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Horia Lovinescu, Between the "Terror of History" and Psychoanalytical Dreams

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Abstract: This paper focuses on Horia Lovinescu (1917-1983), a member of one of the most important dynasties of modern Romanian culture. Six of Horia Lovinescu's dramas are interpreted in a close reading system, by psychoanalytical tools and by focusing on the family constellations the author imagines. These plays are related to the historical context ("the terror of history"), in order to understand how works of art are the reverberation of biographical-creative data of the greatest importance and how they echo in a paradoxical way social-political transformations. This double reading, psychological and historical, is justified by the playwright himself, through the construction of his plays and through his many allusions to psychoanalysis in his writings.

Keywords: Horia Lovinescu, psychoanalysis, historical reading, communism, dramas, artistic creation, myth.

This article is dedicated to Horia Lovinescu (1917-1983), a member of one of the most prominent dynasties of modern Romanian culture. He is the nephew of the great literary critic Eugen Lovinescu (1881-1943)[2], brother

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[2] Iulian Boldea, "Eugen Lovinescu and the Art of Portrait," *Journal of Romanian Literary Studies*, Issue 1 (2011): 46-58 (https://www.researchgate.net/publication/274078365_E_Lovinescu_and_the_Art_of_Portrait, accessed March 2024); https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eugen_Lovinescu (accessed March 2024).

of the essayist Vasile Lovinescu (1905-1984)[3], cousin of the novelist Anton Holban (1902-1937)[4] and of the famous political and cultural dissident Monica Lovinescu (1923-2008), Eugen's daughter[5]. Unlike all of them, who held liberal or right-wing political convictions, Horia Lovinescu seemed to be a loyalist of the communist regime in Romania, putting his work at the service of forging the "new man" and being considered one of the most important playwrights of the post-war period[6]. Moreover, a complex theatre man, Horia Lovinescu led the destiny of the Nottara Theatre in Bucharest for two decades (1964-1983), as general manager, imposing a high artistic standard on its stage productions. In what follows, I will try to read Horia Lovinescu's dramas in a close reading system, using a series of psychoanalytical tools, focusing on the family constellations he imagines, and relating them to the historical context ("the terror of history"[7]), in the belief that works of art are the reverberation of biographical-creative data of the greatest importance and that they echo in a paradoxical way social-political transformations. This psychological and historical reading is justified by the playwright himself, through the construction of his plays and through his many allusions to psychoanalysis in his writings.

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[3] Ovidiu Marian-Ionescu, *Vasile Lovinescu – Magna Opera. Consensus and differentiation regarding the Primordial Tradition*, PhD abstract in English, The "Lucian Blaga University in Sibiu", 2017, https://doctorate.ulbsibiu.ro/wp-content/uploads/RezumatenglezaMarian.pdf (accessed March 2024).

[4] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anton_Holban (accessed March 2024).

[5] Daniela Vizireanu, "Political Hegemony Over the Public Intellectual in Communist Romania: Monica Lovinescu and Her Misrepresented Portrayal in the Print Press," *Synthesis*, XLII (2023): 94-100 (https://synthesis.ro/political-hegemony-over-the-public-intellectual-in-communist-romania/); Iulia Vladimirov, "Monica Lovinescu: the Voice of Unbound Freedom," *History of Communism in Europe. Avatars of Intellectuals Under Communism*, vol. 2 (2011): 281-321; Camelia Crăciun, "Monica Lovinescu at Radio Free Europe," in *The Exile and Return of Writers from East-Central Europe. A Compendium*, ed. by John Neubauer and Borbála Zsuzsanna Török (Berlin, New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2009), 276-303; Ion Mihai Pacepa, *Red Horizons. Chronicles of a Communist Spy Chief* (Washington D. C.: Regnery Gateway, 1987), 34-35; https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Monica_Lovinescu (accessed March 2024).

[6] Camelia Crăciun, "Monica Lovinescu at Radio Free Europe," 279-280.

[7] Teofilo F. Ruiz, *The Terror of History. On the Uncertainties of Life in Western Civilization* (Princeton & Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2011).

