverse perspective is simple. The parallel lines in space, which should converge toward the horizon, are rendered the other way around. Instead of meeting in a vanishing point situated in the back of the painting, the lines come together somewhere in front of the painting, in the plane of the viewer (see Fig. 7).

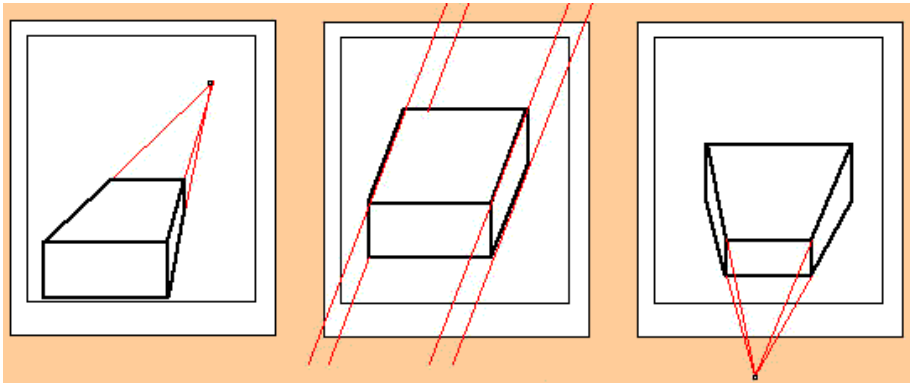


Fig. 7. Principles of construction: linear, axonometric and reverse perspectives.

We are not talking about a system with a single vanishing point. It is very uncommon to identify only one point of convergence in the Byzantine iconography. Most of the times, each represented object has its own perspective, being rendered in such a way as to be highlighted. Furthermore, one of the most common techniques of the reverse perspective is the polycentrism of plastic representations, determined by the mobility of view. The eye can look at different components of an object from various angles, each part having its own visual angle and its own centre of perspective. In this case, spatial representation in Byzantine painting is different from linear perspective, where there is only one point of view. By using more than one vanishing point in a composition, the artist is trying to establish a system of priorities and a connection with the viewer.

¹⁶ P. A. Michelis, *op. cit.*, p. 184.

The buildings from the Byzantine images lose their three-dimensionality, reverse perspective conferring them a fragile, light and immaterial nature. These buildings have a purely decorative role, not being represented at a human scale. Besides, Byzantine art refuses the "box space", typical to linear perspective. In accordance with the same principle of reverse perspective, the events taking place inside the building are shown outside. A red veil is placed above the buildings, to suggest that the action is actually happening indoors.



Fig. 8. *The Annunciation*, 14th century, Saint Clement, Ohrid, Macedonia



Fig. 9. *Jesus Christ* – detail.

In the first image above (Fig. 8), the red veil placed over the baldachin, under which Virgin Mary is placed, implies that the action is taking place inside. The space is delimited by the oblique lines of the baldachin and of the two pedestals placed at the foot of the image. The pedestals give the impression that the soil is moving upwards, without generating spatial depth, because reverse perspective is used for their representation. The same effect occurs in the case of the pedestals beneath the column and the capital. At the top of the image there is a building seen from above which is also represented in reverse perspective. All these elements seem to be placed in the same plane. The sensation of two-dimensionality is accentuated by the abstract golden background, which resembles an absolute light that comes from beyond the earthly dimensions. For that matter, the lighting is contradictory in this image. As there is not a unique source of light to unite all the components in a coherent and inseparable system, the characters and objects detach themselves as

isolated and solitary elements that belong to another world. Some parts of the architectural elements, which should have normally been left in shadow, are emphasized through colour, thus claiming a spot in the foreground, compressing space even more. Due to these representation particularities, the action seems to be placed on a spiritual, imaginary realm outside the space.

In the other image (Fig. 9), reverse perspective is present in the representation of the Gospel. The cover is presented frontally, but the lateral sides, which normally should have converged towards the interior of the image, seem to advance in the direction of the viewer. At the same time, the edges of the Gospel have their vanishing point outside the image, in front of the observer. The red colour of the lateral sides additionally emphasizes the two-dimensionality of the image. Due to all these elements, the viewer is attracted in the plane of the painting, having the sensation of a continuous forward movement. Analyzing *The Trinity*, the icon created by the Russian painter Andrei Rubliov, the theologian Paul Evdochimov considers that reverse perspective eliminates the distance, the depth where everything disappears afar, and produces the opposite effect: it makes the characters come closer, showing that God is there and everywhere¹⁷.

The principles of reverse perspective are applied in all stages of the history of Byzantine art, in icons, as well as in mural art or miniatures. But it is not used with the same rigour by all Byzantine art schools. Until the iconoclast period, reverse perspective appears only in its simple forms, although the permanent refusal of rendering spatial depth can be easily noticed. It is only during the Palaiologos dynasty that this spatial representation method manifests the richness of its artistic expression capacities.

The complexity of reverse perspective and its systematic application prove that Byzantine art cannot be described as being incapable of rendering space as we see it. This type of perspective is an artistic method thoroughly verified by practice and one of the main possible schemes in visual arts that corresponds to just one of the possible interpretations of the world around us. This original method of spatial suggestion is preferred by Byzantine painters, as it better expresses the world that the Middle Ages wanted to be transposed into images, fully satisfying people's aesthetic needs.

In recent times, researchers who look into Byzantine art have tried to explain the principles of reverse perspective by starting from certain scientific data. Egon Sendler identifies two tendencies in interpreting this particular method: an eastern one, which is supported by optical and geometric theories and a western one, which sees reverse perspective as the expression of cultural data. But Sendler concludes by saying that research is far from being over¹⁸.

¹⁷ Paul Evdochimov, *Arta icoanei - o teologie a frumuseții (The Art of the Icon - Theology of Beauty)*, Edit. Meridiane, București, 1992, p. 207.

¹⁸ Egon Sendler, *Icoana, chipul nevăzutului (The Icon: Image of the Invisible)*, Edit. Sofia, București, 2005, pp. 141-155.

Byzantine inverse perspective and other forms of spatial suggestion that present reality in an unusual way have been spontaneously understood by the contemporary man. It would be unfair to judge these methods of space representation only by taking into account the principles of linear perspective. Architect P. A. Michelis¹⁹ considers that this would make sense only if the Byzantine compositions had no artistic purpose and did not manage to express the desired subject. However, as Michelis states, what is odd is that they actually achieve their goal even better than they would have if they had used classic perspective or photography²⁰.

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¹⁹ Egon Sendler, *Icoana, chipul nevăzutului (The Icon: Image of the Invisible)*, Edit. Sofia, București, 2005, pp. 141-155.

²⁰ *Ibidem*.

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Fig. 7. Principles of construction: linear, axonometric and reverse perspectives.

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Fig. 9. Inverted perspective in representing *The Gospel*.

Photo credit : the autor.

AN ASPECT OF THE SYMBOLISM OF THE POLITICAL POWER DURING THE MIDDLE AGES: THE ANOINTMENT

Raluca Minea*

Abstract: The anointment is a ritual that offers a sacred dimension to the coronation. The specialists who have studied the two rituals of power investment, anointing and coronation, could not establish the pre-eminence of one over the other. It can be assumed, however, based on domestic documents and examples from history, that “the coronation represents a first stage, a gesture of which value was, in time, overshadowed by anointment”¹.

The moment in which the anointing appears can be linked to the context of a “crisis of legitimacy” when the Church agrees to act as an intercessor between the sovereign and divinity². In the middle of the 9th century, coronation became, along with chrismation, a permanent component of the ecclesiastical procedures of consecration of a new sovereign.

Keywords: anointment, coronation, power, sovereign

The idea that a king becomes legitimate only if he is subjected to the ritual of anointing and coronation, can be a starting point for a broader research regarding the symbolism of the political power during the Middle Ages. France and the Romanian countries, representing two reference areas of Europe, respectively the West and the East, offer different evolutions and specific realities that can highlight similarities in their historical progress.

Even though geographically far-off, the West and the East are cultural spaces based on countless similarities stemming from both the Roman political legacy and the spiritual tradition of the Bible.

In the 6th century, Justinian establishes the relations between the Church and the Empire, making them a *symphony*, because together they led humanity on the paths of God, being “as two different bodies with complementary functions”, he refers to the definitions adopted at the

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¹ A. Pippidi, *Tradiția politică bizantină în țările române în sec. XVI-XVIII*, Ed. Corint, București, 2001, p. 50.; Corina Nicolescu, *Le couronnement, „încoronarea”*. *Contribution à l'histoire du cérémonial roumain*, RESEE, XIV, 4, 1976, P. 647-663.

² Radu G. Păun, *Les fondements liturgiques du „constitutionnalisme” roumain entre le Seconde et la Troisième Rome (XVI^e – XVIII^e siècles)*. *Premières résultats*, în RRH, XXXVII, 1998, nr. 3–4, p. 188.

Chalcedon Council on the divine-human unity, thus implying – at a religious level- the collective pastoral care of the Church, and at temporal level – the personification of the people in the unique person of the prince³.

Many historians have tried to establish what ritual has a greater importance: the anointing or the coronation. It is significant that the chroniclers Commynes⁴ and Villehardouin⁵ writing about Louis VII, the Latin king of Jerusalem, and Louis IX (The Holy) refer to coronation, not *consecration*⁶, but also at the gesture that the Pope makes sometimes, he puts the crown on his own head also and he allows the bishops to perform the anointing.

The noun “sacred” (consecration) appears in France in the second half of the 12th century, but the verb “sacerer” (to consecrate) is identified in the vocabulary earlier, just as with “to anoint” that precedes the term “anointment” with more than half a century. Regarding the meanings of the term “sacred”, the word is specifically French. For other nations of Europe (English, French) – the term “coronation” (or “anointment”, respectively “die Kronung”)⁷.

The anointment tradition may have its origins in the Old Testament. In the text of book of Samuel I, Yahweh tells him that he would send a young man who he has to “anoint him leader of My people”⁸. It is important to find out the period during which the imperial anointing appeared in Byzantium in order to determine whether the first sovereigns of the Western Europe took the model from the Byzantines, an issue that has preoccupied Marc Bloch in his studies regarding coronation. The author states that the first document that reports this fact is clearly a description of the imperial anointment and coronation of Baldwin of Flanders, in 1204, held according to the Latin rite⁹.

The royal anointment was marked by duality. On the one hand, the sovereign obtained the divine hallmark through anointing, and on the other hand, he seemed to receive the authority from the hands of priests. Inspired thinkers by this theocratic idea emphasized one aspect or another of this duality in their writings. Hincmar in the 9th century, Archbishop of Reims,

³ O. Clément, „L'Eglise orthodoxe”, în J. Delumeau, *Le fait religieux*, Paris, Fayard, 1993, p. 172.

⁴ Philippus Cominaeus, (1447 – 1511) was a writer and diplomat in the courts of Burgundy and France.

⁵ Geoffrey of Villehardouin (in French: Geoffroi de Villehardouin) (1160–1212) was a knight and historian who participated in and chronicled the Fourth Crusade, apud Beryl Smalley, *Historians in the Middle Ages*. Thames and Hudson, 1974, p. 131.

⁶ J.P. Roux, *Regele. Mituri și simoluri*, Ed. Meridiane, București, 1998, p. 288.

⁷ Richard A. Jackson, *Vivat Rex. Histoire des sacres et couronnements en France*, Association des Publications près les Universités de Strasbourg, Editions Ophrys, Paris, 1984, p. 9.

⁸ It's about Saul, the first king of the Jews.

⁹ M. Bloch, *Regii taumaturgi. Studiu despre caracterul supranatural atribuit puterii regale, în special în Franța și în Anglia*, trad. De Val Panaitescu, Iași, 1997, 326-327.

friend and counsellor of Charles the Bald¹⁰, Ratherius in the 10th century, Hugues de Saint-Victor and John of Salisbury in the late 12th century, Innocent III at the beginning of the 13th century, Egidio Colonna (Egidio Romano) in the 12th-14th centuries, who transmitted the argument of chrismation: “the one who receives the anointing is inferior to the one who gave it” or, according to the terms borrowed from Saint Paul, from his Epistle to the Hebrew: “And without all contradiction, that which is less is blessed by the better.”¹¹

The apologists of royalty invoked anointing and its virtues when they had to provide a piece of explanation to the people regarding their theory on the inviolable character of the princes. But contemporary historians do not have a clear interpretation of the origin of supernatural character that made the sovereigns thaumaturges in the Medieval West. Healing grace may be provided with the enthronement or together with anointing or be inherited by the virtue of succession order; the issue has not yet been clarified. The healing grace could have been received with the enthronement or together with anointing or it could have been inherited on the virtue of the succession order; the issue has not yet been clarified. Aeneas Piccolomini, an erudite of the 15th century¹² wrote about how the sovereign was perceived by the people: “The French deny that any man who was anointed with this oil can be a rue king, that is to say, the heavenly oil kept at Reims”¹³. The gestures and the symbols staged on this occasion gave the king a sacred dimension and that is why it is legitimate.

The royal anointment first came in the Western European countries: Spain, the Frankish kingdom, England, Celtic countries¹⁴. For Navarre and Scotland, the anointment was authorized by the Papal bull in 1257 and 1329 respectively.

Radu G. Păun observed that the anointment occurs in the moment of existence of a certain “crisis of legitimacy” and when the Church agrees to act as intercessor between sovereign and divinity¹⁵. The anointing as a gesture that completes the crowning, giving it a sacred dimension, has emerged in the context of the usurpation of the Merovingian throne by Pepin the Short in 750, from the need to legitimize the change of power by appealing to the authority of the Church rooted in the transcendent. Pepin

¹⁰ Norman F. Cantor, *The Civilization of the Middle Ages*, 1993, p. 186.

¹¹ The text *Ep. către Evrei*, VII, 7 is cited by Hugues de S. Victor and John of Salisbury, apud M. Bloch, *op. cit.*, p. 152.

¹² He is known as a historian. The work *Cosmography* collects information about the Romanian countries from Dominican and Franciscan monks.

¹³ M. Bloch, *op. cit.*, p. 153.

¹⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 318.

¹⁵ Radu G. Păun, *Les fondements liturgiques du „constitutionnalisme” roumain entre le Seconde et la Troisième Rome (XVI^e – XVIII^e siècles). Premières résultats*, în RRH, XXXVII, 1998, nr. 3–4, p. 188.

sent an embassy in 750 to the pope to obtain his consent to dethrone the Merovingians¹⁶.

The first sovereign anointed was Louis the Pious, in 816 at Reims, when he received from Pope Stephen IV, in the same solemnity, both the consecration with holy oil and the crown. Subsequently, the anointing ritual seems to have been a part of the imperial coronation ceremony.

The first English prince about whom it can be stated that he had been anointed is Egbert, son of the king of Mercie, Offa, associated to the throne even during his father's life; the ceremony was held at the Council of Chelsea in 787, in the presence of pontifical emissaries¹⁷. The known texts do not use the word "anointment". As the chronicles state, Egbert was the "consecrated" king. The same term usually appointed the ordination of the bishop which in the Anglo-Saxon ritual involved the using of holy oil.

In the middle of the 9th century, crowning became, together with chrismation, a permanent component of the ecclesiastical procedures of consecration of a new king. From this period dates the oldest ordo¹⁸, that of Charles the Bald¹⁹, who on June 6, 848 received it from the Archbishop of Sens, Ganelon, the anointment, "the diadem" and the sceptre. Carol has been a king for a long time without being anointed; he received the royal crown in 838, from his father, Louis the Pious, without having held any ecclesiastical ceremony but he considered that anointment and the handing of the crown and sceptre by the hands of a priest, during a liturgy, were indispensable to his prestige, his descendants following his example²⁰.

Pedro III of Aragon²¹ (1276-1285) was anointed by the Bishop of Ostia, but crowned by the pontiff sovereign. In the case of Stephen I of Hungary, the Pope gave him the title of king, sending him the crown and the anointing became the responsibility of local authorities (997)²². There are exceptions, Henry I of Germany, for example, who refused the "blessing of the pontiffs"²³.

The ritual of the royal anointing was perpetuated in Spain and England. Similarly, in terms of the states that resulted from the Carolingian empire. Anointing – with coronation – seems to have also been practiced in Italy, in Lorraine and even in the small kingdoms of Provence and Burgundy.

¹⁶ M. Carp, *Ritual și legitimitate monarhică în evul mediu*, Xenopoliana, X, 2002, „Instituții și practici sociale” <http://institutulxenopol.tripod.com/xenopoliana/pagini/8.htm>.

¹⁷ M. Bloch, *op. cit.*, p. 321.

¹⁸ These orders were liturgical works, containing prayers and ceremonial gestures which accompanied the royal consecration.

¹⁹ Marielle Hageman, *Between the Imperial and the Sacred: The gesture of Coronation in Carolingian and Ottonian Images*, in *Medieval Communication*, Utrecht, 2001, p. 149.

²⁰ M. Bloch, *op. cit.*, p. 325.

²¹ Monarch of Aragon, crowned in Zaragoza.

²² M. Bloch, *op. cit.*, p. 151.

²³ *Ibidem*.

But in Germany, Otto I was anointed and crowned with the accession to the throne in 936, and all his successors followed his example²⁴.

The practice of anointing was also adopted by the Polish royalty, whose recognition by Otto III, the secular leader of the Western Christianity, in the year 1000, preceded the coronation of Boleslav I the Archbishop of Gniezno (centre of the Metropolitan church in Poland)²⁵.

In France, there is a certain similarity between Jesus and the King, that was the subject of eulogy from the time of early Carolingian "because he is the anointed king, *rex Christus*"²⁶. When the sovereign arrived at Reims, Dean surrendered, recalling the Biblical texts that justify his veneration by the people²⁷, explaining that he is welcomed with a song that glorifies Christ's entry into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday: *Benedictus qui venit in nomine Domini*, because the anointing from the consecration ceremony is of divine origin. By the fact that he possesses the sacredness conferred by the religious act of anointing and coronation, an act celebrated and legitimized by the Church, seen as the "House of God" (Tm. 3, 15) and the "Body of Christ" Ef. (1: 22-23; 4)²⁸ the person of the king accedes to unicity, but God is One, his celestial perfection being found only in Jesus, man and God in the same time²⁹.

Anointing and coronation in Byzantium

In Eastern Europe, unlike the West, there was a closer fusion between the imperial and ecclesiastical authority. The Byzantine emperors respected the authority of the patriarch of Constantinople, who assumed certain sacral functions. The ritual of coronation in the Byzantine monarchy proves the strong tendency of fusion between secular and sacral in terms of authority. All texts which relate to the Byzantine legislation prove that the Byzantine emperors understood the legitimization of their authority also through divine will. Thus, the kingship institution and the ecclesiastical one were in a permanent relationship.

In Byzantium, the image of the Basileus inherits both the characteristics of the Roman "imperial" royalty and the customary practices of the oriental ceremony. In ancient Rome, the king's person is identified with the historical beginnings of the citadel. He possesses an authority of a magical-religious essence, enjoying the favours of the deity, mediating the relations between the Senate and the people³⁰.

²⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 326.

²⁵ A. Pippidi, *op. cit.*, p. 51.

²⁶ J.P. Roux, *op. cit.*, p. 290.

²⁷ *Ibidem*.

²⁸ Dan Alexandru Popescu, *Suveranul divin și simbolistica puterii politice în evul mediu*, rev. Transilvania, 1/2008, p. 21.

²⁹ Idem, *Istoria Bizanțului. Studii sinteze de istorie bizantină*, Ed. Alma Mater, Sibiu, 2003, p. 20.

³⁰ D. A. Popescu, *Suveranul divin ...op.cit.*, p. 75.

The imperial cult introduced in Rome by Octavian Augustus, was imported from Byzantium by Constantine, surviving until the fall of Constantinople, persisting in the Orthodox countries in the Balkans up to the eve of the modern era.

The Emperor, venerated as August, is transformed into a monarch in a permanent relationship with God. The king obtains the holiness of the basilical space with a solemn worship service for the veneration of the sovereign by the people and kneeling in front of the proskynesis, this attitude was inherited after the Roman conquest of the Persian ritual³¹.

The divine nature of the Basileus follows to be defined exclusively based on Christian valences. Christianity recovers itself, being based on its own traditions³², symbols and formulas. The image of the leader finds a new model, the exceptional figure of Jesus Christ (the Basileus aimed to be a *mimethes Christou*), man-God, and ideal *Rex et Sacerdos*. In the Byzantine society, the result of the fusion of the classical Greco-Roman traditions, Christian and Oriental elements and the right to govern becomes legitimate by the virtue of deification of the leader; the king's portrait represents a real cult object for his vassals³³.

In ancient Rome, the coronation of the king was regarded as an apotheosis (deification). The concept of wise king who belongs to a distinct spiritual category, located between gods and men, has appeared since the Greek antiquity, but it is also present in the Jewish Old Testament. For the Christian world, the monarchy begins with Constantine and the ideas drawn from Scripture and the examples of the rulers of the people of God, such as Moses, Saul, David and Solomon lay at the basis of the theorization of the imperial cult.

In Byzantium, the imperial ceremony was very closely related to the Old Testament's symbols, figures and topics such as: providential selection, deliverance of the people and their leadership towards the "promise land", the victory over enemies. The votive theme also acquires biblical connotations: the emperor is, in this regard, a new David or a new king-mag³⁴. These themes appear very early in the Byzantine imperial iconographic programs, at the Basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore in Rome and especially during Justinian, San Vitale in Ravenna.

The anointing of the Byzantine emperors was attested at the beginning of the 14th century, the rite persists until the end of the Empire³⁵. Numerous texts, much earlier than the 14th century, use the terms

³¹ *Ibidem*, p. 76.

³² Philippe Walter, *Mitologie creștină. Sărbători, ritualuri și mituri din Evul Mediu*, trad. Rodica Dumitrescu și Raluca Tulbure, Ed. Artemis, 2005.

³³ Alain Ducellier, *Bizantinii. Istorie și cultură*, Ed. Teora, București, 1997, p. 74-89.

³⁴ Mircea Eliade, *Istoria credințelor și ideilor religioase, III, De la Mahomed la epoca Reformelor*, translated by Cezar Baltag, București, 1991, p. 91-92.

³⁵ M. Bloch, *op. cit.*, p. 327.

“anointment” and “to anoint” for the investiture of a king, but it is unknown if the meaning is literal or pure metaphorical. The first solution – in the literal sense – was adopted by W. Sickel, referring to a letter from the Patriarch Fotie to Emperor Basil I, the prelate reminds the king of his coronation in these terms: “anointing and laying of the monarchic hands”. Basil I is crowned in 867, the date at which Pepin, the first of the Frankish kings, had already been anointed³⁶, so it cannot be said that the Western monarchies have taken Oriental habits.

To Sickel oppose several scholars who consider the expressions used in his letter to Fotie to be simple metaphors. One of them is Brightman³⁷, who considered the anointing was metaphorical. The famous book “About Ceremonies” about the Emperor Constantine Porphyrogenitus (945-59) contains a detailed description of the coronation, in which the anointment does not appear. The term appears in the writings of Emperor John VI Cantacuzenus, *Four history books*, in which the author, describing the coronation of Andronikos III Palaiologos, that took place in 1325, mentions the ritual of anointing³⁸.

Coronation at the Romanian people

In the Romanian countries, there was no proper dynastic doctrine, the succession to the throne was hereditary in line of male descent and generally in the order of the first born. A. Pippidi, in his work, “The Political Byzantine Tradition” wrote that «“Porfirogeneza” and even the legitimacy of birth did not play any role. Therefore, the right to rule, ensured in principle by the “princely offspring”, in fact by choice, was not available but thankfully, his confirmation came from the church through the double act of coronation and anointing”³⁹». In the West, in France, for instance, birth and anointing did not legitimize the King⁴⁰.

The coronation ceremony may have existed since the founding of the Romanian medieval states, since at that time there was already a tradition in Europe regarding the celebration of this event. There is no evidence, however, of the enthronement of Basarab I Muntenia (Ungrovlahia) and of Bogdan I in Moldavia or if that these rulers received the crown from Constantinople after the custom of international legitimization of a new autonomous state, practiced in Eastern Europe. Moreover, there are no testimonies regarding the enthronement ceremony in the first two centuries of

³⁶ In 751.

³⁷ F. E. Brightman, „Byzantine imperial coronations” în *Journal of Theological Studies*, II (1901), p. 383.

³⁸ M. Bloch, *op. cit.*, p. 327.

³⁹ A. Pippidi, *Tradiția politică bizantină în țările române în sec. XVI-XVIII*, Ed. Corint, București, 2001, p.50-53.

⁴⁰ D. Pissot, *Le cérémonial de la Cour de France, ou Description historique de ses grandes dignités, charges et titres d'honneur*, Paris, 1816, p. 2, *apud* A. Pippidi.

existence of the Romanian states. It is possible that Alexander the Good received the crown from the Emperor John VIII Palaeologus, but this was not an argument for the legitimization of his throne in Moldavia⁴¹.

The first anointed Moldavian prince was probably Stephen the Great⁴². His accession to the throne after a long series of bloody usurpations, the prince of Moldavia begins his action to strengthen the central authority through a gesture that signifies the legitimization of power according to the imperial ritual, “meant to assure victory over the other contenders and also to raise the throne at the height of the Orthodox kings”⁴³.

“In the year 6965 (1457), April 12, Great Tuesday, came Stephen voivode, son of Bogdan voivode, against Aron voivode, the place called Hreasca, at Doljești, and conquered Stephen voivode, by the Grace of God, and took the sceptre of Moldova”⁴⁴. The taking of the sceptre was only one phase in the process of legitimation of power. “The king does not truly become a crowned head but only after his investiture”⁴⁵. Stephen became a full sovereign after his anointing by the Metropolitan Bishop of Moldavia. “He was anointed to reign by the Metropolitan Teoctist”, writes Grigore Ureche⁴⁶. The Metropolitan Teoctist, from whose hands he received the consecration, was able to legitimize him, just as in the case of the Byzantine patriarchs whose choice was made by the country’s assembly – a close equivalent of the Senate⁴⁷.

The first known citation of the coronation prayer in Moldova appears in the *Chronicle* of Axinte Uricariul⁴⁸, being also linked to the description of the coronation of Stephen the Great “God our God, king of kings, and Lord of the men, who by Samuil the prophet by who you have chosen David your servant, and you anoint him king over the people of Israel. You hear our prayer yourself [...]. Make him worthy to anoint with the oil of joy. Dress him with power from above. Put on his head a crown with pricey jewel. [...] Give in his right hand the sceptre of salvation. Strengthen him on the seat of justice”.

⁴¹ Elisabeta Negrău, *Cultul suveranului sud-est european și cazul Țării Românești*, Ed. Lumen, Iași, 2011, p. 115.

⁴² *Cronicile slavo-române*, p. 14, 56, 70.

⁴³ A. Pippidi, *op. cit.*, p. 51.

⁴⁴ *Cronicile slavo-române din sec. XV–XVI publicate de Ion Bogdan*, edition revised and supplemented by P. P. Panaitescu, București, 1959, p. 15 (Letopisețul anonim); (romanian translation of the chronicles of Putna).

⁴⁵ Jean-Paul Roux, *Regele. Mituri și simboluri*, traducere și note de Andrei Niculescu, București, 1998, p. 174.

⁴⁶ Grigore Ureche, *Letopisețul Țării Moldovei*, 1457 (ed. P.P. Panaitescu, București, 1955, p. 83).

⁴⁷ A. Pippidi, *op. cit.*, p. 52.

⁴⁸ *Apud* Paul Mihail, I. Caproșu, „Despre ceremonialul domnesc”, în AIIA „A.D. Xenopol” Iași, tom VIII (1971) p. 398.

Ștefăniță Vodă and Petru Rareș were also anointed at the time of the coronation in 1517 respectively in 1527. As seen in the chronicle of Macarie, Ștefăniță Vodă benefited from this ritual, “He was then of nine years old and he received the blessing of anointing from the hand of Theoctist, Reverend Metropolitan Kir, in the glorious citadel of Suceava”⁴⁹. Metropolitan Theoctist II conferred, by the act of anointing, legitimacy and sacred protection to the nine year old child, ascended to the throne – a unique case in the history of Moldavia until then. It seems that the same Metropolitan has anointed Petru Rares⁵⁰.

The words of bishop Macarie are relevant regarding the personality of the Metropolitan: “he fell asleep into Lord, at old age, the one who anointed the princes and the teacher of Moldavia, Metropolitan kir Theoctist”⁵¹.

The last anointing coincides with the visit of Moldavia of the patriarchs Ieremia II of Constantinople and Ioachim V of Antiochia in the period in which Despot vodă was crowned “with a gold crown at Suceava, on Saint Gheorghe’s day”⁵². In the chronicle of the Romanian from Camenița, there is information about a crowning of Despot on 15 august 1562, when he received the title of king!”⁵³

In the Romanian country, for the act of anointing there are no firm proofs until the 16th century when the feudal political ideology was systematized, although the quality of “God’s anointed” is stated even in the documents of Mihai I and Vlad Dracul, but they only have a metaphorical value with the meaning *chosen*⁵⁴.

According to Nicolae Iorga, this ceremonial attested in the time of Petru Cercel, of which there are reports according to which he was the first Wallachia prince ever anointed, date back to 1535, from the assigning of Radu Paisie as the Prince of the Romanian countries, who had received his investiture in a ceremony in the Ottoman Empire⁵⁵.

The Byzantine ritual is respected as far as the kneeling of the prince in front of the altar is concerned, in front of “the imperial gates”, the prayers need to be “read” at the coronation of the Orthodox kings” or the role of the great Chamberlain (*cubicularius*)⁵⁶.

By the act of receiving the crown from the hands of a bishop (usually patriarch or metropolitan), the sovereign was entitled to believe that he had

⁴⁹ *Croniclele slavo-române din sec. XV–XVI publicate de Ion Bogdan*, edition revised and supplemented by P. P. Panaitescu, București, 1959, p. 92.

⁵⁰ Liviu Pilat, *op. cit.*, p. 148.

⁵¹ *Croniclele slavo-române*, p. 95.

⁵² *Călători străini despre țările române*, vol. 2, p. XIV.

⁵³ H. Siruni, *Mărturii armenesti despre România, extrase din cronica armenilor din Camenița*, I, s. III, t. XVI, 1936, p. 275.

⁵⁴ *Ibidem*.

⁵⁵ N. Iorga, *Bizanț după Bizanț*, p. 124, 153.

⁵⁶ D. Cantemir, *Descrierea Moldovei*, p. 153-157.

received the crown from God Himself. "May God crown you with the crown of glory and honour and May He receive you in the eternal kingdom," said the French archbishop, and the officiate continues: "'May you live in justice, mercy and piety to receive the crown from the eternal Our Lord Jesus Christ in the synod of the saints'⁵⁷.

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⁵⁷ J.P. Roux, *Regele.Mituri şi simboluri*, traducere de Andrei Niculescu, Meridiane, Bucureşti, 1998, p. 289.

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MEDIEVAL CULTURE IN CONTEMPORARY RESEARCH

THE COMPUTER GENERATED ART/CONTEMPORARY CINEMATOGRAPHY AND THE REMAINDER OF THE ART HISTORY. A CRITICAL APPROACH

Modesta Lupașcu *

Abstract: The paper analyses the re-conceptualization of the intermedial trope of computer generated images/VFX in recent 3D works/cinema scenes through several examples from art history, which are connected with. The obvious connections between art history and images are not conceived primarily as an embodiment of a painting, the introduction of the real into the image, but prove the reconstructive tendencies of contemporary post-postmodern art. The intellectual, the casual, or the obsessive interaction with art history shown by the new film culture, is already celebrated through 3D computer generated art, focused to a consistently pictorialist cinematography.

Keywords: computer generated art, Medieval Age Art, Renaissance, pictorialist cinematography, animation.

In the 21st century, the confluence of art and technology was widely heralded and accompanied by the establishment of an array of new genres generally comprised in the larger topic of CGI (computer generated imagery). The serious study of CGI culture has provided fertile ground for the development of sophisticated forms of critical commentary. At the same time, CGI has stimulated a wide range of analyses drawing from the traditions and theoretical engagements of many other disciplines, including film, television and media studies, art history and criticism.

In the 21st century cinema and television industry, computer animations have become more important than ever. Imaginary characters, objects, as well as people, events and places that are either difficult, costly, or

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even impossible to shoot, can now be produced and animated through computer modelling techniques.

Today, we might say that Bazin's myth of total cinema has come closer than ever to realization, albeit in a manner that Bazin himself did not anticipate, and would not have appreciated. For what has happened in the last half century is that, instead of the movies becoming more like reality, reality has become more like the movies. The world we live in is saturated with images, and especially moving images.

The fast development of technology and its impact on all production industry has enabled computer-generated animation techniques to become varied and widespread. Computer animation techniques not only save labour input and money, but also give the producer the option of applying the technique in either two dimensional (2D) or three dimensional (3D), depending on the given time frame, scenario, and content.

New digital possibilities could not dissolve the continual fluidity of versatile cinematic imagery approaches, which transcend since Middle Ages.

The genuine Tapestry at the Centre Guillaume le Conquérant in Bayeux is commemorating the Normand Conquest of England of 1066. According to Richard Burt's thesis, the Bayeux Tapestry could be seen as cinematic analogue and its broader implications for the way we understand both medieval visual and pre-print culture are to be considered¹.

Many scholars draw up the same theory as: Marie-Thérèse Poncet who includes a screenplay of the "film" and divides the Tapestry into seventy-three shots². Michel Parisse discusses the Tapestry in terms of montage sequences, mise-en-scene, flashbacks, and jump cuts; also he divides the Tapestry into sections that make up a screenplay³. Similarly, Suzanne Lewis refers to sequences, scenes, cuts, fast cutaways, and faded shots in the Tapestry⁴. More broadly, François Amy de la Bretèque sees reciprocal equivalence between the Bayeux Tapestry and film: "One may consider that, in the minds of many of our contemporaries, the embroidery (Bayeux Tapestry) represents a kind of medieval equivalent of cinema... The embroidery was a form of precinema"⁵.

Perhaps coincidentally, not long after scholars began to draw an analogy between the Bayeux Tapestry and film, the Tapestry itself began to

¹ Richard Burt, *Re-embroidering the Bayeux Tapestry in Film and Media: The Flip Side of History in Opening and End Title Sequences*, in *Exemplaria*, vol. 19, no. 2, Published by Money Publishing, California, 2007, p. 328.

² Marie-Thérèse Poncet, *Étude comparative des illustrations du Moyen Âge et des dessins animés*, — *L'esthétique du dessin animé*, Nizet, Paris, 1952, p. 5.

³ Michel Parisse, *The Bayeux Tapestry*, Denoel, Paris, 1983, p. 53.

⁴ Suzanne Lewis, *The Rhetoric of Power in the Bayeux Tapestry*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1999, pp. 11-12.

⁵ François Amy de la Bretèque, *L'imaginaire médiéval dans le cinéma occidental*, Champion, Paris, 2004, p. 144.

appear in film. These cinematic citations of the Bayeux Tapestry invert the analogy frequently drawn by scholars between the Tapestry and film, making these films related to the Middle Ages analogous to the Bayeux Tapestry.

In science, architecture, engineering, and graphics, there is the assertion that the graphic performed on the computer is indispensable for the comprehension of complex phenomena. Behind this sentence is the concept of spatial thinking, the viewpoint.

Numerical graphics are inextricably connected to the Western artistic archive, in the manner of realism, as opposed to the Eastern artistic sphere which counts on several realities transfigured, spiritualized, photographic realism without tyranny⁶. The expressive significance of artistic strategies and the conventions of the genre continue to exercise influence on contemporary graphics. The assertions below substantiate the intimate association of the history of art with computer-aided exploration of imagery.

The view is a phenomenon that finds elements of Platonic thought⁷ in springs, being all the more interesting in the twentieth century, by Erwin Panowsky studies – *Meaning in the Visual Arts* - through approach visible geometry.



Fig. 1. Jan Lievens (1607–1674) *Still Life with Books*, circa 1630, Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam.



Fig. 2. 3D computer generated image

Despite this difference, the ability to generate three-dimensional stills does not represent a radical break in the history of visual representation of the multitude comparable to the achievements of Giotto.

A Renaissance painting and a computer image employ the same technique (a set of consistent depth cues) to create an illusion of space, existent or imaginary. The real break is the introduction of a moving synthetic image—interactive three-dimensional computer graphics and computer animation.

⁶ Reverse perspective serve as arguments, the canons of detailed human figure of Byzantine erminia, as well as the taste of Asian art towards two-dimensional image.

⁷ Erwin Panowsky, *Meaning in the Visual Arts. Paper in and on Art History*, Doubleday & Company Ink., New York, 1955, p. 11.

With these technologies, a viewer has an experience of moving around the simulated three-dimensional space – something one can not do with a painting.

Starting with the late Renaissance, reached with which relate through the following features: two or more arrangements of light sources, in line with the aesthetic principles of the 15th century, play of light, shadow, bright reflexes; the contrast between diffused light and powerful, spectacular lights, originally theorized by Leonardo da Vinci; theatrical appearance resulting from the effects of shading; organic forms evolving in the context of geometric ones.

This is how Frederick Hartt, the author of a widely used textbook *Art. A history of Painting, Sculpture, Architecture* describes the importance of Giotto di Bondone, “the first giant in the long history of Italian painting”. In contemporary Italian eyes the step from Cimabue to Giotto was immense in that weight and mass, light and inward extension were suddenly introduced in a direct and convincing manner⁸.

Giotto’s miracle lay in being able to produce three-dimensional forms for the first time on a flat surface, which the French could achieve only in sculpture. For the first time since antiquity a painter has truly conquered solid form⁹.

At the same time, it is constantly pointed out that this realism is qualitatively different from the realism of optically based image technologies (e.g. photography and film), because the simulated reality is not indexically related to the existing world.

Researchers working in the field of visualization are using these notions for which terms were created by contemporary equivalents. The question that arises is why legitimate illusion of 3D works? The answer is not only likely neurological or neuropsychological. It can be extracted, from art history paradigms, which has modeled our brain, has created extremely powerful concepts to whom we are shorn.

For instance, the appearance of rectangular pixels, units of computer artwork which are arranged by electronical displays or are printed in such a way that by blending the result is a bitmap optical image, that are leading through a visual phenomenon what is claimed from cubism or pointillism.

The fact that researchers have created numeric patterns which can be found in the history of art is a spectacular phenomenon: the molecules were modelled like a balloon, some entities inside the human brain can be rendered in the manner in which they play a transparent items in Tiepolo way.

The human body is not easy to imagine for an electronic environment, even if they are granted a maximum of attention and a high-quality technical

⁸ Frederick Hartt, *Art. A history of Painting, Sculpture, Architecture*, Prentice Hall, New Jersey, p. 503.

⁹ Lev Manovich, *Reality Effects in Computer Animation*, in *An Animation Reader*, Jane Pilling (editor), John Libbey Publishing, New Barnet, United Kingdom, 2011.p. 6

support. If the representation of the human body possesses surfaces of gum, or a being appears as if it would be encased in a plastic membrane, their visual expression reminiscent of his wooden mannequins of Pinturicchio or the toes of his wax Ingres¹⁰.

Comparison between dense texture and dramatic light key of a vertical section through the skull of a mummy, modeled on the computer as an image-support in Medical University of Mathematics and Computer Science from Hamburg and *A Blond Man Portrait* (oil on canvas, 108x93cm, 1667) by Rembrandt van Rijn, reveals how great was the impact of Rembrandt's work, its color quality but most of his theatrical, dramatic light and psychological meanings that you propose, on the aesthetic taste of the period.

Computer - aided graphics, proposed through extremely prolific 3D images that tend toward a hyperrealism, and in the context of which the human figure or the natural elements are realised by 3D software, are sometimes modelled under the influence of dramatic shadows and overhead lights of Renaissance or Baroque.

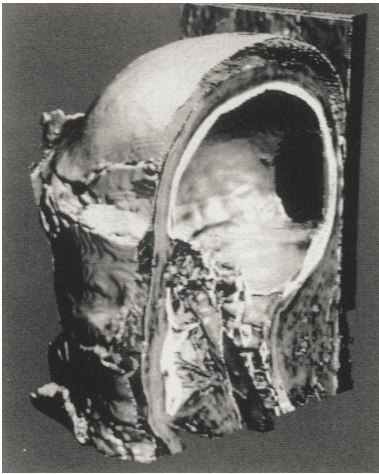


Fig. 3. Karl Heinz Hohne, Cross Section of a Mummy's Head, 1992.

SIGGRAPH '92 stereo slide set. A number of recent medical images move away from the painless sectioned body and begin to represent solid tissues and specific textures.



Fig. 4. Rembrandt, *Portrait of a Fair-Headed Man*, Melbourne, National Gallery of Victoria Rembrandt's visceral, "waxy" textures evoke the possibility of sensation and pain in ways analogous to some Texture mapped surfaces¹¹

¹⁰ James Elkins, *Art History and the Criticism of Computer -Generated Images*, Leonardo, vol.27, no.4, 1994, p. 337.

¹¹ Idem, p. 339.

It is important to acknowledge that a shift has occurred – at least within an important swathe of contemporary visual culture – towards an analysis that foregrounds the dimension of appearance, form, and cultural connections. A rush into this way of interpretation that has been more clearly apprehended may follow an all too easy dismissal of such a aesthetic spectacle¹².

In spite of the token disclaimer that high and low culture distinctions have been effaced in the postmodern milieu (apparently opening popular cinema to a veritable smorgasbord of analytic processes), film theory has, in the main, recuperated the distinction. While undertaking analyses of contemporary cinema theory, an examination of popular cinema as far from a conventional aesthetic approach to art as it possible could be relegated.

The trope of *tableau vivant* studied in some films scenes is not conceived primarily as an embodiment of a painting, "the introduction of *the real into the image*"¹³.

As such, the *tableau* becomes a powerful agent in generating metanarratives, offering a blueprint for a *big picture*, a comprehensive vision of the world (reinforced by recurring mythological themes like the genesis or the end of the world, the loss of Paradise, etc.). We may connect this feature of these *tableaux vivants*, therefore, to what Lyotard named the *figure of return*¹⁴, and to the reconstructive tendencies of contemporary post-postmodern art.

This is a tendency that is perhaps most palpable in the manifold revitalization of the trope of the *tableau vivant* and a post-cinematic aesthetics trading in the drive of the narrative for the compelling visual attraction of carefully crafted imagery.

This shift of focus from narrative to visuals along with the excessive emphasis on pictorial effects is a poetic strategy that occurs in current world cinema. Painterly compositions in a broad sense (descriptive, *tableau*-like shots achieved with minimum of movement), or re-creations of specific paintings in cinema (i.e. *tableaux vivants* in a narrower, theatrical sense) can be seen as intermedial figures that are present in different ways throughout the entire film history from the frontal, boxed-in *tableaux* of early cinema (where they served as a condensation of the narrative), through their decorative, rhetorical/ideological use in Hollywood genre films and so called heritage films, to a means for self-reflexivity and deliberate subversion of the classical narrative in Jean-Luc Godard's or Peter Greenaway's works¹⁵.

Contemporary films relying heavily on the technique of *tableau vivant*

¹² Andrew Darley, *Visual Digital Culture: Surface Play and Spectacle in New Media Genres*, Routledge, London, 2000, p. 6.

¹³ Pueker Brigitte. 2007. *The Material Image. Art and the Real in Film*. Stanford, Stanford University Press, p. 45.

¹⁴ Lyotard Jean-François, *Acinéma. Wide Angle*, vol. 2, 1978, p. 52.

¹⁵ Brewster Ben and Lea Jacobs, *Theatre to Cinema: Stage Pictorialism and the Early Feature Film*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1998, p. 38.

(through different pathways and in their own distinctive manner) connect, not only to global stylistic trends in cinema but also, in part, to what can be grasped in the allure of *becoming an image* within contemporary culture on a more abstract theoretical level, as well.

The quintessential image framing such antithetical extremes of things and senses (as perhaps the most puzzling instances in the rhetoric of pictoriality in new cinema) can be identified in the type of *tableau vivant* that is, paradoxically, closely connected to the idea of death (the imminence of death, the sight of a disfigured, ailing body), in which a live body is displayed as a corpse, or the other way round, a corpse is presented as an embodied picture, or an object of art made of flesh.

The striking still compositions that can be associated with paintings, painterly styles, and pictorial photographs have the rhetorical function of highlighting the grave undertones of a narrative which always leans towards the construction of a more or less overt allegory, either in the mood of tragicomedy and the grotesque, of gritty family drama, or that of a more abstract or lyrical meditation with biblical or philosophical connotations. In each case, in a very different way, the *tableau* form confers the filmic discourse a degree of constructedness and aestheticism that often emerges in a tense interplay with unsettling subject matters, or in certain cases, even a repulsive naturalism of scenes¹⁶.

These film references construct their stylized images building on the opposition between life and art, sensual and abstract, fossilizing their human figures into dead iconographical forms.

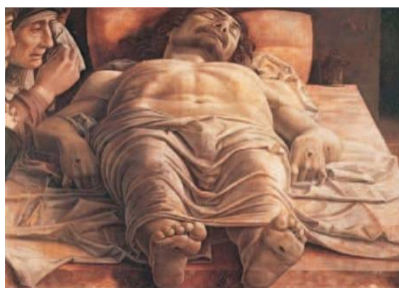


Fig. 5. Andrea Mantegna:
The Lamentation over the Dead Christ (c. 1480) and *The Body of the Dead Christ in the Tomb*



Fig. 6. Andrei Zvyagintsev,
The Return, 2003

Ágnes Pethő demonstrates this also in paraphrases of Andrea Mantegna's and Hans Holbein's dead Christ that have become a surprisingly

¹⁶ Ágnes Pethő, *The Tableau Vivant as a figure to return in Contemporary East European Cinema*, in *Acta Univ. Sapientiae, Film and new Media*, 9, 2014, pp. 54-55.

recurring motif in contemporary East European and Russian cinema¹⁷.

Perhaps the most complex use of the reproduction of Mantegna's painting can be found in the Russian Andrei Zvyagintsev's debut film, *The Return* (*Vozvrashcheniye*, 2003), where it becomes not only a clearly marked vantage point that doubles the reference frame of the otherwise realistic narrative, suggesting the possibility of an allegorical reading, but also prepares the viewer for further, less obvious biblical motifs or cinematic quotations, and initiates an intricate play between images and media.

The viewer familiar with Tarkovsky's films may find several scenes paying homage to the master of "sculpting in time" alongside images reminding us of essential works of Antonioni or Kieslowski, as the film unfolds, through a consistently pictorialist cinematography, a series of impressive photographic *tableaux*.



Fig. 7. Hans Holbein, *Dead Christ*, circa 1520-1522, a sculptural painting



Fig. 8. *Becoming Jane*, directed by Julian Jarrold, 2007.

It is undeniable, that the excess of signification enfolded in Julian Jarrold's scene from *Becoming Jane*, where Jane Austen is mortified by her maximal suffering, through it being perceptible the influence of Holbein's painting, as well as through our own complex bewilderment in experiencing it in pictorialism cinematography.

Since the early days of computer animation, constructing human and humanoid characters has been the holy grail of the emerging technology. The

¹⁷ Idem, pp. 72-73.

first examples of three-dimensional, fully animated characters appeared in advertisements and music videos in the early 1980s. But it was only ten years later that the technology had developed sufficiently for computer-generated characters to be integrated into films.

The relationship between the real world and its cinematic representation has been, for a long time, one of the fundamental themes explored in theoretical debates. Jean-Pierre Oudart, analyzing the system of representation dating back to the Renaissance, advances a more complex view. He suggests that it was *the position ascribed* to the subject in the figurative tradition of Renaissance painting that gave rise to the representational system prevalent in the cinema¹⁸. In nineteenth century paintings, a *reality effect* was produced by the use of perspective, effects of light and shade, discontinuity of planes, etc.

The idea is that the realism of cinema is based on a psychological notion of reality. So, some theorists assume that realism, in a psychological sense, has nothing to do with the accuracy of the reproduction, but with the spectator's belief about the origin of the reproduction. It must be stressed here, however, that this psychological sense is a belief that originates in the spectator's mind, a belief in the representation, in the approximated reproduction of reality, but not an assumption of the film's image as being the real image itself. This approximated reproduction, or this relation between the image and reality, is a consequence of the codes and conventions established in the cinema and accepted by the audience.

If we follow Bazin's approach (myth of total cinema) and compare images drawn from the history of three dimensional computer graphics with the visual perception of natural reality, his evolutionary narrative appears to be confirmed. Images progress towards the fuller and fuller illusion of reality: from wire-frame displays to smooth shadows, intricate textures, aerial perspective; from geometric shapes to moving animal and human figures; from Cimabue to Giotto to Leonardo and beyond. Bazin's idea that deep-focus cinematography allowed the spectator amore active position in relation to film image, thus bringing cinematic perception closer to real life perception, also finds a recent equivalent in interactive computer graphics, where the user can freely explore the virtual space of the display from different points of view. With such extensions of computer graphics technology as virtual reality, the promise of Bazin's "total realism" appears to be closer than ever, literally within arms reach of the virtual reality user¹⁹.

Starting by hypothesizing that these deviations do not disrupt the balance of the representation, because they appear equally in the domains of behavior and form, they may better be understood as satellites.

¹⁸ Apud., Barbara Flueckiger, *Computer Generated Characters in Avatar and Benjamin Button*, Harro Segeberg Ed., Munich, 2011, p. 7.

¹⁹ André Bazin, *What is Cinema?*, Vol. 1, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1967, p. 20.

The aim of this case study will be to analyze Benjamin Button, including how the character has been constructed, how he masters the fundamental problems and lastly how the character acquires itself in evaluative models.

Appearance and behavior are interrelated in a complex network based on genetic information on the one hand, and on environmental and cultural influences amidst which individuals grow up on the other. This approach is indebted to the dynamic-interactionist paradigm of personality psychology, which assumes the intimate reciprocity between individual and environment²⁰.

Manifold connections can be established between these bodies, which are also shaped by both textual and intertextual, extradiegetic influences. "The body's image is the character's sensory material basis," while the cinematographic body image is a priori "an aesthetic and social construction possessing a physical-psychic expressive potential"²¹.

Benjamin Button, directed by David Fincher, is a film that does not fit neatly into established categories. It is a film in the tradition of the picaresque novel. As such it portrays the life journey of a poor but cunning hero from birth to death, and can thus be likened to *Forrest Gump*. The narrative succession differs, however, through the fantastical element that the protagonist is born an old man and gradually grows younger²².



Fig. 9. 3D computer generated head replacement in Benjamin Button

The problem with old-age make-up is that it is additive, whereas the aging process is reductive. Will be having thinner skin, less musculature, everything is receding. Another traditional approach to solving this problem is

²⁰ Asendorph, Jens B., *Psychologie der Persönlichkeit*, Springer, Berlin, 2005, p. 84.

²¹ Taylor, Henry M.; Tröhler, Margrit Zu ein paar Facetten der menschlichen Figur im Spielfilm. In: Heinz B. Heller et al. (Eds.): *Der Körper im Bild. Schauspielen, Darstellen, Erscheinen*. Marburg: Schüren, 1999, p.139.

²² Barbara Flueckiger, op. cit., p. 8

to use actors of different ages to portray a single role in multiple life stages²³. Fincher wanted to avoid this approach, since it constitutes a disjunction in the character's identity. The challenge was intensified because of the dissonance between a growing body and an old appearance. For this reason, Fincher wanted to attempt a solution with a computer-generated character. The aged version of Brad Pitt is nonetheless computer-generated only in part, since the body is that of a human actor while the head is created completely digitally and placed on the actor's body by means of head replacement (fig. 9).

Human skin has always remained one of the most challenging materials to be represented in computer-generated imagery, particularly because of its translucence, that is, its semi-transparent materiality. Light rays penetrate the surface of the skin into its deeper layers, where they are scattered in a complex way and acquire the color values of the bodily tissue and blood vessels²⁴ (fig. 10).



Fig. 10. Shader elements for the 3D CGI head of Benjamin Button²⁵

If one omits this so-called subsurface scattering, the skin looks like plaster. In its simplest form, a shader for skin is composed of the following components: texture maps, which determine the distribution of color; displacement maps for small-scale skin variations such as pores and wrinkles; albedo maps, which record the diffusely reflecting parts of the skin that lead to whitening; specularity maps for brightness reflections; reflectance maps for

²³. Plantinga, Carl, *The Scene of Empathy and the Human Face on Film*. In: Carl Plantinga and Greg M. Smith (Eds.): *Passionate Views. Film, Cognition, and Emotion*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999, p. 239.

²⁴ Jensen, Henrik Wann, *Realistic Image Synthesis Using Photon Mapping*, A K Peters, Natick, Mass., 2001, p. 127.

²⁵ Barbara Flueckiger, op. cit., p. 12.

color reflections and texture maps of the color data under the skin's external layer for the purpose of subsurface scattering.

This way of composing a humanoid character reminds us of Hieronymus Bosch's works of arts. The tendency of characters to become heroes of mythical proportion, transforms the films themselves into metafictional allegories of this very urge for reconstruction, reinstatement, and re-embodiment of myths.



Fig. 10. Hieronymus Bosch, *last Judgement*, detail which involve the head-composing characters.

Conclusion

Digital humanities represent a major expansion of the purview of the humanities, precisely because it brings the values, representational and interpretive practices, meaning-making strategies, complexities, and ambiguities of being human into every realm of experience and knowledge of the world. It is a global, trans-historical, and transmedia approach to knowledge and meaning-making.

We do not think the humanities are in perpetual crisis or imperiled by another battle for legitimacy with the sciences. Instead, we see this moment as marking a fundamental shift in the perception of the core creative activities of being human, in which the values and knowledge of the humanities are seen as crucial for shaping every domain of culture and society through the new aesthetic of pictorialist cinematography.

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THE SEARCH FOR GOD IN THE MEDIEVAL NOVEL “LAUR”

Paula-Andreea Onofrei *

Abstract: By offering the consumers of literature a “non-historical novel”, as the writer himself mentioned on the title page, Evgheni Vodolazkin delicately manages to take his reader to a world which is outside the laws of time, although the action is placed in the Middle Ages. As we have mentioned in the review of the book, it is captivating, charming, mesmerizingly beautiful – these would be the essence of this creation. In a nutshell, we consider that Vodolazkin’s words about his own novel invite to meditation, offering a complex perspective: “There are things about which one may speak more easily in the context of old Russia. About God, for example. In my humble opinion, the connections with Him were more direct a long time ago. Furthermore, they simply existed. Now, the nature of these connections represents the preoccupation of very few people, and this leaves us in anxiety. Have we found out, from the Middle Ages onwards, a completely new thing that has allowed us to relax?”¹

Keywords: medieval novel, Christian Orthodox, God, repentance, healing power, metanoia

There are a few books on this Earth who are written with soul, heart and mind and *Laur* is one of them, together with *The Dead Are Coming Back Home*. Being placed in the 15th century, in Russia, with an intrigue that manages to surpass time and space, *Laur* is the Bildungsroman of Arseni, who is a healer, a fool-for-Christ, a pilgrim and a monk, he passes from one phase to another during the entire book which contains four individualized chapters which are suggestively called “The Book of Knowledge”, “The Book of Giving Up”, “The Book of the Road” and “The Book of Tranquility”².

Bases on the ideas that “nothing happens haphazardly” and *metanoia*, just like in the book “The Dead Are Coming Back Home”³ by Cornel Constantin Ciomâzgă, the novel has a deeply philosophical, religious and

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¹ <http://www.humanitas.ro/humanitas-fiction/laur>, Last seen on November 22nd, 2016.

² Evgheni Vodolazkin, *Laur, A nonhistorical novel*, Translation from Russian and notes by Adriana Liciu, “Humanitas Fiction” Publishing House, Bucharest, 2014, page 325, my translation.

³ Cornel Constantin Ciomâzgă, *Se întorc morții acasă [The Dead Are Coming Back Home]*, “Cartea actuală 3 C” Publishing House, Bucharest, 2014.

spiritual meaning, underlined by the fragment: “In this victory over time, he saw he confirmation of the fact that nothing of what happens in the world is haphazard. People crash on each other (Ambrogio thought), fly to each other, like atoms”⁴; for *metanoia*, it is representative the following : “He is a Greek-Russian believer and he asks you to change your thoughts, in other words – to repent, because in Greek, repentance is called *metanoia*, which means exactly the change of thoughts”⁵. Moreover, in *Laur* and *The Dead Are Coming Back Home*, there is also a specific scene during which one of the male characters has a fish bone in his throat, menacing to end his life: “The bone got stuck in the throat in three points. It neither goes further down, nor up. It went too deep for it to be reached with one’s fingers. Mother Marfa hits her husband in the back, but the bone can’t be moved”⁶. In Cornel Constantin Ciomâzgă’s novel, the corresponding fragment is the following: “Everything started from some fish brought by one of his nephews. His wife prepared a saramura⁷ for him. The polenta - burning hot, the appetite – big, the eyesight – a little bit weakened, one fishbone went down his throat and...got stuck in it, of course. Coughing, lack of air, water-water, fists near the backhead, hâc-hâc and he went down like a sack of spuds. Before his wife went and brought someone or asked for an ambulance to come, the woman being out of her bearings, the old man who was also suffering from a heart disease, started to turn cold.

Agitation, screaming, neighbours, telephones, slapping of the man’s cheeks, “spread some water on his face”, “give him some vinegar”, “loosen up his buttons near the throat”, “push hard on his chest”, “mouth to mouth resuscitation”, “missing breathing!”, “oh, my God, quickly light a candle!”, “this poor man has just kicked the bucket”⁸.

The red thread which unites these four chapters of *Laur* is the spiritual transformation of Arseni, it is his connection with God which inspired us to search for the deeper meaning of his journey towards the afterlife, which simply defies normal laws of time and space. In this respect, in the text, there is a plastic bottle which appears in the description of a forest in spring, in the Middle Ages. This anachronism which was created on purpose is explained by the author in the following way: “It appears there because I wanted to suggest that there is no time. And this is the essential idea of the novel: there is eternity, but no time. The main means of expressing this thing is language”⁹. The corresponding fragment in the book is this: “Under the snow, one could have a glimpse at the untidiness of the forest – leaves from the past year, rags which had lost their colour and faded plastic bottles. In the glades open to sun, grass

⁴ Idem 2, page 172, my translation.

⁵ Idem 2, page 225, my translation.

⁶ Idem 2, page 161, my translation.

⁷ A type of dish which is fish-based, similar to a salted soup which may also have garlic, vinegar, used as garnish in some situations.

⁸ Idem 3, page 12, my translation.

⁹ Idem 2, cover page, my translation.

had already appeared, but in the thickets, snow was still thick. And it was cold there"¹⁰.

With powerful and vivid words, Vodolazkin manages to re-create the atmosphere of the Middle Ages, a representative example is the moment when Laur takes full responsibility for Anastasia's pregnancy, when the crowd of medieval village people is on the verge of slaughtering the future mother because she refused to declare who the father of her unborn child was and every single negative event from the community was associated with the unwed girl who was believed to have sinned with the devil. Saints adopted this behaviour, in order to save lives, they claimed they were the fathers of unmarried women who were condemned by the society. "In the Middle Ages, sensations were few, and what happened with Laur was, undoubtedly, something sensational, because it was about the fall of a faultless man.(...) When they spoke about it, many people felt sorry for Laur, noticing the fact that the height of one's flight is threatened by a fall which may be just as big as the ascension"¹¹.

As we have already mentioned, Arseni passes through some major changes that are going to become a way of living for him. In the village Rukina, where he was born, his mentor was Hristofor, his grandfather, the one who taught him everything about the healing power of faith and plants. Moreover, Hristofor is the one who also noticed the early qualities of the child who was gifted by God with the power of foreseeing: "Grandpa Hristofor looked at how the mysterious currents of the icon were flowing into Arseni's hands. Once, he wrote down the following remark; the child has a special power of focusing"¹²; "In order to strengthen not only Arseni's flesh, but also his spirit, he placed him in monastery"¹³; when Arseni turned fourteen and Hristofor taught him how to cure people of plague, he started crying because he had "seen in advance" that his father would die of this illness:

"What happened to you, why are you crying?, asked Hristofor.

I see the sign of death on him, answered the boy.

Arseni continued his crying for seven days and seven nights. Hristofor kept silent, because he knew the boy was right"¹⁴.

The divine gift of foreseeing events is also given to another character in this "nonhistorical novel", as Vodolazkin said, we are now referring to Ambrozii, who predicted five events in his early childhood: the dream about his family gathering grapes before the sudden darkness and the destroying hailstorm with ice as big as a dove's egg (page 169), the war on the territory of Piedmont, started in 1494 (page 170), the discovery of America by Columbus

¹⁰ Idem 2, page 63, my translation.

¹¹ Vodolazkin, Evgheni, *Laur*, Humanitas Fiction, 2014, Bucharest, page 315, my translation.

¹² Idem 2, page 18, my translation.

¹³ Idem 2, page 20, my translation.

¹⁴ Idem 2, page 23, my translation.

in 1492 (page 170), Florence haunted by plague for two years (page 171) and the terrible flood from November 4, 1966 (page 174).

Except for the gift of foreseeing, Arseni also has the power of healing people by using words and plants, respecting the indications of Hristofor who transmitted all his knowledge to his grandson. In this respect, a powerful moment is the one during which a woman with a head tumor is cured in a miraculous way: "Believe in God and His Holy Mother and you will find help. The abbot touched her forehead with dried lips. And the tumor will regress. Go in peace and stop being upset.

Why are you crying, Arseni?

I am crying of joy"¹⁵.

Furthermore, if we analyze the entire novel, there are numerous moments when Arseni, with God's help, actually works miracles, at pages 157, 158, 160, 161, 294, to mention only a few of them. Moreover, we found fragments which remind us of Surrealism, there are undeniable connections with the world of art: when Arseni cured a woman of a terrible tooth ache, he did something almost hilarious, underlined in the fragment "He put his hand in his mouth, he pulled the wisdom tooth from the gum and handed it to the newcomers. They understood that this was the answer of the healer to their request. They took the wisdom tooth to the wife, she put it inside her mouth and the pain went away"¹⁶.

Moreover, it is essential the fact that he passes through four phases during which he changes his name, this fact can also be associated with the moment when monks leave their former earthly life and dedicate their existence to God, also changing their names, as a sign of "rebirth" in a new existence. The eloquent fragment is the following: "Laur is a good name, because the plant which is now your homonym is medicinal. Being always green, it symbolizes eternal life.

No longer do I feel the unity of my life, said Laur. I was Arseni, Ustin, Ambrozie, and now, look, I have become Laur. My life has been lived by four people who don't look alike, who have different bodies and different names. What do we have in common, the blonde child from Rukina village and I? Memory? The more I live, the more it seems that my memories are inventions. I have ceased to believe in them, and this is why they can't connect me with the one that I was in different periods. Life looks very much like a mosaic and it opens up in pieces.(...) But even in the mosaic of life, there is what unites all its components: the aspiration towards Him. In Him, they all become one, again"¹⁷.

Regarding the change of name, Arseni became Ustin when the girl he loved died, after giving birth to their dead child, she suffered from plague. The

¹⁵ Idem 2, page 29, my translation.

¹⁶ Idem 2, page 156, my translation.

¹⁷ Idem 2, page 296, my translation.

moments when he realizes that the girl he loved was dead, unwed and with a dead child near her – their son!!! – are full of dramatism and even negation of reality: "Ustina was there, her eyes closed, and Arseni felt how life rolled outside her body. Ustina, don't go, Arseni cried from the bottom of himself, so powerfully, that the abbot Nikandru heard him from the monastery"¹⁸. It is traumatizing the idea that the two beings left this life without receiving the Holy Eucharist and Arseni takes full responsibility for this, the motif of sleep appears here as "a water of oblivion", as a negation of reality, as a sign of his depression: "Even in his sleep, he was afraid to discover that Ustina was dead. He was terrified now, in the morning: the coming of a new day without Ustina was unbearable for him. He was soaking wet with sleep until he forgot about him. Sleep was leaking through his veins and was knocking on his heart.(...) When he saw Death, Arseni's soul said: I can't bear your glory, and I can see that your beauty is not from this world. In that moment, the soul of Arseni saw the soul of Ustina. Her soul was almost transparent and this is why it was not perceivable.(...) Death was already holding Ustina's soul by the hand and was ready to take it up"¹⁹.

It is intriguing the fact that another Russian saint, this time a woman, Xenia of Sankt Petersburg, took her beloved husband's name after he died, as a sign of changing her life, as a way of maintaining his memory vivid and as a supreme sign of love, because she managed to live until the end of her life using his name. In the book "The Life, Miracles and the Akathist of Saint Xenia", it is also mentioned the moment when she changed her name, written on her grave stone: "In the name of Father and Son and the Holy Spirit. Here lies God's servant Xenia Grigorievna, the wife of Colonel Andrei Theodorovici Petrov, an imperial Kappelmaister. Widow when she was 26, pilgrim for 45 years, she lived until the age of 71. She was known under the name of Andrei Theodorovici. May all that have known her pray for her soul's salvation"²⁰. Furthermore, a piece of explanation of Saint Xenia's behaviour can also be connected to Arseni's change of name into Ustina, not to mention also the fact that we have found more than sixty references to Ustina, during which Arseni "talks" to her, it is a unidirectional dialogue as a sign of his perpetual love for her, in everything he does. Regarding Sain Xenia, it has been written: "Towards the end of her life, she went back to Petersburg dressed in an old uniform of her husband, and from that moment on, she refused to answer when called Xenia Grigorievna, she replaced this name with her husband's, Andrei Theodorovici. Maybe in her deep devotion towards her husband, she believed she could take over the burden of his sins and

¹⁸ Idem 2, page 74, my translation.

¹⁹ Idem 2, page 75, my translation.

²⁰ *The Life, Miracles and the Akathist of the Saint Xenia, Our Mother of Sankt Petersburg*, Translation from English: Maria Paraschiv, Anestis Publishing House, s.a., s.l., page 9, my translation.

unfortunate death that caught him totally unprepared. Full of sorrow and repentance for her own sins and her husband's, she left her house, wandering around the lonely streets of Petersbourg, known as Storona²¹ Petersburg²².

In his search towards forgiveness for his own sins, Ustina's and the lost child, Arseni dedicates his entire existence to healing people. He becomes one of the so called "fools-for-God". In the Athonite Paterikon, it is explained this term which may be unknown by the people who are not Christian Orthodox: "Those who were <fools-for-Christ> were wise people for God and crazy ones from the point of view of the world. They were in fact (though it was a mystery) saints, but for the world, they seemed abnormal. With their holy weird things and with their theatrical behaviour, they managed to mock "the ugliness" of the decaying human nature and especially the cursed pride of people, which is the source of all evils. The method of "fools-for-Christ" puts an end to selfish love and attacks human vanity. Many are the "fools-for-Christ" that lived in the Holy Mountain and have been left unknown to us, but God knew them. Hidden from the world, they were seen by the angels"²³.

In this respect, Arseni is a fool-for-God, because he does things which seem unexplainable to rational human beings, but totally justified in the eyes of God: "Arseni threw mud balls in a few respected inhabitants from Zapskovie. At their back, he could clearly distinguish big and small devils. The inhabitants are not satisfied.

The only consolation is that the devils are even less satisfied.

Sometimes, Arseni threw stones in the doors of churches. There is also another place where a sufficient number of devils gather. They do not dare to go inside and they all gather at the entrance"²⁴.

If we do focus on the religious and psychological meanings of suffering, because many of the inhabitants of the visited places are cured by Arseni, we launch the following question: what would the purpose of physical and mental suffering be? In the book *Suffering and Spiritual Growth*, Priest Liviu Petcu, Academic Assistant, PhD, underlines the words of a hermit who said: "If you pay your debts in this life, you can find salvation. But, if you are hit in the head several times, you will get even something more than this."²⁵ In some cases, even if the people who deal with suffering are seen by the others as innocent and having too cruel a destiny, we should not let ourselves

²¹ Meaning "the outskirts of the city".

²² Idem 12, page 11, my translation.

²³ <http://www.pateric.ro/capitolul-xxxix-despre-fericita-nebunie-pentru-hristos-care-naste-deplina-smerenie-si-care-aduce-duh-dumnezeiesc-si-har-ceresc/>, Chapter XXXIX – About the happy madness for Christ, which gives birth to full piety and brings God's Holy Spirit and Divine Gift, page last seen on November 22, 2016, my translation.

²⁴ Evgheni Vodolazkin, *Laur, A nonhistorical novel*, Translation from Russian and notes by Adriana Liciu, "Humanitas Fiction" Publishing House, Bucharest, 2014, page 157, my translation.

²⁵ Liviu Petcu, *Suferința și creșterea spirituală [Suffering and Spiritual Growth]*, The Publishing House of the Academic Foundation AXIS, Iași, 2012, page 30, my translation.

be trapped by human interpretations. In this respect, it is mentioned: "God allows the innocent to suffer in order to give a new chance to the ones who haven't repented, so that they can be brought back to the path of contrition, after having seen the suffering of the ones without guile, thus becoming like the good thief who was put on the cross on Christ's right side"²⁶.

Moreover, in *The Athonite Paterikon*, there is a clear reference to the way we should live, there is a clear exhortation in the quotation: "If we ask for pieces of explanation regarding what happens to us, we can lose everything. We lose the tranquility of our mind and the reward"²⁷. In order to bring a broader perspective on the topic, Priest Liviu Petcu brings the following argument: "In most cases, the ones that people consider accomplished (from a spiritual perspective - perfect, ideal)²⁸ still have, in the eyes of the Creator, something imperfect or not complete"²⁹. < In the same way – writes Saint Gregory the Great – not knowing, we often look at the sculpted statues which are still not finished, already praising them as if they were perfect, but the maestro still examines them and still polishes them; though he has heard the praising words, he keeps on retouching, making everything right>"³⁰.

Reflecting on the healing power of the fools-for-Christ, we have been intrigued by the book *The Lausiatic History* where there is a fragment which is, in our humble opinion, connected to Vodolazkin's Arseny and his gift of healing, given by God to the rightful ones who also show endurance in suffering: "Inside this book (*The Lausiatic History*), we are taught a great lesson of patience in suffering. We also learn from it not to be amazed nor bewildered when we see the rightful one in sufferance"³¹. < In the Mountain of Nitria, a man called Veniamin has lived for eighty years, willingly living in hard conditions. He received God's mercy by the power of healing. Every person who had his hand put on him/her or who received blessed oil after giving him/her the blessing, was delivered from any illness. This man, embellished with such a charisma, got sick of hydropsy eight months before he died and his body became so swollen, that he seemed to be another kind of Job. (...) Because we couldn't look at his terrible sufferance, we changed the direction of our sight. Then, the happy Veniamin told us: "Pray, my sons, so that my inner human being doesn't become ill of hydropsy">"³².

²⁶ Idem 4, page 31, my translation.

²⁷ Ioannikios Kotsonis, *The Athonite Paterikon*, Translation by Anca Dobrin and Maria Ciobanu, "Bunavestire" Publishing House, Bacău, 2000, pages 122-123, my translation.

²⁸ What is placed in brackets is my commentary, in order to better understand the term "accomplished".

²⁹ Liviu Petcu, op.cit., page 32, my translation.

³⁰ Saint Gregory the Great, *Dialoguri despre moarte [Dialogues about Death]*, translation by George Bogdan Țăra, Amarcord Publishing House, Timișoara, 1998, page 52, my translation.

³¹ Liviu Petcu, op.cit., page 33, my translation.

³² Paladie, *Istoria lausiacă [The Lausiatic History]*, translation, introduction and notes by Priest Dumitru Stăniloae, PhD Professor, IBMBOR Publishing House, Buchares, 1993, p.30-31.

Furthermore, if we search for the deeper meaning of suffering, we can find it in the words of Saint John Chrysostom: “You will ask: <How has God allowed this to happen? >. In order to place on the head of the right one more crowns and to punish the devil more”³³.

If we connect the spiritual state of mind of Vodolazkin’s character Arseni with the words of Saint John Chrysostom regarding the eight reasons for the saints’ suffering, we discover that the literary character has all the attributes of a real saint, after he repents for his youth deed when he lived with Ustina, being unwed in front of God: “I can say that eight are the reasons for the saints’ suffering. Because of this, listen to all of them carefully, knowing that no forgiveness or relief will come to us if we are outraged by fleeting events, whose causes are multiple, still, we should not be outraged by any of them.

Consequently, *the first reason* is to prevent the situation in which the great virtues and amazing things made by the saints cause them pride.

The second is to prevent the world from worshipping them more than they should as people and to prevent people from looking at them as if they were gods, not simple mortals.

The third, in order to make God’s power shine more, using it to win and spread faith in His name to all people who pass through misfortunes and who are persecuted from all sides.

The forth, because the patience of saints itself appears more glowingly, showing people that they do not serve God because they have an interest, but because they have for Him pure love, because, in the middle of all misfortunes, they are always devoted to Him.

The fifth, in order to make us think about the resurrection of the dead, because when a rightful person, full of merits, leaves this life after having been suffered countless hardships, the human being thinks about the future judgment without one’s own will, and one tells oneself: if people never leave the ones who work for them without payment, it is self-understood that God will never forget to repay those who ended their life while suffering and working for Him. But, if it is not possible to deprive them of their reward, surely, by not receiving it in this world, they will receive it in the afterlife.

The sixth, because those who suffer misfortunes need to be encouraged and comforted by seeing that the most amazing and holy people have suffered the same or even worse.

The seventh, because when we are given the piece of advice to look at the virtue of the rightful ones, and when we are told: imitate the happy Peter, imitate de happy Paul, the greatness of their deeds should not make us believe

³³ Saint John Chrysostom, in the volume *Problemele vieții [The Problems of Life]*, translation by Cristian Spătărelu and Daniela Filioreanu, „Cartea Ortodoxă” Publishing House, Galați, s.a., p.268-269, my translation.

that they had a different nature from ours or that it may be impossible for us to imitate such big models.

The eighth, finally, in order to show you what happiness and misery truly consist of, who should be considered a happy or a miserable person”³⁴.

In a nutshell, the search for God in this novel is marked by the motif of the fool-for-God, the healing power of faith, words and plants, the change of name corresponding to several phases of spiritual development. This spiritual dimension is enhanced by the connections which we have found with Andrei Rublev, Tarkovsky's movies and *The Name of the Rose* by Umberto Eco. We do believe that this novel is a powerful Russian writing, representing an invitation for the readers to introspection, in search for higher values for one's soul.

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³⁴ Saint John Chrysostom, *Primele patru omilii despre statui ale Sfântului Ioan Chrisostom [The First Four Homilies about Statues of Saint John Chrysostom]*, homily 1, Translation from the original version made by Stoenescu Apostol, <Noua Tipografie “Profesională”> Publishing House, Dimitrie C. Ionescu, Bucharest, 1908, p.16-17, my translation.

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LES RAPPORTS DE L'ART ABSTRAIT (KANDINSKY, KLEE, MONDRIAN) AVEC LES TENDANCES D'ABSTRACTION DE L'ART SACRÉ

Gabriel Badea*

Abstract: *The Connections of Abstract Art ((Kandinsky, Klee, Mondrian) with the Abstractization Tendencies of Sacred Art.* The main purpose of this paper is to study the connections that can be established between the modern abstractionism and the abstract tendencies from other historical eras. In the first part I will present three distinct interpretations: the first direction is based on authors as Mircea Eliade and Roger Lipsey, who see modern art through the links still alive between art and religion, from a syncretic perspective, or, after Eliade's expression, based on a creative hermeneutics. The second direction is represented by the work of Adorno, Compagnon, Greenberg, Lyotard, for whom the modern art is a manifestation of radical discontinuity in relation to the art of the past, and the emergence of abstractionism is due primarily to a historical necessity (the increasing rupture between form and content, the increased autonomy of the sensible over the intelligible). The third direction is represented to Wilhelm Worringer, whose work (*Abstraktion und Einfühlung*, 1907) predates the emergence of the first abstract paintings, but relying on the German aesthetic tradition, manages to go beyond the threshold distinction between figurative and abstract, thus identifying a type of *Einfühlung* art and another of abstract type, namely the predominance of one or the other in different historical contexts and civilizational patterns. In the second part of the paper I will refer to instances of the spirit of abstraction in the case of Byzantine sacred art, especially in the footsteps of Plotinian aesthetics and as a result of the iconoclastic crisis. In the last part, I will present the key ideas for three major representatives of abstractionism (Kandinsky, Klee, Mondrian) and the survival of the concepts of sacred art in their works and art theories.

Keywords: abstract art, *Einfühlung*, sacred art, form, content, iconoclasm, spirit, matter

L'approche proposée dans cet essai, c'est de regarder l'art abstrait moderne comme un art cosmologique à travers lequel les univers plastiques traditionnels sont détruits, mais pas à la suite d'une emprise négative ou contestataire (conformément à la dialectique de l'avant-garde), mais pour créer ou pour imaginer de nouveaux mondes, pour arriver aux niveaux les plus

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profonds de la réalité. Deuxièmement, je me propose de montrer que, même comme avant-garde de la modernité ou comme expression du Nouveau radical dans l'art, l'art abstrait partage certaines caractéristiques avec les tendances d'abstraction de cette période historique.

Ma démarche est fondée sur les interprétations des auteurs comme Mircea Eliade ou Roger Lipsey, qui ont abordé le problème de l'art moderne à travers les rapports de la religion (le spirituel) et l'art. Pour le jeune Eliade, le phénomène artistique a besoin de la participation d'autant de plans de la conscience que possible: l'idéal est donné par l'artiste du Moyen Âge, qui maîtrisait, à part son art, une métaphysique et une Cosmologie. En esquisant le portrait virtuel de "l'Écrivain de demain", Eliade envoie à l'art médiéval, celui qui surgissait de prémisses cosmologiques, étiques et existentielles:

L'écrivain de demain devra retrouver la dignité et la sévérité de son art. Tout comme l'artiste du Moyen Age – qui maîtrisait les sept Arts, initié à la Théologie tout comme à la Musique et à la Grammaire- le nouvel écrivain va falloir approfondir les techniques et les secrets de l'entière connaissance de l'humanité. [...] Pareil à l'idéal de Dante, à celui de Calderón, Shakespeare, Goethe ou Novalis – l'écrivain nouveau [...] va rêver un Art qui soit en même temps une Métaphysique et une Cosmologie¹.

En ce qui concerne l'art moderne, Eliade a remarqué son fond moins évident pour les adeptes du Nouveau Radical, respectivement le cycle destruction-régénération, visible dans la hiérophanie de la matière et dans l'aspiration des artistes vers la création des nouveaux mondes, des visions primordiales, totales et essentielles. Eliade a remarqué la fureur iconoclaste et anarchique spécifique à l'artiste moderne, reliée à la destruction et à la régénération de l'Univers dans la civilisation sémitique. Ainsi, il montre que l'artiste moderne répète certains modèles de l'histoire des religions. Une interprétation similaire, concernant ce côté moins visible du modernisme artistique, peut être trouvée dans le volume *La Nostalgie des Origines*, publié en 1969:

Tous les mouvements artistiques modernes cherchent, consciemment ou inconsciemment, à détruire les univers esthétiques traditionnels, la réduction des « formes » à l'état élémentaire germinal, larvaire, dans l'espoir de recréer des « mondes frais »; [...] Ces mouvements cherchent à abolir l'histoire de l'art et de retrouver l'instant auroral quand l'homme voyait pour la « première » fois le monde. C'est inutile de mentionner maintenant combien celles-là doivent intéresser l'historien des religions, familier avec le système mythologique impliquant la destruction symbolique et la recréation de l'univers permettant la

¹ Mircea Eliade - „Scriitorul de mâine...” dans *Viața literară*, an XI, nr. 11, 25 aprilie-mai 1937, p.1, cité après Mircea Eliade - *Prophetism românesc*, vol. II, București, Roza vânturilor, 1990, p. 198.

reprise régulière d'une existence «pure» dans un monde frais, forte et fructueuse.²

En ce qui concerne l'évolution de la relation entre l'art et la religion dans le contexte de la modernité, la plupart des chercheurs ont admis une séparation des plans par le fait que l'art gagne progressivement son autonomie, sans éprouver la nécessité de satisfaire le rôle d'auxiliaire de la religion officielle (en imposant des canons de la représentation, la dépendance financière de l'Église, etc). Mais Eliade a montré que cette rupture de surface n'épuise pas toutes les relations entre l'art et spirituel, même dans une crise du sentiment religieux associé à la montée des nouvelles doctrines matérialistes, positivistes et asimbolistes.

L'apparition de l'abstractionnisme comme nécessité historique

Tout d'abord, il faut mentionner les conditions sociales et historiques qui ont conduit à l'apparition de l'abstractionnisme, respectivement sa particularité par rapport aux autres avant-gardes historiques, les rapports entre ses principes et ceux du dadaïsme, du surréalisme et de l'avant-garde russe. Artistes comme Mondrian, Kandinsky, Malevitch semblent avoir ignoré les conditions socio-historiques qui ont favorisé l'apparition du nouveau mouvement artistique (la distinction entre le contenu et la forme, l'autonomie croissante du sensible par rapport à l'intelligible dans le XIXe siècle), placent leurs œuvres en descendance de la tradition spirituelle. Au contraire, l'interprétation de Clément Greenberg et de Theodor W. Adorno est centrée sur l'opinion que la parution de l'abstractionnisme doit être interprétée comme une rupture, un choc, une révolution, par rapport à la tradition de la représentation picturale basée sur la perspective de la Renaissance. Deuxièmement, les changements rapides et profonds dans le cadre de l'art moderne sont regardés comme une réflexion des transformations spécifiques au phénomène de modernisation par lesquelles passent les sociétés occidentales (la rationalisation des procès de production et consommation, l'accélération de la vie sociale, la naissance des rapports contractuels et impersonnels entre les gens). Un philosophe comme Adorno a mis le problème des rapports entre l'art moderne et le Nouveau comme une catégorie épistémologique. Ainsi, il a fait la distinction entre l'art fantastique et l'art romantique d'un côté (ceux-ci représentant un Non existant comme s'il existait, leur inventions étant seulement des changements de la réalité empirique), et de l'autre côté, l'art moderne, celui qui, refusant la contamination à l'existence telle quelle, l'exprime sans pitié³. Adorno a rejeté la continuité linéaire, non-dialectique entre l'Ancien et le Nouveau, tout comme l'explication du caractère novateur du modernisme à travers les similitudes avec d'autres hypostases historiques du phénomène de l'art. Dans

² Eliade, Mircea – *Nostalgia originilor*, Ed. Humanitas, București, 1994, p. 108

³ Adorno, Theodor W. – *Teoria estetică*, Ed. Paralela 45, Pitești, 2005, p. 31.

le contexte de la modernité, il a parlé de l'impératif de la nouveauté comme condition *sine qua non* de la réussite: „A partir de la deuxième moitié du XIXe siècle, avec le capitalisme avancé, la catégorie du nouveau est l'une centrale [...]. Dès ce moment, aucune œuvre qui a méprisé le concept, même fluctuant, de la modernité, n'a pas été réussie”⁴. De ce point de vue, Kandinsky, Klee et Mondrian, bien qu'ils ne fussent pas intéressés par le plan de la nécessité historique, ils ont respecté pourtant la condition exigée par Adorno de sorte que leurs techniques aient un caractère novateur.

Jean François Lyotard a identifié comme principale caractéristique de l'art moderne, son autodéfinition comme technique de l'indéterminé par lequel l'artiste s'est libéré de toute contrainte des représentations (le support, le cadre, les lignes, les couleurs, l'espace). On retient, à ce titre, l'exemple de Cézanne.

Ces sensations élémentaires sont cachées à la perception commune, ce qui reste sous l'hégémonie du son mode commun classique de regarder. Elles ne sont pas accessibles au peintre, donc elles ne peuvent pas être reproduites par celui-ci qu'avec le prix d'une ascèse intérieure qui nettoie le champ perceptif et mental de tout préjugé inscrit même dans la manière de voir⁵.

Pour le peintre moderne, la vraie mise est de „faire voir ce qui fait voir et non pas ce qu'est visible”⁶. Donc, Adorno et Lyotard comprennent l'art moderne dans les termes d'une rupture radicale avec la tradition de la représentation, mais sans mentionner l'intérêt particulier manifesté par la majorité de peintres modernes pour l'art primitif et exotique. Ainsi, ils s'arrêtent sur les différences entre le modernisme lui-même et les tendances d'abstraction d'autres époques historiques, en passant sous silence les similitudes frappantes d'entre celles-ci lorsqu'on se rapporte au plan de la subjectivité esthétique.

Worringer : l'instinct d'abstraction est anhistorique

Ce deuxième plan est mis en discussion par Wilhelm Worringer, qui situe l'apparition de l'abstractionnisme dans un contexte différent par rapport au contexte dialectique. La fameuse œuvre de l'esthéticien allemand, *Abstraction et empathie/ Abstraktion und Einfühlung*, date de 1907, lorsque l'abstractionnisme proprement-dit n'existait pas (la première œuvre est due à Kandinsky en 1910). Il y a quelques hypothèses conformément auxquelles le peintre d'origine russe, avec ses collègues du groupe *Blaue Reiter* (Franz Marc et August Macke), aurait lu l'œuvre de Worringer et l'aurait considéré comme source d'inspiration. Ce dernier a fait la distinction entre l'art abstrait et l'art d'*Einfühlung* ou empathie: la caractéristique de la première est de marquer une

⁴ Idem, p 32.

⁵ Lyotard, Jean – François – „Sublimul și avangarda”, dans *Inumanul*, Ed. Idea, Cluj, 2002, p. 98.

⁶ Ibidem.

séparation, pendant que la dernière établit “une liaison entre le sujet et l'objet, fait pénétrer le sujet dans l'objet, implique une osmose et une communion”⁷. Ces deux types d'art se différencient également en ce qui concerne les rapports avec la nature: l'art abstrait trouve son origine dans le désir de l'homme de se réfugier dans un univers des formes non-naturelles, car il perçoit la nature comme un alliage de forces hostiles, qui le domine avec leur pouvoir; ou, au contraire, lorsque l'homme, par son intelligence et sa raison, aboutit à dominer la nature, en la méprisant. L'art d'*Einfühlung* exprime des sentiments d'empathie et communion avec la nature car l'homme ne ressent plus son angoisse, en arrivant à s'adapter aux rythmes saisonniers et aux cycles progrès/régression.

L'innovation majeure de Worringer consiste dans le fait qu'il n'a pas commencé sa démarche à partir de l'opposition entre l'art naturaliste/imitative/réaliste et l'art symbolique /abstrait/ idéaliste. Par contre, en partant de théories de Lipps et Riegl, il a analysé le processus de la création non comme l'habileté de réaliser un œuvre d'art, mais il est allé en amont, vers la volonté de créer un tel œuvre. Cette intentionnalité de la création est antérieure au choix de créer un objet d'art en accord avec les formes naturelles ou en en faisant abstraction. De l'autre côté, en partant de la théorie de Lipps, il a fait la distinction entre l'art d'*Einfühlung* et l'art abstrait: „Pareil à l'instinct d'intropathie, comme prémisses de l'expérience esthétique, qui trouve sa satisfaction dans la beauté de l'organique, l'instinct d'abstraction trouve sa beauté dans l'anorganique qui nie la vie, dans le domaine cristallin, concernant en général toutes les règles et les nécessités abstraites.”⁸

La théorie de Worringer a été suivie et confirmée par celle d'Herbert Kühn, formulée dans l'œuvre *Die Kunst der primitiven* (1923). Kühn avait identifié dans l'art primitif deux catégories de formes – l'une „sensorielle” ou naturaliste, l'autre „imaginative” ou abstraite: „L'art sensoriel s'exprime par «imitation», en sens aristotélique, quant à l'art imaginaire, il cherche «l'éternel Un dans les choses, l'essentiel, la loi. Il cherche le mysticisme du triangle, le symbole de base du cercle, la paix infinie du rectangle»”⁹. (v. Fig 7 et 8) Herbert Read a essayé d'expliquer l'origine de la forme dans l'art en fonction de la distinction de Kühn:

Conformément à la première hypothèse, toutes les déviations formelles de l'efficacité seraient dues à l'imitation, consciente ou inconsciente, des formes trouvées dans la nature; conformément à la deuxième hypothèse, la forme a sa propre signification, c'est à dire elle correspond à une nécessité intérieure psychique et elle exprime ce

⁷ Brion, Marcel – *Arta abstractă*, Ed. Meridiane, București, 1972, p. 54.

⁸ Worringer, Wilhelm – *Abstracție și intropatie și alte studii de teoria artei*, Ed. Univers, București, 1970, p. 23.

⁹ Kühn, Herbert – *Die Kunst der Primitiven*, Delphin-Verlag, München, 1923 apud Goldwater, Robert – *Primitivismul în arta modernă*, Ed. Meridiane, București, 1974, p. 70.

sentiment [...] qui représente souvent le désir de réification, d'éclaircissement, de précision, d'ordre¹⁰.

Ainsi, l'instinct d'abstraction peut être même le *primum movens* dans l'apparition de l'art comme processus de perception de la forme autonome, détachée de l'univers des formes naturelles.

L'apparition de l'abstractionnisme peut être interprétée comme une hypostase moderne d'un phénomène culturel qui apparaît périodiquement dans l'évolution des civilisations. A travers l'histoire ont existé trois périodes majeures d'ascension de l'iconoclasme: les deux premières pendant l'Empire Byzantin, entre 730-787 et 815-843, et la troisième pendant la Reforme. Dans son œuvre, *L'image interdite*, Alain Besançon a réalisé une histoire de l'iconoclasme ou de l'antipathie envers l'image, commençant avec Platon et jusqu'à deux représentants majeurs de l'abstractionnisme, Kandinsky et Malevitch. La thèse de son œuvre est celle que l'abstractionnisme moderne représente l'hypostase la plus récente de la tendance iconoclaste qui se manifeste périodiquement ou cyclique dans l'histoire de l'humanité, même si on peut facilement remarquer de différences notables entre l'iconoclasme byzantin et celui moderne. Mais ces différences, bien qu'elles attestent des transformations fondamentales au niveau sujet/objet, immanent/transcendance, apparence/réalité, elles ne peuvent éclipser entièrement les causes fondamentales et anhistoriques qui ont conduit, successivement, à l'émergence de l'iconoclasme. Dans le cadre de l'iconoclasme byzantin, les arguments de deux côtés étaient, premièrement, d'ordre théologique: „L'interdiction du second commandement contre l'image taillée a été utilisée comme un argument contre les icônes par les iconoclastes. Mais pour les iconophiles cette interdiction a été dissoute par la nouvelle dispensation de l'Incarnation et ministère du Christ, ainsi que par les pratiques de l'image de l'Eglise primitive”¹¹. L'émergence de l'iconoclasme est aussi liée au mécanisme dialectique de l'histoire: „la production croissante d'icônes et leur utilisation comme images de dévotion à partir du VI^e siècle a exacerbé la nécessité d'une théorie de l'image au IX^e siècle”¹². Je vais revenir sur l'hypostase moderne de l'iconoclasme dans une section ultérieure.

La question du spirituel dans l'art moderne

La dissimulation ou la négligence de la dimension spirituelle par les historiens et les critiques de l'art moderne, est surprise dans l'article „Modern Art”, dans *l'Encyclopédie des religions*, écrite par Roger Lipsey, l'éditeur et l'exégète le plus important du travail de Ananda Coomaraswamy. Dans ce qui

¹⁰ Read, Herbert – *Originile formei în artă*, Ed. Univers, București, 1971, p. 82.

¹¹ Cormack, Robin – „Art and Iconoclasm”, dans Jeffreys, Elizabeth; Haldon, John; Cormack, Robin – *The Oxford Handbook of Byzantine Studies*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2008, p. 754.

¹² Idem, pp. 753-754.

suit, je vais me rapporter à une étude plus vaste, signée par Lipsey, *Le spirituel dans l'art du XXe siècle*. Je vais commencer par dire que les études de Compagnon¹³ et Lipsey peuvent être considérées comme des interprétations différentes concernant la présence (i)légitime d'un fondement spirituel dans l'art abstrait du début du XXe siècle. Compagnon estime que des artistes comme Mondrian, Kandinsky, Malevitch essayent de légitimer leur œuvres d'une manière *a posteriori*, en faisant appel à la doctrine spiritualiste du passé, dont le XXe siècle s'en était «déarrassé». Compagnon revient dans un autre paragraphe en mettant à l'index les trois peintres, qu'il accuse de naïveté et de retard culturel: „Grâce à un drôle décalage, la doctrine spirituelle, que le XXe siècle avait abandonnée, a servi à Kandinsky de légitimer au moins, sinon de trouver, le «ce» que intuitivement il remplacerait à l'art figuratif”¹⁴. Toujours sur Kandinsky, Compagnon a noté qu'il „se sentait lié aux symbolistes et préraphaélites anglais (Rossetti et Burne-Jones), qu'il considérait comme égaux à Cézanne, Matisse et Picasso, bien que son propre travail appartienne, indéniablement, aux autres tendances, et que pour nous, sa nécessité historique est évidente”¹⁵. En contrepartie, le travail de Roger Lipsey est une référence pour la lecture de l'interpénétration entre l'art et le thème spirituel dans les courants artistiques y compris l'art abstrait. Eliade n'a pas accordé une attention particulière à l'intérêt manifesté pour la théosophie ou l'anthroposophie par des artistes comme Mondrian, Kandinsky, Klee, Malevitch. Au contraire, sa position concernant le système théosophique d'Helena Petrovna Blavatsky était une plutôt critique, en le considérant comme une forme de popularisation des traditions spirituelles ésotériques.

En dépit de ces insuffisances, l'hypothèse de Lipsey est que l'art moderne peut être interprété comme un art cosmologique, parallèle et complémentaire à la science (par exemple, la physique des particules subatomiques, une zone en plein essor au début du XXe siècle). Pour Kandinsky, Klee, Mondrian l'objectif majeur est de chercher dans les profondeurs de la matière l'essence immuable et éternelle de la réalité. La devise de Mondrian était „moins de matière, plus de puissance”, l'artiste étant dans une recherche permanente d'une réalité supérieure – l'universalité qui est au-dessus de nous. D'autres artistes ont vu dans l'abstractionnisme de Mondrian une unité parfaite entre l'énergie, la forme et le sens: „les compositions sévères, mathématiquement parfaites de Piet Mondrian transforment l'angle droit et la ligne dans l'esprit pur. Ceux qui peuvent

¹³ Compagnon, Antoine – *Cele cinci paradoxuri ale modernității/ Les Cinq Paradoxes de la modernité*, Echinox, Cluj-Napoca, 1998.

¹⁴ *Idem*, p. 88.

¹⁵ *Idem*, pp. 88-89.

comprendre les mystères de son système de réseaux, peuvent comprendre un aspect de l'Absolu”¹⁶.

Les hypothèses d'Eliade ci-dessus résonnent avec les idées de Piet Mondrian sur la conjonction entre l'art moderne et le sens intemporel et universel de l'esprit à travers l'abstractionnisme: „Représentant quelque chose de perceptible pour les sens, quelqu'un fait une affirmation de l'humanité car il connaît le monde grâce à son Ego. En contrepartie, s'il choisit de ne pas représenter les choses, il reste une place pour le Divin”¹⁷. L'„Universel” que Mondrian cherche peut être le même plan fondamental ou l'„Urgrund” dont parlait Paul Klee:

[L'Artiste] examine avec un regard pénétrant les formes que la nature place devant lui. Plus il regarde en profondeur, plus il devient capable d'élargir sa vision sur le passé, plus il est profondément impressionné par l'image de la création même, de la Genèse, plutôt que par celle de la nature comme produit fini¹⁸.

Ainsi, Klee cherche la découverte d'une image originaire et essentielle de la Genèse comme archétype de la création, au-delà du voile des objets et des êtres naturels appelés „produits finis” de celle-ci. Tout comme Mondrian qui a découvert une structure plastique fondamentale de l'univers, Klee a médité longtemps sur les hypostases multiples dans lesquelles se manifestent les deux éléments essentiels: le point et la ligne. Le premier d'entre eux marque le passage du chaos à cosmos, et Klee pendule entre les références bibliques et les références philosophiques. Le point est en même temps un réservoir d'énergie, de croissance et de mouvement; une image plastique du Logos originaire, du mot qui crée et gouverne le cosmos; il est la forme initiale et la matrice de toutes les formes ultérieures. La ligne est retrouvée presque partout dans le monde visible comme un élément fondamental dans la construction et le soutien de celui-ci (v. Fig. 4 et 5): „Fleuve dans la lointaine. Pensée. Chemin. Attaque. Epée. Fourmillement. Flèche. Rayon. La lame du couteau. L'échafaudage. Le constructeur de n'importe quelle forme: le fil avec du

¹⁶ Fingersten, Peter - “The Six-Fold Law of Symbolism”, dans *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, Vol. 21, Nr. 4, Vara, 1963, pp. 391: “Piet Mondrian's severe, mathematically-perfect compositions transubstantiate line and right angles into pure spirit. Those who can understand the mysteries of his grid system can understand an aspect of the Absolute”.

¹⁷ Piet Mondrian cité dans Lipsey, Roger – “Modern Art”, in *The Encyclopedia of Religion* (coord. Mircea Eliade), Macmillan Publishing Company, New York, 1987, vol. 10, p. 5: „In depicting something perceptible to the senses, one makes a human statement because one knows the world through one's own self. If one does not represent things, a place remains for the Divine”.

¹⁸ Paul Klee cité dans Lipsey, Roger – *The Spiritual in Twentieth-Century Art*, Dover, New York, 2011, p. 178: “...[the artist] surveys with penetrating eye the finished forms which nature places before him. The deeper he looks, the more readily he can extend his view from the present to the past, the more deeply he is impressed by the one essential image of creation itself, as Genesis, rather than by the image of nature, the finished product”.

plomb”¹⁹. Mais le monde visible est identique au monde réel, qu’il obture ou le cache du regard du sujet. Ainsi, l’artiste doit-il en éloigner les manifestations dans le cadre du monde sensible et doit-il aspirer vers la représentation de la réalité dans ses formes essentielles, c’est à dire justement au processus d’abstraction: „Tout le transitoire est seulement une comparaison. Ce que nous voyons est un but, une possibilité, un moyen. La vérité se caché toujours en arrière-plan”²⁰. De l’autre côté, le point et la ligne correspondent sur un plan différent, à l’antagonisme ou au dualisme, qui rendent possible l’existence des concepts binaires (bas/haut, gauche/droite, bien/mal etc.) et implicitement du monde environnant.

Un autre cadre conceptuel fondamental pour la pensée de Klee est défini par les relations des formes naturelles, des formes finales et du processus de création ou la Genèse dans un sens idéal:

Tout d’abord, [l’artiste] n’attache une importance trop intense à la forme naturelle parce que, pour lui, ces formes finales ne sont pas la vraie substance du processus de création naturelle. Car il donne plus de valeur aux pouvoirs qui créent les formes qu’aux formes finales mêmes. [...] Plus il regarde en profondeur, plus il peut élargir son point de vue du présent au passé, plus il est impressionné par une image essentielle de la création elle-même, comme la Genèse, plutôt que par l’image de la nature du produit fini²¹.

Donc pour Klee, la Genèse n’est pas un phénomène qui tient seulement du passé, un phénomène achevé et irréversible, mais elle est un processus en plein déroulement, qui en représente un stage intermédiaire et, par la suite, les formes qui nous entourent ne peuvent être jamais de formes finales. L’artiste doit faire abstraction de formes retrouvées dans le cadre du monde sensible et il doit aspirer vers la représentation des forces qui soutiennent et modèlent la réalité seconde qui change: „Il se dit, en pensant à la vie autour de lui: ce monde à un moment donné était différent et, à l’avenir, il se penchera d’autant plus différent. Puis, s’envolant à l’infini, il réfléchit: il est très probable que, sur d’autres étoiles, la création ait produit un résultat complètement différent”²². De l’autre côté, tout comme dans le cas de Klee, mais en partant sur une voie distincte, Kandinsky et Mondrian arrivent à des résultats similaires, dont la réalisation fondamentale consiste à voir la forme comme un obstacle: „Parce

¹⁹ Klee, Paul – *Notebooks. Volume 2, The Nature of Nature*, Lund Humphries, London, 1973, p. 301: „River in the remote. Thought. Pathway. Assault. Sword, stab, arrow, ray. A knife's edge. Scaffolding. And that joiner of all form, the plumbline”.

²⁰ Klee, Paul – *Diari 1898 – 1918*, Mondadori, Milano, 1990, pp. 380, par. 1081: „Tutto il transitorio è solo un confronto. Ciò che vediamo è un proponimento, una possibilità, un mezzo. La verità reale si cela ancora nel fondo”.

²¹ Klee, Paul – *On Modern Art (1924)*, dans Harrison, Charles; Wood, Paul (ed.) – *Art in Theory 1900-1990. An Anthology of Changing Ideas*, Blackwell Publishers, Oxford, 1992, p. 348.

²² Idem, p. 348.

que l'obstacle de la forme a été détruit, le nouvel art s'affirme comme plasticité pure"²³.

Contrairement à ces deux acceptions sur l'art abstrait de Woringer, l'argumentation d'un artiste visionnaire et originel, de l'envergure de Paul Klee, s'inscrit sur d'autres plans de la compréhension de l'intentionnalité sur laquelle se construit la création artistique. Il a comme point de départ le rapport dialectique entre le monde visible en pleine dégradation pendant les années de la Première Guerre Mondiale (pendant laquelle ses amis artistes, August Macke et Franz Marc, sont morts sur le front), et le monde pur de l'abstraction : „On quitte la terre d'ici pour agir sur les terres d'ailleurs, où, au moins, l'existence intacte est possible. Abstraction. Le romantisme froid de ce style sans pathos n'a plus jamais été rencontré. Plus le monde devient un lieu affreux (comme aujourd'hui), plus l'art devient plus abstrait, tandis qu'un monde heureux produit un art acheminé vers le monde d'ici et de maintenant"²⁴. Klee parle aussi de „la formation du type cristallin" dans les couches subtiles de son psychique, et, en faisant une référence à l'art de Kubin, il affirme que celui-ci „a ressenti la nostalgie du cristallin, mais il n'a pas pu s'arracher de la boue visqueuse du monde des apparences" et il a conçu, dans son art, „le monde comme poison"²⁵. Il s'agit



Fig. 1. Vasily Kandinsky – *Points fixes*, 1942

²³ Idem, p. 288.

²⁴ Klee, Paul - *Diari 1898 – 1918*, Mondadori, Milano, 1990, pp. 316-318, par. 951: „Si abbandona questa zona e in compenso si va in una di là, dove ogni anelito può essere soddisfatto. Astrazione. Il freddo romanticismo di questo stile senza *pathos* è inaudito. Quanto più è spaventoso questo mondo, come oggi, tanto più astratta è l'arte, mentre un mondo felice produce un'arte dell'al di qua”.

²⁵ idem, p. 320, par. 958: „Kubin fuggì questo mondo perché fisicamente non ce la faceva più. Rimase bloccato a mezza strada, bramò di diventare adamantino, ma non riuscì a liberarsi dalla melma tenace della realtà fenomenica. La sua arte concepisce un mondo avvelenato, un mondo in rovina”.

donc de la nostalgie d'un monde minéral, gouverné par des principes géométriques abstraits, indifférents aux cycles agrégation-désagrégation qui déterminent le monde des apparences. C'est une aspiration vers la stabilité, mais aussi vers la totalité, une image invoquée par Klee lorsqu'il compare son art à celui de Franz Marc: „Plus humain, il aime avec plus de chaleur que moi-d'une manière plus pesante. Il rejoint les animaux comme s'ils étaient des humains. Il les dresse à son niveau. Il ne commence pas par se dissoudre en totalité, comme en faisant partie de lui, pour qu'après il puisse

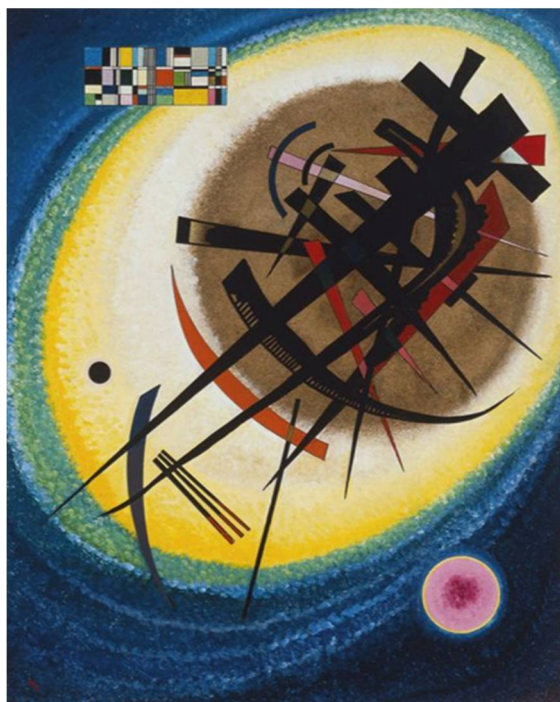


Fig. 2. Vasili Kandinsky – *Dans l'ovale lumineux* (*In the bright oval*), 1925

se concevoir, pas seulement au même niveau avec les animaux, mais aussi avec les pierres et les plantes. Chez Marc, on trouve sur le premier plan l'idée du terrestre en défaveur du cosmos"²⁶. L'idée du cosmos devient ainsi la matrice de la totalité et dans ce cadre le terrestre ne représente qu'une hypostase particulière, fragmentaire et en éternel changement.

Quant aux préoccupations d'ordre spirituel et au style de Kandinsky, Lipsey observe l'influence de *l'Arbre kabbalistique de la vie* (dans *Points fixes*, v. Fig 1), du *Monocorde cosmique* imaginé par Robert Fludd (1618) (dans *In the bright oval* / *Dans l'ovale lumineux*, v. Fig 2) et probablement d'une certaine vision chamanique. Il a connu l'importance fondamentale du cercle pour son art, comme un symbole de l'ordre cosmique et du Paradis. On peut identifier, dans la création de Kandinsky, au moins deux périodes distinctes: la première, la période de la rédaction du volume-manifeste *Du spirituel dans l'art* (1912); la seconde période, où il a activé dans le mouvement

²⁶ idem, par. 1008: „Egli è più umano, ama con più calore, con maggiore intensità. Si china con umanità verso gli animali. Li innalza a sé. Non si dissolve nel tutto, come fosse parte di esso, per potersi considerare poi alla stessa stregua, non solo degli animali, ma anche delle piante e delle pietre. In Marc l'idea del terreno prevale su quella dell'universo”.

Bauhaus, en étant contraint de cacher le sens spirituel de sa peinture, car plupart des artistes du mouvement n'étaient pas sensibles à ces questions.

Tout comme Van Gogh et comme Mondrian, Kandinsky a cru être le témoin d'une révolution spirituelle vraiment contemporaine' un moment tournant dans l'histoire humaine:

À peine éveillé après les années du matérialisme, l'âme est intoxiquée par le désespoir, né à cause de l'incrédulité et de l'absence de sens. Le cauchemar du matérialisme qui a transformé la vie dans un jeu diabolique et absurde, n'est pas encore terminé, il obscurcit encore l'âme éveillée. Seulement une lumière clignotante et faible...²⁷

Le spiritualisme profond qui est fondamental pour l'art de Kandinsky est exprimé sans équivoque dans son ouvrage théorique de 1912, ouvrage quittant les voies traditionnelles de l'histoire de l'art et qui ignore le modèle de l'interprétation historiciste ou strictement esthétique. En échange, Kandinsky réintroduit quelques concepts fondamentaux pour la théorie de l'art (imitation, *Stimmung*, le contenu mystique de l'art, l'art comme partie de la vie spirituelle, le rapport esprit/matière, les niveaux de représentation du divin), mais il introduit aussi de nouveaux rapports (la relation musique-peinture, la ressemblance d'ordre intérieur entre l'art moderne (abstrait) et les arts des époques différentes). La création de son nouvel art est radicale, en accord avec l'action de la nécessité intérieure, la seule qui puisse guider l'artiste dans le labyrinthe des formes extérieures; pour Kandinsky la définition de l'expression artistique était „la tendance de représenter la nature pas comme un phénomène extérieur, mais de communiquer premièrement l'élément de l'impression intérieure”²⁸. Worringer avait noté, quelques années auparavant, la transformation survenue dans le cadre de l'esthétique moderne avec l'apparition du concept d'*Einfühlung*, dû à Theodor Lipps, „qui a fait le pas décisif en passant de l'objectivisme esthétique au subjectivisme esthétique, et qui ne part pas, dans ses recherches, de la forme de l'objet esthétique, mais de l'attitude du sujet qui contemple”²⁹. Mais, en partant de ce subjectivisme esthétique (le son intérieur, l'action de la nécessité intérieure), Kandinsky arrive à la négation de la réalité extérieure, vue plutôt comme obstacle hissé contre celui qui se trouve à la recherche de l'éternel objectif: „l'action de la nécessité intérieure et donc l'évolution de l'art est l'expression progressive de l'éternel objectif par sa temporalité subjective”³⁰. Ce n'est pas par hasard que deux de coryphées de l'abstractionnisme venaient de l'espace de la culture

²⁷ Wassily Kandinsky cité dans Lipsey, Roger - “Modern Art”, *ed. cit.*, p. 4: „Only just now awakening after years of materialism, our soul is infected with the despair born of unbelief, of lack of purpose and aim. The nightmare of materialism, which turned life into an evil, senseless game, is not yet passed; it still darkens the awakening soul. Only a feeble light glimmers...”

²⁸ Kandinsky, Vasili – *Spiritualul în artă*, Ed. Meridiane, București, 1994, p. 80.

²⁹ Worringer, *op. cit.*, p. 22.

³⁰ Kandinsky, *op.cit.*, p. 68.

russe, là où la tradition de l'art byzantin avait survécu dans la peinture de l'icône. Hans Belting a remarqué l'intérêt spécial de Malevitch pour l'art byzantin dans lequel il voyait une recherche de l'essentiel, au-delà des apparences du monde extérieur: „K. Malevitch, qui essayait de trouver l'idéal absolu, telle une nouvelle icône, en évitant le détour par la figuration, voyait dans l'icône russe l'alternative à la tradition artistique de l'Occident: selon ses propres termes, elle était pour lui une source d'une vérité plus haute que celle de la nature”³¹. D'une façon similaire, la tradition de l'icône byzantine essaye de faire abstraction d'hypostases du Multiple pour représenter l'Un avec toutes ses qualités: l'immutabilité, l'uniformité, l'invariabilité, la simplicité³². Certes, au niveau de la représentation et des techniques, il y a de différences notables entre l'art byzantin et l'abstractionnisme moderne, mais par le prisme de l'instinct d'abstraction et la volonté d'art, telles qu'elles sont interprétées par Worringer, le rapprochement peut être légitime. À l'attente de „rendre visible l'invisible”, à l'aide de certaines procédures, l'art byzantin a essayé de limiter les points de contact entre le monde matériel et le monde suprasensible: „On fit donc disparaître le volume, l'espace, le poids, la variété habituelle des mouvements, des formes, des couleurs. «Dématérialisée» de cette sorte, la figuration semblait plus conforme à une évocation de l'Intelligible”³³.

Quels sont donc les rapports entre l'abstractionnisme moderne et l'art sacré? Si le dernier, spécialement celui chrétien, en imposant les thèmes, les modalités de représentation, empêche la naissance d'une subjectivité moderne, pourquoi ce sont les esprits avant-gardistes comme Klee, Kandinsky, Mondrian, retournent vers le plan spirituel? Le philosophe Michel Henry, dans son tome dédié à Kandinsky ramène en actualité l'hypothèse que l'art sacré a comme but principal justement la représentation de l'invisible: „À son début, tout art est sacré, son souci exclusif c'est le surnaturel. Cela veut dire justement qu'il se préoccupe de la vie – non pas du visible mais de l'invisible”³⁴.

Cette approche est en accord avec la périodisation hégélienne de l'art en fonction de l'évolution du rapport d'adéquation entre la forme et le contenu de l'œuvre d'art. La première période associée à la religion de la nature c'est la période de l'art symbolique, où il existe une séparation entre le contenu spirituel et la forme sensible. L'adéquation entre les deux est réalisée dans l'art classique, associé au panthéisme de la Grèce antique et grâce à la sculpture: „Le point central de l'art est constitué par l'union - comme totalité libre, bien caillé en soi - du contenu avec la forme ou la figure qui lui est absolument adéquate. Cette réalité qui coïncide avec le concept du beau et vers lequel aspirait en vain la forme symbolique de l'art apparaît seulement dans l'art

³¹ Belting, Hans – *Image et culte. Une histoire de l'image avant l'époque de l'art*, Les Éditions du Cerf, Paris, 1998, p. 34.

³² Grabar, André – *Les origines de l'esthétique médiévale*, Macula, Paris, 1992, p. 27.

³³ Idem, p. 21.

³⁴ Henry, Michel – *Voir l'invisible. Sur Kandinsky*, Ed. François Bourin, Paris, 1988, p. 217.

classique”³⁵. Finalement, la dernière période est celle de l’art romantique, vue comme antithèse de l’art classique et interprété à travers une série d’oppositions: extérieur/intérieur, corporalité/spiritualité. La tendance de l’art romantique s’inscrit dans l’intériorité et dans la spiritualité:

La peinture représente l’intérieur sous la forme des objets extérieurs; mais son fond propre est la subjectivité sensible. [...] ce qu’y représente le noyau de la représentation, ce ne sont pas ces objets en eux-mêmes, c’est la vitalité et l’animation de la conception et de l’exécution personnelle, c’est l’âme de l’artiste qui se reflète dans son œuvre et qui offre non pas une simple reproduction des objets extérieurs, mais soi-même et sa pensée intime³⁶.

Mais Hegel avait considéré que cette étape de l’art romantique (ou chrétien) avait été résolue une fois pour toutes: „En général, dans le développement de chaque peuple, il arrive un moment où l’art ne suffit plus. Après la période de l’art chrétien, si puissamment favorisé par l’Église, vient la Réforme, qui enlève à la représentation religieuse l’image sensible pour ramener la pensée à la méditation intérieure”³⁷.

En revenant à Michel Henry, l’art sacré est l’expression d’une subjectivité pathétique, construite par la précipitation de la vie en notre Moi, hors de sphères de la volonté et de l’action: „Depuis le christianisme [...] le télos grec de la figuration a subi une mutation importante: ce qui est représenté, ce n’est plus le monde justement, c’est explicitement, délibérément, inlassablement, la vie – la vie invisible”³⁸. (v. Fig. 11) Un sentiment est invisible et surtout les sentiments de nature religieuse (la force, la joie, l’amour, le pardon, la purification, le don), et l’art ne peut tout représenter que par suggestion ou symbolisation. Si l’on accepte la thèse que l’art est un domaine de l’imaginaire, alors entre les tendances d’abstraction de l’art sacré et de l’abstractionnisme purement moderniste, on peut établir une connexion directe, un éloignement progressif de formes du monde sensible. D’autres auteurs ont nié l’existence de cette liaison, en insistant sur le caractère éminemment moderne de l’abstractionnisme: „À la différence du processus d’abstraction de la nature ou des objets (une tendance récurrente dans de nombreuses cultures et périodes qui remonte aussi loin que la peinture rupestre paléolithique), l’art abstrait comme une esthétique consciente basée sur des

³⁵Hegel, G. W. F. – *Prelegeri de estetică*, vol. I, Ed. Academiei, București, 1966, p. 446, cité après Hegel, G.W.F. – *Despre artă și poezie*, vol. I, Minerva, București, 1979, p. 204.

³⁶ Idem, pp. 65-66: „Pictura înfățișează intuiției noastre interiorul în forma obiectivității exterioare, dar conținutul ei propriu pe care îl exprimă este subiectivitatea adecvată. [...] Dar ceea ce formează miezul conținutului unor astfel de opere de artă nu sunt înseși aceste obiecte, ci viața și sufletul concepției subiective și al executării, sentimentele artistice oglindite în opera sa, care nu este o simplă copie a unor obiecte exterioare, ci ni-l arată pe el însuși, interiorul lui.”

³⁷ Hegel, G. W. F. – *Esthétique*, tome premier, Librairie Germer-Baillière, Paris, 1875, p. 40.

³⁸ Idem, p. 219.

hypothèses d'autosuffisance est un phénomène moderne complet”³⁹. Il est vrai que l'abstractionnisme moderne n'a plus une finalité morale ou religieuse au milieu des masses, que son spiritualisme reste incompréhensible pour celles-ci, que dans la modernité on ne peut plus parler d'un culte des images comme dans l'art chrétien. Mais, si l'on se rapporte au „concept d'abstraction” théorisé par Worringer où la „volonté d'art” comme impulse originaire de la création artistique de type historiciste pré-moderne-moderne devient artificielle.



Fig. 3. Vasili Kandinsky – *Composition VII*, 1913

Quoi d'autre c'est l'art chrétien byzantin et médiéval que de la morale intériorisée dans un culte des images? En mettant l'accent sur l'expérience intérieure du sujet qui regarde, cet art s'éloigne de la reproduction de la réalité extérieure. Même s'il semble un art figuratif, la manière de représentation conduit à l'éloignement de la réalité extérieure, du monde matériel des apparences et met celui qui regarde sur la voie de l'univers essentiel et inébranlable de la morale chrétienne: de la sorte, les personnages sont représentés toujours au premier plan, il n'y a pas de profondeur, de perspective, de volume, de relations entre les personnages et l'espace; dans l'art byzantin, les proportions naturelles des objets, dans une vision de perspective, sont inversées volontairement de sorte que le côté le plus éloigné d'une table est représenté d'une manière plus visible que celui situé au premier plan. Les visages des personnages bibliques, des saints ou martyres sont esquissés d'une

³⁹ "Abstract Art", in Turner, Jane (ed.) - *The Dictionary of Art*, Macmillan Publishers, New York, 1996, vol. I, p. 73.

manière schématique et les détails physiologiques ou la représentation réaliste sont négligés en faveur d'une vision plus profonde, apte de sonder au-delà de la surface du monde matériel vers ce qu'on peut montrer par l'intermédiaire du symbole (v. Fig 10).

Pour exprimer ces considérations, même s'il est un esprit moderne, Kandinsky utilise un langage mystique afin de développer ses intuitions et ses idées concernant la nature, les fonctions et les buts de l'art abstrait. Alain Besançon a affirmé que „la suppression de l'objet dans la peinture” signifie le triomphe de la vie intérieure sur la réalité extérieure, tout comme la morale intériorisée des évangiles conduit à la délivrance du sujet par rapport au conditionnement et à la violence du monde matériel. De ce point de vue, l'artiste de l'abstrait réalise une sorte d'ascèse spirituelle, un isolement face au monde matériel, en élaborant un être intérieur dont la liberté consiste dans l'acte de la création artistique. Par la suite, sans ascèse, sans apprivoiser les instincts et les pulsions, on ne peut parler que d'une délivrance illusoire. Kandinsky utilise une image spéciale pour exprimer cet état: Tout ce qui était réduit aux objets, c'était comme „un scarabée que l'on tient par le dos” et qui agite désespérément ses pattes. „Combien de fois, pourtant, n'ai-je pas senti cette main dans mon dos, et une autre encore qui se posait sur mes yeux et me plongeait dans la nuit noire tandis que le soleil brillait!”⁴⁰. Une ascèse aussi rigoureuse a été pratiquée par Mondrian, le fils d'un pasteur calviniste, lui-même en aspirant de devenir prêtre un jour: „Considérée du point de vue de Calvin, la théosophie est un pélagianisme extrême, puisque le sujet fait lui-même son salut par l'ascèse, par la méditation, par la connaissance illuminative, et, d'autre part, elle remplit l'abîme insondable qui sépare Dieu de l'âme humaine en posant un cosmos plein de divin, continuum évolutif de matière et d'esprit où la matière se spiritualise de plus en plus jusqu'à devenir «vie autonome de l'esprit conscient de lui-même»”⁴¹.

Il est bien vrai que Kandinsky, tout comme Mondrian, a découvert cette dimension supra-matérielle par l'intermédiaire des écrits d' Helena Blavatsky, Rudolf Steiner, Annie Besant, en ayant la confirmation de leurs visions quasi-extatiques (Kandinsky a parlé dans ses écrits de ses expériences synesthésiques et la révélation de la forme naturelle comme impasse sur la voie de l'amplification des visions intérieures). Mais, selon l'observation de Clément Greenberg sur Klee, un fait valable dans le cas de Kandinsky et Mondrian aussi, ils mènent plus loin les innovations dues au cubisme (la discipline plastique, l'abandon de la perspective): „La libérant de la représentation naturaliste, ils ont rendu disponible tout l'ensemble du répertoire de signes de l'humanité: idéogrammes, hiéroglyphes, dessins

⁴⁰ Kandinsky, Wassily – *Regards sur le passé et autres textes*, 1912-1922, Hermann, Paris, 1974, p. 124.

⁴¹ Piet Mondrian – *De Stijl*, n°1, 1917-1918.

d'enfants, motifs décoratifs, des diagrammes, des cartes, etc”⁴². Mais Greenberg commet l'erreur de limiter l'usage de ces signes seulement au registre naturaliste, en passant sous silence la fonction profondément symbolique de la majorité des cultures archaïques. Klee garde encore les traces d'un langage symbolique pré-linguistique, pendant que Kandinsky et Mondrian rompent le lien avec tout ce qui peut être signe graphique ou symbole. Pour Mondrian, la découverte du cubisme, dans le Paris de 1911, est visible dans la série *Arbres* (v. Fig. 6), où, selon Alain Besançon, „le thème est pris comme un moyen de diviser l'espace de la toile, de sorte que la structure rythmique devienne vite le véritable «sujet»”⁴³.

Alain Besançon a identifié dans le filigrane de l'œuvre de Kandinsky une esthétique apophasique par laquelle l'artiste essaye de dessiner l'Esprit à travers la négation, l'éloignement de contenu, attribut, apparence. Les peintures de Kandinsky ont un fonds religieux (voir la *Composition VII*, 1913) (v. Fig.3), qui évoque des thèmes religieux: Le Jugement Dernier, La Résurrection du Christ, Le Déluge, Le Jardin du Paradis. En ce qui concerne la complexité de la peinture, on doit ajouter qu'elle est le résultat de plus de trente esquisses, aquarelles et peintures à l'huile réalisées en tant qu'étapes annonciatrices. Dans l'œuvre *Accent en rose* (1926), selon l'observation de Roger Lipsey⁴⁴, on peut reconnaître l'influence de la cosmologie de Plotin, basée sur la descente du Multiple provenant de l'Un, par une série de dégradations successives. La pensée de Plotin a eu aussi une influence profonde sur les modalités de représentation spécifiques de l'art sacré byzantin, ayant sa recommandation de ne pas représenter d'ombres et de profondeurs (v. Fig. 12):

La profondeur (de l'être ou de la chose), c'est la matière, et c'est pourquoi la matière est ténébreuse. La lumière qui l'éclaire est la forme: l'intelligence voit la forme. Voyant la forme dans un être, elle juge que la profondeur de cet être est une obscurité située sous la lumière; de même, l'œil lumineux, portant son regard sur la lumière ou les couleurs, qui sont des espèces de lumières, discernent l'existence du fond obscur et matériel caché sous la surface colorée⁴⁵.

Un fait frappant, dans l'abstractionnisme moderne il n'y a ni perspective, ni ombre; mais la différence majeure de l'esthétique plotinienne de l'Antiquité tardive consiste dans la disparition de toute forme qui pourrait définir une chose ou un être. Un géométrisme pur de nature géologique ou

⁴² Greenberg, Clement – „Saggio su Klee”, dans Fontana, Claudio (ed.) – *Paul Klee. Preistoria del visibile*, Silvana Editoriale, Milano, 1996, p. 14.

⁴³ Besançon, Alain - *L'image interdite. Une histoire intellectuelle de l'iconoclasme*, Gallimard, Paris, 2000.

⁴⁴ Lipsey, op.cit., p. 212.

⁴⁵ Ennéade, II, 4, 5 apud Grabar, André – *Les origines de l'esthétique médiévale*, Macula, Paris, 1992, p. 36.

macrocosmique prend la place à la réalité extérieure reproduite à l'échelle de l'œil humain. Dans l'absence de toute forme finie ou animée vers une finalité précise, l'attention de l'artiste est concentrée sur les formes *in potentia*, plutôt que *in actu*, et aussi les relations établies entre eux (point, ligne, plan, cercle, triangle, rectangle etc.). Tout est amplifié par les rapports chromatiques, devenant harmonie ou dissonance dans un spectacle grandiose, en évitant de détourner vers l'univers des formes dépourvues de résonance intérieure.

Conclusions

Les trois grands noms de l'abstractionnisme occupent une place à part dans le cadre des avant-gardes historiques en s'inscrivant dans la dialectique de l'ancien et du nouveau ; leurs techniques ont un caractère innovateur, elles (les techniques) et eux, les artistes respectent les principes de l'autonomie de l'art, de l'individualisation de l'artiste, de la production d'un nouveau discours sur son propre art. Mais, en même temps, ils sont préoccupés par des doctrines spiritualistes théosophiques, qui ont leur origine dans le platonisme ou dans les doctrines hindoues. Leur art peut être interprété comme rupture et nouveauté, capable de surprendre, cependant, certaines tensions existantes dans les sociétés entre-deux-guerres (une Europe dévastée par la guerre, des tensions économiques et sociales, mais aussi l'ascension de la technique, l'aliénation etc.). Il reste discutable s'ils sont considérés ou non appartenir à un processus historique dans l'évolution de l'art, un processus qui suppose l'extinction même de l'élément spirituel en faveur de l'élément matériel ou formel.

Ce travail a été réalisé au cours du stage près de L'Institut Roumain de Culture et de la Recherche Humaniste à Venise, obtenu par le soutien de l'État roumain à travers le programme national de bourses "Nicolae Iorga".



Fig. 4. Paul Klee – *Route Principale et routes secondaires*, 1929



Fig. 5. Paul Klee – *Ad Parnassum*, 1932

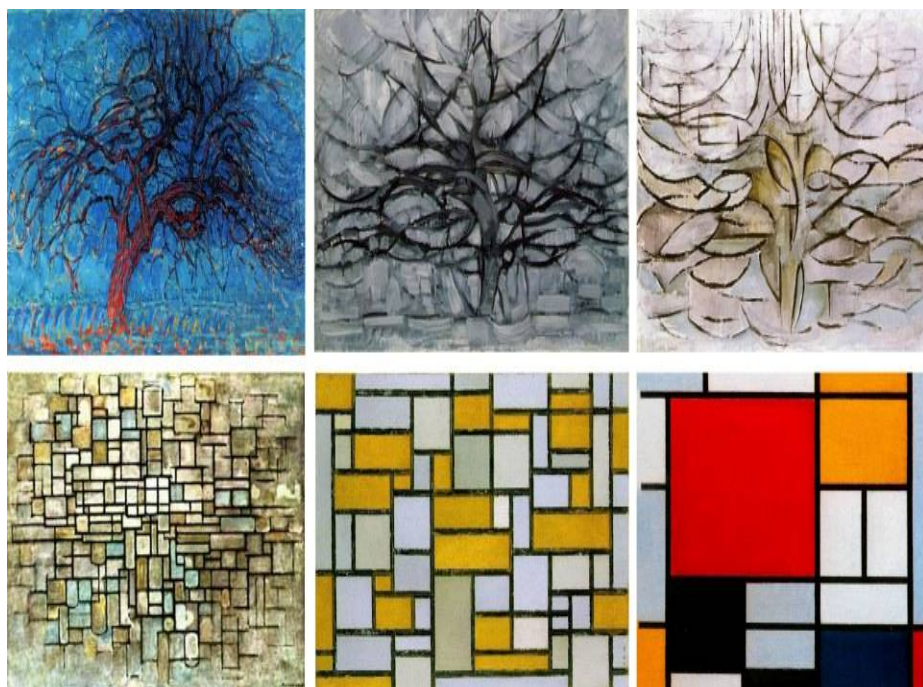


Fig. 6. Piet Mondrian – (de gauche a droite, en haut) *Arbre rouge*, 1909; *Arbre gris*, 1910; *Pomme en fleur*, 1912; (en bas) *Composition no II*, 1913; *Composition en gris et marron clair*, 1918; *Composition*, 1922.



Fig. 7. Mosaique de pavement, Gordion, Turquie, VIII^e siècle av. J.C.

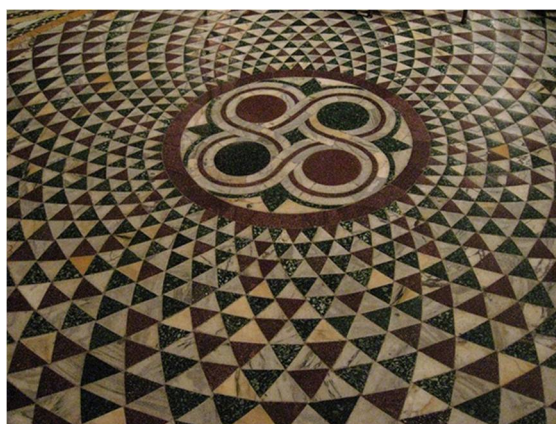


Fig. 8. Mosaique de pavement, Basilique San Marco, Venise, XII^e siècle

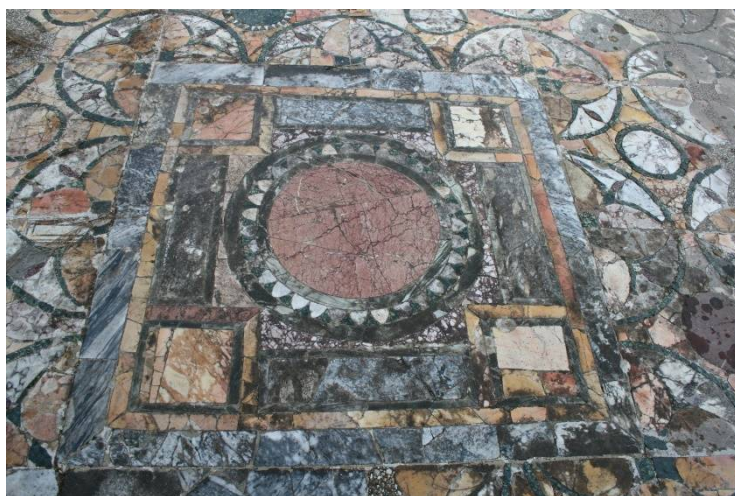


Fig. 9. Mosaïque de pavement, Ostia, IV^e siècle

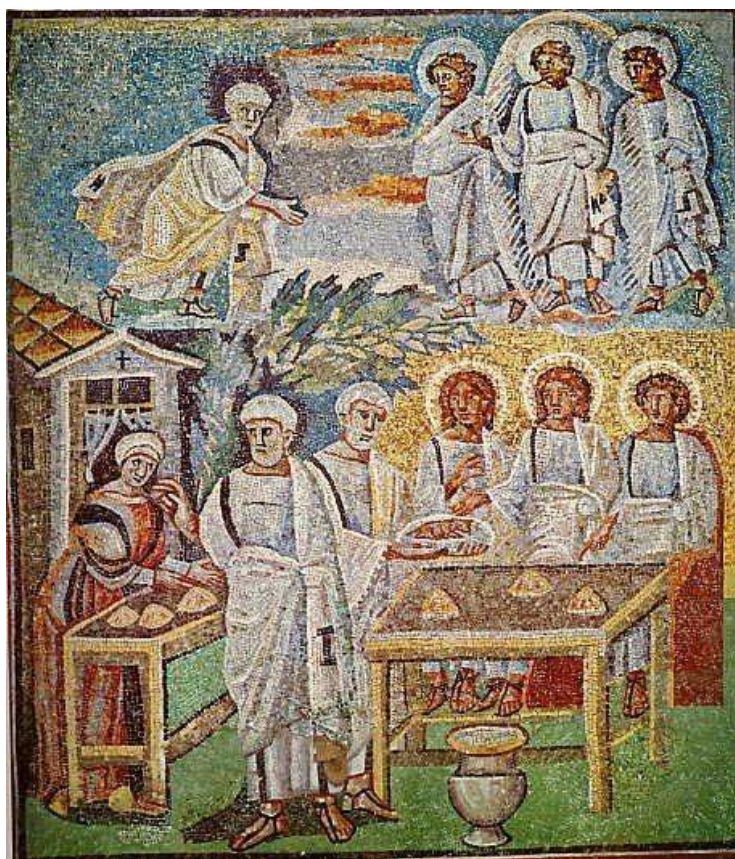


Fig. 10. *Théophanie à Abraham*, mosaïque, Rome, Sainte-Marie-Majeure, V^e siècle



Fig. 11. Icône mariale de S. Maria Antiqua, VII^e siècle,
S. Francesca Romana, Rome

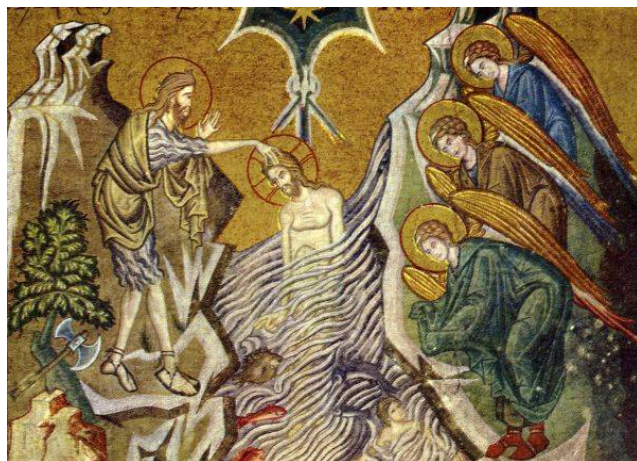


Fig. 12. *Le baptême de Jesus*, mosaïque du XIV^e siècle,
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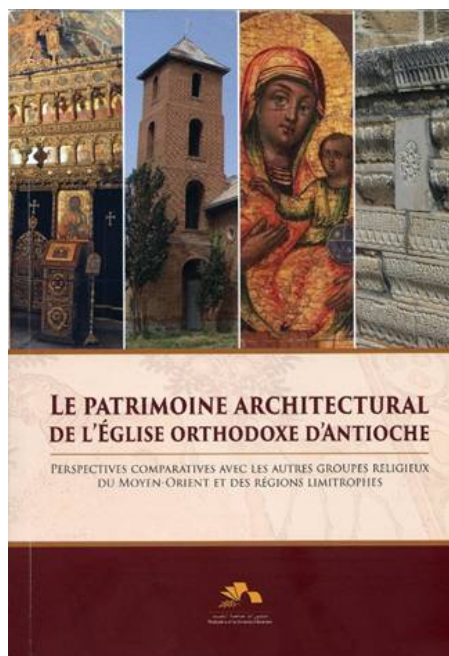
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BOOK REVIEWS

Le patrimoine architectural de l'Eglise Orthodoxe d'Antioche / The Architectural Heritage of the Orthodox Church of Antiochia

Tereza Sinigalia

Le patrimoine architectural de l'Eglise Orthodoxe d'Antioche: Perspectives comparatives avec les autres groupes religieux du Moyen-Orient et des régions limitrophes, sous la direction de May Davie, Université de Balamand, Liban, 2015, 354 pages, illustrations hors texte /



The Architectural Heritage of the Orthodox Church of Antiochia: Comparative Perspectives with the Other Religious Groups of Middle East and Border Regions, by May Davie, University of Balamand, Liban, 2015, 205 pages

Ce volume de contributions a eu comme point de départ l'initiative d'une réunion scientifique de savants de différentes parties du monde, en majorité du Moyen- Orient, qui devait se tenir à Beirut, à l'Université de Balamand de l'Académie Libanaise de l'Art. C'est la situation politique de la région qui a empêché le projet initial d'être accompli.

Le volume réunit, sous la direction de Madame May Davie – qui signe aussi *l'Introduction générale* – 16 articles regroupés dans trois sections : I. *Patrimoine matériel et patrimoine représenté* ; II. *Culturelles métissées versus mentalités* ; III. *Du vue au voyant, la sociabilité du regard*.

Nous nous trouvons dans un embarras du choix majeur face à l'abondance de sujets et d'informations issus de ce volume, tellement riches et, à proprement parler, nouveaux pour les lecteurs en dehors de l'aire culturelle et artistique envisagée dans ces recherches.

C'est la raison pour laquelle j'ai choisi de commenter brièvement seulement 5 articles, en donnant pour le reste seulement les noms des auteurs et le titre de leurs contributions.

Les problèmes communs posés par ces recherches sont synthétisés dès la *Préface* de Georges N. Nahas et l'*Introduction* signée par May Davie, qui a essayé de donner de très brefs résumés – de quelques lignes seulement – pour chaque article.

L'ouverture de ce florilège est due à May Davie avec sa contribution intitulée « Paraître vaut mieux qu'être. Les marqueurs identitaires des orthodoxes du Patriarcat d'Antioche », qui nous fait part d'une démarche consistant à inventorier « les valeurs patrimoniales du Patriarcat Orthodoxe d'Antioche et de considérer les moyens adéquats pour les préserver » (p. 17). L'élément-clé de cette discussion porte sur l'idée de patrimoine identitaire national. Où peuvent-ils se retrouver vis-à-vis de leur patrimoine matériel sacré, les chrétiens de ce Patriarcat, dans les petites églises médiévales, chapelles votives, oratoires en plein air, qui ont traversé les siècles, ou plutôt dans les nouvelles églises de style néo-byzantin ou grec moderne qu'ils préfèrent aujourd'hui ?

L'inventaire a été réalisé par l'équipe ARPOA (Architecture Religieuse du Patriarcat Orthodoxe d'Antioche) de l'Université de Balamand, en utilisant un Système d'Information Géographique (SIG) afin de corroborer les données recueillies sur le terrain, la localisation des édifices, mais aussi, par l'intermédiaire d'un programme spécial, d'obtenir des informations concernant les édifices eux-mêmes avec leurs caractéristiques constructives, stylistiques et ses relations avec les contextes historique et culturel où ils ont fait leur apparition et se sont développés.

Un tableau (p. 19) et 10 planches en couleurs dans les *Annexes* synthétisent les résultats de la recherche, en classifiant les églises selon 3 critères : source d'inspiration ; type d'église, période de construction ; chaque série/planche est illustrée par les exemples retrouvés sur le terrain, avec des informations générales concernant la datation, type de bâtiment (plan, élévation, voûtes ou plafonds, matériaux de construction, décoration), sources d'inspiration retrouvées dans le style.

L'auteur constate avec regret que la protection des constructions anciennes au Liban et en Syrie¹ est de date relativement récente et est redevable plutôt aux initiatives privées, tandis que l'Etat ne s'implique que rarement et surtout lorsqu'il y a des signaux venus de l'extérieur.

La conclusion de l'article est pessimiste, parce que l'auteur constate la disparition d'une préoccupation identitaire dans l'architecture orthodoxe des églises nouvelles, postmodernes (d'après 1990) du Patriarcat en faveur d'un

¹ Bien sûr, les constatations sont antérieures aux désastreuses destructions survenues pendant la guerre actuelle en Syrie.

style soi-disant « Byzantin », ce qui « relève d'une solution de facilité sémiotique » et qui marque « une manière de perdre son âme » (p. 24).

La contribution de Lina Fakhoury Soued, de l'Université de Balamand - « *Antoine Lammens, son héritage au service du patrimoine iconographique du Proche-Orient* » - porte sur deux aspects intimement liés à la personnalité d'un homme providentiel : le père belge ayant consacré de longues années de sa vie aux icônes byzantines et post-byzantines, qui a créé un système insolite de classification de la documentation les concernant, proche des bases de données modernes, qui a été aussi le créateur d'un Atelier de restauration d'icônes à l'Université Balamand de Liban, auquel il a légué son héritage : icônes, publications, documentation, notices sur les pièces étudiées et même collectionnées par lui, le réseau d'informations scientifiques entrecroisées qu'il l'avait créé afin d'arriver à une meilleure connaissance de ce patrimoine. Malheureusement, après sa mort, en 2002, le don spirituel fait à ses élèves afin de continuer son œuvre et son espoir que cet héritage sera la base d'un futur développement ont été tournés en dérision : L'Atelier ne fonctionne plus, le groupe d'élèves s'est dissipé, la moitié des collections et de sa riche documentation a disparu.

L'auteur de l'article propose de nouvelles façons de valoriser cet héritage dévasté : l'introduction dans une base de données informatisée de tout ce qui est resté, le développement de la recherche comparative entre les œuvres d'art religieux de l'Orient et de l'Occident à l'aube de la Renaissance en Italie, déjà envisagé par le père Lammens (Cimabue, Duccio, Berlingheri etc.), la réorganisation de l'Atelier de restauration d'icônes, démarche absolument nécessaire, vu l'état précaire de conservation de ce patrimoine.

L'article suivant que j'ai choisi est dû à Hee Sook Lee-Niinioja de l'Université Oxford Brookes. Le titre est formulé d'une manière qui, à mon avis, ne résume/reflète pas le contenu : « *The Great Mosque of Cordoba as Al-Andalus Islamic-Christian culture, inspired by the Greek Orthodox tradition* ». Ce n'était pas le titre qui a attiré mon attention, mais une des images choisies pour la couverture du livre : un détail de l'iconostase de l'église du monastère Stavropoleos de Bucarest (Roumanie). La suite des idées a un parcours curieux, dont la clef est difficile à trouver, parce que l'auteure passe de l'une à l'autre, sans expliquer ou au moins avertir sur une rupture ou un changement dans la direction de l'analyse. On débute avec quelques informations d'ordre historique concernant la construction de la Grande Mosquée de Cordoba en El-Andalous (VIII^e-X^e siècles), transformée en cathédrale romaine-catholique dédiée à la Vierge après la conquête de la ville par les chrétiens en 1236. Au commencement de XVI^e siècle, l'intérieur de l'ancienne mosquée a reçu un aspect ornemental entièrement catholique.

Sans autre avertissement, on passe au thème de l'*iconostase* dans une église orthodoxe et au rôle liturgique qui lui a été concédé par son emplacement entre le sanctuaire, où se trouve la *table de l'autel*, et l'espace réservé à la

communauté ; immédiatement on parle du *mihrab*, niche décorée aménagée dans l'épaisseur du mur orienté vers Mecque, d'une mosquée, qui est non sacré par lui-même, mais a seulement le rôle d'indiquer la direction pour la prière.

On pourrait déduire avec un peu d'imagination que le paragraphe et le sous-chapitre suivants sont dédiés à la décoration de ces deux types de lieux de culte, qui ont en commun l'ornement inspiré par la feuille d'acanthé et la feuille de vigne, cette dernière étant utilisée dans les lieux de culte chrétiens pour son association avec le Vin transformé dans le Sang de Jésus pendant la Liturgie eucharistique, tandis que, dans l'Islam, les deux variantes d'ornements, de souche grecque et romaine, deviennent les composantes d'un type nouveau, l'arabesque.

De nouveau, on revient sur l'iconostase, en crayonnant un abrégé historique et une description générale du type commun aujourd'hui, pour arriver, dans le final de ce sous-chapitre, à l'iconostase de l'église du monastère Stavropoleos de Bucarest. C'est n'est pas clair pourquoi l'auteure a choisi cet exemple, sur lequel elle donne aussi quelques informations incorrectes : au commencement, le monastère a accueilli des moines et non des nonnes. Le nom de Stavropoleos n'est pas roumain, mais, par sa désinence, il représente la forme courante pour la désignation des moines grecs qui venaient à la tête des monastères dits « dédiés » de Valachie et de Moldavie, provenant d'un grand Lieu Saint (Mont Athos, Jérusalem, Sinäi), d'un évêché jadis fonctionnel, mais dans les XVIII^e – XIX^e siècles se trouvant *in partibus*, ou l'higoumène d'un monastère grec qui a eu des droits épiscopaux. Le fondateur du monastère bucarestois, Ioanichios de Pogoniana (Epire), a reçu le rang de métropolite de Stavropole, après la construction de sa première église de Bucarest, en 1724, élargie en 1730. D'ici vient le nom de la sainte demeure.

Un retour à Cordoba et à son décoration, dans les deux phases religieuses de son existence, nous donne la sensation d'un cheminement désordonné. La présence, sur la même page, de l'ancien mihrab de la mosquée et du grand retable Renaissance espagnole placé au-dessus de le maître-autel de la cathédrale catholique, qui pour les non-initiés et dans le contexte de la discussion, pourrait être confondu à une iconostase (figures 4a, b/p. 412) exigeaient des explications claires. Avec cet article – portant sur plusieurs observations et questions valables, nous sommes devant une sorte d'aller-retour compliqué qui pourrait générer des confusions, en dépit du fait que la conclusion est correcte : « *La Grande Mosquée de Cordoba – construite par les musulmans et passée aux chrétiens – garde encore son caractère islamique dans sa singularité architectonique, mais avec un parfume chrétien. Ce fait peut créer ce sort de communauté dans l'adoration de lieux sacrés entre les religions différentes, en conservant un héritage*

commun, qui pourrait conduire à une communication interculturelle » (p. 180).

On change le palier de discussion avec la contribution de Keterina Seraïdari, du Centre d'Anthropologie Sociale de Toulouse, qui sort de la zone d'autorité du Patriarcat Orthodoxe d'Antioche proprement-dit, mais reste dans le même espace géographique et religieux est-méditerranéen et surtout dans la quête d'arguments identitaires dans le patrimoine architectural et artistique. L'auteur part d'un moment crucial pour le Grecs (1821-1827), celui du début de la définition de leur identité qui a à la base leur « *double héritage, celui de la Grèce antique et celui du christianisme orthodoxe* » (p. 276). Pour lui, « *la question du patrimoine religieux se pose en termes nationaux : il faut sauvegarder ce qui fait la spécificité nationale* » (p. 276). Ces idées mettent en question le patrimoine religieux des minoritaires (catholiques, juifs, musulmans) en ce qui concerne sa préservation, vu le financement de la protection, en partant d'une idéologie qui le considère en dehors de ce qu'on pourrait définir comme « national ». D'ici part la démarche de l'auteur, qui tente une hiérarchisation du patrimoine religieux, prenant comme exemple la situation de l'île de Tinos, qu'elle avait étudiée, île habitée depuis la colonisation latine après la quatrième croisade, de 1204, et par une communauté de catholiques qui revendique une origine grecque. Du point de vue patrimoine, il s'agit de deux monastères de jésuites, dont l'un, celui d'Exombourgo, a été bâti sur les ruines de l'ancien château vénitien, à son tour utilisant ceux d'une fortification plus ancienne, qui superposaient des couches de cultures préhistoriques, antiques et byzantines. Autour d'elle, on a organisé un lieu de commémoration des morts pour la patrie entre 1912 et 1950, qui sont aussi le centre de rayonnement du plus grand pèlerinage catholique des Cyclades.

Le cinquième article que j'ai choisi porte sur une question d'un intérêt plus général dans le monde: le patrimoine immatériel des différentes communautés religieuses existantes aujourd'hui à Beyrouth. Madame Christiane Sfeir a intitulé sa contribution *Religion et narrations. Un patrimoine religieux en construction à Beyrouth*. Le titre reflète seulement d'une manière partielle le contenu, spécialement en ce qui concerne sa deuxième partie. De nos jours, il existe à Beyrouth 18 communautés religieuses différentes de nuance musulmane, chrétienne ou juive, chacune avec ses croyances, traditions, manifestations publiques, même des lieux spéciaux pour les manifestations publiques en dehors des bâtiments monumentaux, comme les deux grandes mosquées et la cathédrale St Georges des maronites. L'auteur nous offre deux études de cas, l'un concernant les spectacles religieux de la communauté chiite pour fêter le jour d'Achoura le premier jour de l'année musulmane, quand ils commémorent le martyr du petit-fils du prophète Mahomet par l'armée du calife omeyyade, et l'autre, les cérémonies annuelles chrétiennes de la Semaine Sainte, avec la

procession du Dimanche des Rameaux, avec des branches d'oliviers et de fleurs jusqu'à l'autre procession conduite par un prêtre, celle du Vendredi Saint, quand on commémore la mort de Jésus. Les croyantes portent un cercueil symbolisant le tombeau du Christ, et dans les quartiers chrétiens de la ville il y a aussi des manifestations de deuil : fermeture de tous les magasins, musique religieuse transmise par les media, port des habits noirs par quelques personnes.

Ce type de manifestations entre dans le domaine du patrimoine immatériel et illustre, en même temps, l'identité nationale, qui doit être promue et conservée.

Comme je disais au début de ce texte, l'idée commune pour ce florilège de contributions scientifiques est celle de la découverte du caractère identitaire du patrimoine historique d'une nation ou d'une communauté religieuse ou culturelle.

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² J'ai retenu l'orthographe proposée par les éditeurs.

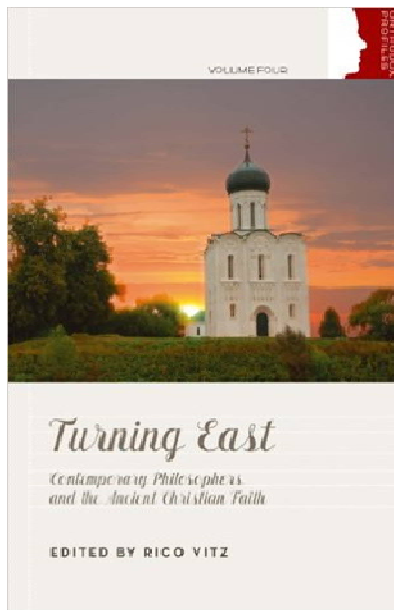
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La lumière cachée de l'Orient chrétien / The Hidden Light of Eastern Christian World

Puiu Ioniță

Rico Vitz Edition, *Turning East – Contemporary Philosophers and the Ancient Christian Faith*, St Vladimir's Seminary Press Yonkers, New York, 2012, 369 pages, translation into Romanian *Întoarcerea spre răsărit, Filosoși contemporani și credința creștină veche*, translated by Mihai Silviu Chirilă, Renașterea Publishing House 2015, 369 pages.



Le monde où l'on vit est irréductiblement marqué par une dissension fondamentale : d'une part l'esprit, d'autre part la matière, d'une part la quête de la transcendance, d'autre part la tentation de l'immanence, d'une part la gratuité du rêve et de la poésie, d'autre part le pragmatisme et l'efficacité, d'une part l'aspiration vers l'idéalité, d'autre part l'immersion dans le magma du hédonisme, d'une part la nostalgie des anciennes valeurs, d'autre part la rhétorique du progrès et de la modernisation. Il semble que l'homme n'a jamais cultivé, plus qu'aujourd'hui, le culte de la raison en se faisant l'illusion que celle-ci lui procurera le secret de son bonheur. Pourtant, l'exacerbation de la raison n'a guère augmenté l'harmonie universelle, n'a pas apporté la sobriété et la compréhension, mais des excès et de la voracité.

L'humanité se retrouve aujourd'hui dans une situation paradoxale : une richesse matérielle sans précédent et une pauvreté spirituelle sans égal. Les trois signes qui annonçaient, pour Spengler, le déclin inévitable de la société occidentale (l'argent, la voiture et la culture comme marchandise) sont déjà devenus des aspects de la globalisation en cours. Le culte de l'argent et de la technologie, la perversion de la culture, la sécularisation programmatique et la dé-spiritualisation ont réussi, pourtant, à provoquer chez l'homme ce que Heidegger appelait «l'oubli de l'Être»? Le vécu superficiel et dérisoire a totalement arraché, de l'âme humaine, les doutes profonds et les interrogations existentielles ? Un regard préoccupé et une observation attentive nous montrent que non. En outre, ni la réflexion philosophique, ni la recherche scientifique, dans ses formes diverses, et ni les substituts offerts par les performances technologiques n'ont pu se

substituer à la quête spirituelle. La paix intérieure et le salut de l'âme restent, en dépit de toutes les apparences, les aspirations les plus profondes de l'homme.

Une preuve en ce sens pourrait être le livre *Turning East – Contemporary Philosopher and the Ancient Christian Faith*, Rico Vitz (ed.), St. Vladimir's Seminary Press Yonkers, New York, 2012. Il pourrait constituer une solution à la crise prolongée du monde occidental. Le volume rassemble les témoignages de seize intellectuels, la majorité des universitaires américains, qui ont découvert l'ancienne foi chrétienne conservée dans le rite orthodoxe, que ce soit l'Église Grecque, Russe, Roumaine, Ukrainienne ou tout autre des Églises Orthodoxes de l'espace européen. Le rencontre avec cette foi, centrée sur le mystère et sur l'expérience mystique, une foi qui conserve, fidèlement et pieusement, la doctrine et les pratiques de l'Église primaire, constitue, pour tous ceux qui se confient dans les pages du livre, un événement crucial. Ce moment est décrit, en général, comme un renversement d'une conception philosophique sédimentée au cours des années de recherches et d'accumulations, comme un détour essentiel grâce auquel le sujet retrouve de nouveaux points qui soutiennent sa construction conceptuelle. Petit à petit, la raison est abandonnée en faveur du vécu, qui devient si intense, que tous les témoins parlent de la révélation, de l'effusion de la grâce, d'une joie immense qui remplit leurs âmes. Le nom *East* (l'Orient) du titre ne désigne pas un territoire géographique, mais une option spirituelle, une manière sotériologique. Plus qu'une position physique, *East* se définit comme une façon spécifique d'être dans le monde et comme un enseignement chrétien profondément affecté par la pensée des Pères.

Passer en revue les titres que les auteurs ont choisi pour leurs témoignages, et les institutions où ils sont chercheurs, philosophes, professeurs des universités, pourrait être révélateur pour la diversité des préoccupations et des professions qui les ont amenées d'une recherche scientifique froide et abstraite vers une démarche qui engage l'être tout entier. Nous vous proposons quelques titres: *Retrouver la foi authentique / Despre regăsirea adevăratei credințe*, David Brandshaw, Université de Kentucky ; *La découverte de l'Eglise primaire / Descoperirea bisericii primare*, Travis Dumsday, Livingstone College ; *La Théologie naturelle et l'Orthodoxie / Teologia naturală și Ortodoxia*, Richard Swinburne, Université Oxford ; *Un chemin qui vient de Rome, à travers l'Antioche / O cale de la Roma prin Antiohia*, Rico Vitz, Université Azusa Pacific ; *Tradition, mystère et cœur / Tradiție, taină și inimă*, Richard Otte, Université de Californie, Santa Cruz ; *La christianisation / Creștinarea*, Kelly Dean Jolley, Université Auburn ; *Sans titre / Fără titlu*, Jonathan D. Jacobs, Université St Louis ; *Un témoignage / O mărturisire*, David Starr, Le Collège de Saint Jean, *Entrer par la mort, vivre par le doute / Intrarea prin moarte*,

viețuirea prin îndoială. Terence Cuneo, Université de Vermont ; *L'imprévisible retour chez soi / Neașteptata întoarcere acasă*, John D. Jones, Université Marquette ; *Un voyage vers L'Est : la découverte de la véritable dévotion et de la véritable foi / O călătorie spre Răsărit: descoperirea dreptei închinări și a dreptei credințe*, H. Tristram Engelhardt jr., Université Rice ; *Raison, foi, féminité et vicissitudes de l'amour: des étapes de la libération / Rațiune, credință, feminitate și vicisitudinile dragostei: stadii ale eliberării*, Corinna Delkeskamp-Hayes, Freigericht, Germania ; *Le chemin vers le mystère : comment je suis devenu philosophe orthodoxe / Drumul spre Taină: Cum am devenit filozof ortodox*, Bruce Foltz, Le Collège Eckerd ; *La merveilleuse maladie : la philosophie comme chemin vers la spiritualité / Boala minunată: filozofia ca o cale spre spiritualitate*, Magnus, Simeon, Magnusson, Université Marquette ; *Les limites de la philosophie et la rencontre avec Dieu Vivant / Limitele filozofiei și întâlnirea cu Dumnezeu*, Cel Viu, Mark J. Cherry, Université du Saint Edouard ; *Voyage orthodoxe / Călătoria ortodoxă*, Jeffrez Bishop, Université St. Louis.

Les choses qui ont impressionné ces chercheurs, non habitués à la logique du *Patericon* et de la *Philocalie* orthodoxes sont nombreuses. La croyance orthodoxe a émergé pour eux comme un royaume mystérieux et béni : cette démarche les a conduits de l'individualisme placé, de manière inévitable, sur des coordonnées rationnelles vers un personnelisme orthodoxe (la doctrine du christianisme oriental rend à l'être humain la dignité d'une personne, en faisant de lui une entité distincte, tandis que l'individualisme capitalise l'homme comme un élément d'une classe, comme un spécimen d'une série), d'une exacerbation de la rationalité vers une modalité de connaissance par le cœur (Pseudo-Denys l'Aréopagite y est régulièrement invoqué), d'un christianisme catholique et protestant tombé dans la routine et dans la formalité vers une sorte de communion fondée sur l'abnégation totale et sur l'amour sacrificiel. Le cheminement caché exige de la cohérence et il n'est pas dépourvu de l'effort. La lumière de la foi se révèle et se cache, mais le chercheur est finalement récompensé par les expériences qui l'inondent à un tel point qu'il arrive à dire, comme l'Apôtre Paul: « si je vis, ce n'est plus moi qui vis, c'est le Christ qui vit en moi » (*Galates* 2 :20). Vu à travers les yeux de nouveaux convertis, la foi orthodoxe apparaît comme une foi profonde et vive, comme un moyen naturel d'harmonie et de plénitude. Le chrétien est entièrement intégré dans le monde qu'il découvre comme un Cosmos, comme la Création divine. Le brin d'herbe insignifiant et le croyant ascétique, tous les éléments de la nature et du monde composent une totalité et chantent continuellement des louanges à l'être divin : « Les messes orthodoxes ont un volet physique: elles sont pleines d'images, de sons, d'odeurs, de goûts, de mouvements. Pour l'orthodoxie, le spirituel n'appartient pas à un autre monde. Il n'y a pas un champ spirituel et un

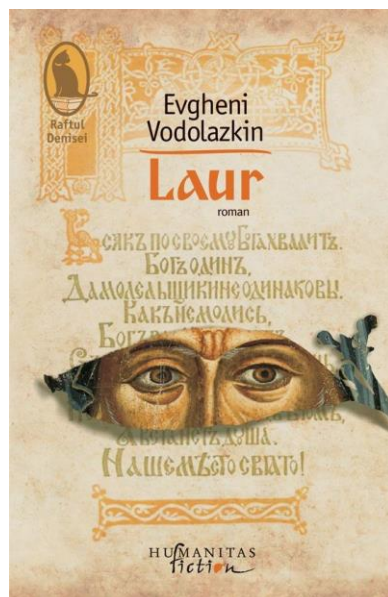
territoire physique. Il existe un seul monde qui est, à la fois, physique et spirituel » (Jonathan Jacobs)

C'est l'acceptation mystique de la foi dans l'orthodoxie qui a fasciné ces auteurs. Ni la doctrine, ni la spéculation philosophique, ni les préceptes théologiques et dogmatiques n'ont conquis les cœurs de ces chercheurs du salut, mais l'amour absolu, le dévouement sans bornes qui fait de l'ascétisme un hymne à la joie. Le converti ressent une transformation profonde, une *métanoïa* à travers laquelle il change l'individualisme avec le communautarisme, l'activisme avec le non accomplissement, le recyclage des déchets avec l'accalmie de l'esprit, la magnificence avec l'humilité, la confiance en soi avec la confiance en Dieu.

A Powerful Russian Novel: *Laur*, Evgheni Vodolazkin

Paula-Andreea Onofrei

Evgheni Vodolazkin, *Laur*, Roman neistoric, / *Laur*, A nonhistorical novel, translation from Russian and notes by Adriana Liciu, Humanitas Fiction Publishing House, Bucharest, 2014, 328 pages.



Being considered a masterpiece of contemporary Russian literature, the novel *Laur* by Evgheni Vodolazkin was published in Romanian by “Humanitas Fiction” in 2014, the Russian version appeared in 2012. The novel received the most important Russian literary award in 2013 – The Prize “Bolșaiia Kniga” and the Prize “Iasnaia Poliana” (Lev Tolstoy) in the same year, when it was also nominated on the short list of “Nationalnii Bestseller” and “Russkii Buker”. It has been translated in more than twenty languages, the reactions of the international public being positive.

The book reminds us of Andrei Rublev, of Tarkovsky’s movies and of *The Name of the Rose* by Umberto Eco, the action is set in the 15th century, the main character passes through several changes in life, being a healer, a fool-for-Christ, a pilgrim and a monk. If we have a look at the structure of the book, there are four chapters, each of them corresponding to the phases through which Arseni passes during his existence, also changing his name: “The Book of Knowledge”, “The Book of Giving Up”, “The Book of the Way”, “The Book of Tranquility”¹.

The atmosphere of the Middle Ages is brought to life through vivid images, such as the moment when Laur takes full responsibility for Anastasia’s pregnancy, when the crowd of medieval village people is on the verge of slaughtering the future mother because she refused to declare who the father was and every single negative event from the community was associated with the unwed girl who was believed to have sinned with the

¹ We have translated the names of the chapters into English.

devil. Saints adopted this behaviour, in order to save lives, they claimed they were the fathers of unmarried women who were condemned by the society. “In the Middle Ages, sensations were few, and what happened with Laur was, undoubtedly, something sensational, because it was about the fall of a faultless man.(...) When they spoke about it, many people felt sorry for Laur, noticing the fact that the hight of one’s flight is threatened by a fall which may be just as big as the ascension”².

Moreover, we found fragments which remind us of Surrealism, there are undeniable connections with the world of art: when Arseni cured a woman of a terrible tooth ache, he did something almost hilarious, underlined in the fragment “He put his hand in his mouth, he pulled the wisdom tooth from the gum and handed it to the new comers. They understood that this was the answer of the healer to their request. They took the wisdom tooth to the wife, she put it inside her mouth and the pain went away”³.

As far as the writing style is concerned, we believe that the essence is represented by a refined simplicity, normally passing from what is real to fantastic, from what is earthly to saint things, the humour is subtle and delicately spread in the narrative thread. Furthermore, there is a charming sensitivity about Vodolazkin; moreover, one can feel his free spirit in his intelligent religiosity, the story in itself transmits a large amount of emotion, its beauty and depth simply change the reader’s perception at multiple levels, it is the type of writing which primarily addresses one’s soul.

What is simply amazing is the transformation of Arseni into “Ustin” during the entire novel. By his behaviour, by curing people, by living in a way which is considered by him appropriate in order to repent from his youth deed – the fact that he ignored all Christian laws when he lived in fornication with a girl, Ustina, who died while giving birth to a dead child – the healer Arseni changes his name into “Ustin” in order to worship the memory of his beloved one, in order to permanently “talk” to her spirit during the entire novel; in this respect, we have found approximately sixty situations in which Arseni seems to take confort in having her soul around him and in discussing different aspects of his life. He even reaches that point when he says “ <But I took her earthly life>. The abbot looked at him with serenity. <Then, give her your life.> <But, can I really live in her place?> < If you understand this seriously - yes, you can. Love made you be one with Ustina, this means that a part of her is still here. She is you.>”⁴

This mesmerizing book has a few motifs which are recurrent and are worth mentioning, creating the narrative skeleton of the novel: the healing power of faith, the power of words, the metaphor of life seen as flight,

² Vodolaskin, Evgheni, *Laur*, Humanitas Fiction, 2014, Bucharest, page 315, my translation.

³ Idem, page 156, my translation.

⁴ Vodolaskin, Evgheni, *Laur*, Humanitas Fiction, 2014, Bucharest, pages 84-85, my translation.

ascension, metanoia, the curing of people - true miracles in most cases, the ability of seeing the future – specific to people chosen by God, people who have reached a specific spiritual level, miracles such as the bread which simply never ended, until Laur reached death and the walking on water, the motif of Pygmalion and Galatea, identified in Arseni and Ustina, the power of one's prayer both inside the community and alone. As far as the themes of this novel are concerned, we do mention here death and belief in the afterlife, the purpose of life, people and God.

By offering the consumers of literature a “non-historical novel”, as the writer himself mentioned on the title page, Evgheni Vodolazkin delicately manages to take his reader to a world which is outside the laws of time, although the action is placed in the Middle Ages. Captivating, charming, mesmerizingly beautiful – these would be the essence of this book. In a nutshell, we consider that Vodolazkin's words about his own novel invite to meditation, offering a complex perspective: “There are things about which one may speak more easily in the context of old Russia. About God, for example. In my humble opinion, the connections with Him were more direct a long time ago. Furthermore, they simply existed. Now, the nature of these connections represents the preoccupation of very few people, and this leaves us in anxiety. Have we found it, from the Middle Ages onwards, a completely new thing that has allowed us to relax?”.

La nouvelle vie des objets d'art / The New Life of Art Objects

Codrina-Laura Ioniță

Caietele restaurării 2016 / Les cahiers de la restauration 2016, Editions ACS, București, 2016, 288 pages / The Notebooks of Restoration 2016, ACS Edition, Bucharest, 2016, 288 pages.



Le cinquième volume des *Cahiers de la restauration*, paru en 2016 ; aux Editions Art Conservation Support (coordonné par Prof. dr. Ioan Darida, Prof. dr. Ovidiu Boldura, Prof. dr. Tereza Sinigalia, chimiste Mihai Lupu et restaurateur Anca Dină) recueille des articles adressés, principalement, aux spécialistes de la conservation du patrimoine culturel, aux restaurateurs, aux chimistes, aux architectes, aux muséographes, aux historiens de l'art ou à d'autres chercheurs, mais aussi au public large intéressé par la préservation et par la valorisation d'inestimable héritage du passé.

Le numéro de 2016 est dédié tout spécialement au patrimoine mobile – le patrimoine « discret », selon le Prof. Ioan Darida, – et à la restauration de ses matériaux: le bois, le verre, la peinture sur toile ou sur papier, le métal, la céramique et d'autres.

Le livre commence par deux études théoriques, la première, écrite par le Prof. Ioan Darida, sur les intentions et sur les modalités de falsifier les œuvres d'art dès la Renaissance jusqu'au XXe siècle, la deuxième, appartenant au Prof. Ioan Opris, pose la question de la conservation des signes culturels. Le volume continue par des diverses études de cas de restauration des objets du Musée National de l'Art ou des collections particulières. Il s'agit des articles destinés aux spécialistes, avec des présentations détaillées des étapes et des moyens de restauration et de conservation des objets. Certains articles se dirigent vers la méthodologie de la restauration et vers les problèmes de la peinture sur des différents supports:

couleurs de l'eau sur le papier ou sur la soie, huile sur toile ou sur panneau de bois, tempera à l'œuf sur toile, tempera sur bois, verre. Parmi les plus importantes œuvres dont les étapes de restauration sont examinées dans des études de cas sont « la Vierge à l'enfant » et « La décollation de Saint Jean Baptiste » de Lucas Cranach, « La Vierge à l'enfant » par un anonyme espagnole du XVe-VIe siècle, L'épithaphe de « l'Enterrement de la Vierge » du Monastère d'un Bois, la reproduction du XIXe siècle d'une toile de Rubens, le portrait de l'abbé Gácsér Leó de l'abbaye Pannonhalma ou les icônes sur verre de « Saint Nicolas » et du « Baptême de Christ ».

À part les peintures sur des différents supports, les objets de mobilier et les outils se retrouvent aussi dans l'attention des spécialistes. Le travail de nettoyage, de restauration et de conservation de l'iconostase de « l'Eglise Blanche - Saint-Nicolas » de Bucarest est dévoilé par Sultana-Ruxandra Polizu, la coordinatrice de l'équipe de restaurateurs. À la fin de cet ample ouvrage, la couleur originale d'or de l'iconostase, avec ses icônes peintes par Gh. Tatarascu témoignent du professionnalisme des experts.

Un autre objet impressionnant en bois est la porte peinte d'exonarthex de l'église du monastère Voroneț. Si dans le volume antérieur des *Cahiers de la restauration*, paru en 2015, l'équipe des spécialistes a présenté les recherches préliminaires pour l'identification des types de peinture sur les panneaux de bois de la porte, dans ce volume, les restaurateurs (R. Pavel, D.-C. Ilie, M.-V. Dudu, A. Michescu, I. Darida, D.-L. Postolache) dévoilent les étapes et les problèmes concrets de l'intervention sur l'objet. Un autre outil liturgique, dont la méthodologie de reconstitution est exposée dans une étude, est la table de proskomidie de « L'Ermitage de Sous Pierre ». L'attention des spécialistes se dirige vers des autres ustensiles: une cassette de pistolets à duel reçue par le prince Cuza de la part de Napoléon III, un disque céramique et une assiette (appartenant à l'époque médiévale roumaine), un support pour parfums en forme de pagode chinoise.

La restauration des monuments et des œuvres d'art impliquent également des surprises. Il y des articles qui montrent quelques-unes. Dans son article, Prof. Tereza Sinigalia donne l'exemple de la découverte d'une scène unique dans la peinture murale ecclésiale roumaine, *La rencontre d'Abram et Melchisédech*, peinte dans l'espace de proskomidie de l'église du monastère Golia de Iași, et mise en circulation grâce aux travaux de restauration. L'image devient un prototype liturgique qui renvoie vers le sacrifice du Fils de Dieu. D'autres découvertes à travers la restauration sont mises en évidence dans des études de cas comme celle qui présente le dévoilement d'un dessin caché représentant un moine sous l'image de la toile « La Vierge à l'enfant » de l'École Allemande des XVIe–XVIIe siècles, ou celle qui permet l'identification du nom de l'auteur de la toile « Scène de croisade », marqué sur le support original et dévoilé en même temps avec

l'enlèvement des supports supplémentaires ajoutés à l'œuvre au cours du temps.

Deux articles mettent en discussion des édifices. R. C. Gheorghiță parle d'un monument sauvé de la destruction, la Maison Fronius de Sighișoara, des étapes de restauration et de dévoilement de la peinture médiévale y peinte. En échange, A. Rauca, D. Pop et R. Moraru soulignent le péril qui menace d'autres monuments, les églises en bois de Maramureș, quelques-unes gravement affectées par la dégradation, d'autres même disparues ou en danger de disparaître bientôt.

A la fin du volume, le chimiste Mihai Lupu, révèle un péril qui menace, cette fois-ci non seulement les monuments ou les objets, mais les restaurateurs, les chimistes, les biologistes ou les autres spécialistes qui travaillent dans le domaine. Il montre le risque majeur dont ils s'exposent en utilisant des matériaux et des substances, souvent très dangereux, pour la santé. Dans ce contexte, si dans le volume de 2015, on a rendu hommage à la mémoire du Professeur Ioan Istudor, dans le volume présent, c'est le tour d'un autre spécialiste du domaine, parti trop tôt, d'être évoqué : Ileana Bondoc Crețu. Mihai Lupu lui rend hommage pour toute l'activité.

On ne peut conclure cette présentation sans remarquer l'excellente qualité graphique du volume, l'abondance des images indispensables pour la compréhension du texte et l'écriture claire et technique des articles qui, évidemment, s'adressent aux spécialistes du domaine, comme un instrument extrêmement utile pour les chercheurs. Pourtant, ce n'est pas un volume dédié exclusivement aux spécialistes, mais à tous ceux qui s'intéressent à l'art. *Les Cahiers de la restauration* montrent le travail difficile et le dévouement des gens qui gardent et protègent le patrimoine, souvent en faisant des sacrifices notables.