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Citadela sfărâmată [*The Shattered Citadel*] (1955), Horia Lovinescu's second play and the one that ensured his lasting success, being screened in 1957, belongs to the broad category of proletkult dramaturgy, but this is a proletkult theatre that achieves a certain aesthetic quality, beyond the constraining ideological imperatives[8], where the great themes and obsessions of the author are already present in filigree, those that will run through his entire work, giving it a superb unity. *The Shattered Citadel* brings to the stage a multi-branched family, in whose description one glimpses a barely camouflaged transposition of biographical data. This is what the French psychoanalyst Charles Mauron called "haunting metaphors" ("metaphores obsédantes"), organised in a symbolic network illustrative of the author's "personal myth"[9].

The Dragomirescu family, belonging to the middle bourgeoisie, is caught in two key moments of history. First, in the midst of the Second World War, in the summer of 1943, when worrying news comes from the Eastern Front: the Romanian-German armies retreat from Stalingrad in the face of fierce Russian resistance. The second time, in 1948, when the Soviets and their communist cronies seized power in the country, beginning the brutal construction of the "new man" and socialism. With passionate lucidity, the playwright traces the transformation and breakdown of family structures under the pressure of socio-political change, seeking to demonstrate that the family is a mere cell, incapable of functioning autonomously outside the social organism.

In fact, the action of Horia Lovinescu's play can be summed up very easily. One sees how brotherly love turns into indifference and then into mutual hatred. Petru, a young high school graduate in 1943, influenced by the intellectual and physical charm of his older brother Matei (a passionate

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[8] Ioana Toloargă, "Horia Lovinescu, *Citadela sfărâmată*", in *Să nu privești înapoi. Comunism, dramaturgie, societate* [Do Not Look Back. Communism, Dramaturgy, Society], ed. Liviu Malița (Cluj-Napoca: Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2022), 430-434.

[9] Linda Hutcheon, *Formalism and the Freudian Aesthetic: The Example of Charles Mauron* (New York, Cambridge University Press, 1984).

thinker of ideals), will commit an extreme, Gidean gesture designed to make him feel that he is living intensely: he will join the army and go to the front, from where he will return blind. Peter blames Matei, who planted in his mind all sorts of crazy ideas, inspired by Schopenhauer and Nietzsche, about "great escapes," about being "beyond good and evil," about the supreme reality of "the self" in the face of universal illusion, about the compulsory opposition to everything, revealing in him "contempt for people" and "foolish pride". It is not difficult to identify in Matei a transvestite portrait of Vasile Lovinescu, the playwright's elder brother, promoter of abysmal ideas of quasi-legionary descent, all the more so as Horia shows him working on an essay on *The magical Function of the Word*, the writing of which is always postponed because of an inexplicable existential anxiety. Self-centred, unable to open up to others, a superior parasite and an alcoholic, Matei ends up committing suicide without dragging Irina, his beloved, along with him, even though he had brought her up in the spirit of the medieval myth of Tristan and Isolde. She will be left to live on in the new reality of communism, to complete her studies in chemistry and – eventually – to return to Dan, her faithful fiancé whom she had left at the beginning of the play in favour of the mirages of Matei's love. Anyway, Matei is the type of the eternal misfit, a desperate man who will stubbornly refuse communist utilitarianism and the absurd reduction to a useful job, a disabused and cynical person, provocative and paradoxical, envious of the happiness of others, wrapping his weaknesses in a cloud of cultural references (Pliny, Flaubert, Dostoevsky: *The Brothers Karamazov*). Finding it hard to take responsibility for the alcoholic excesses he has fallen into, Matei justifies them with an erudite reference to Baudelaire's *Artificial Paradises*: "Whoever has had a grief to appease, a memory to evoke, a sorrow to drown, a castle in Spain to build – all have at one time invoked the mysterious god who lies concealed in the fibers of the grapevine."[10]

On the other hand, Petru (Horia's alter-ego) overcomes the trauma of blindness and finds spiritual light with the help of a simple teacher, Caterina, who comes from the country side and is installed as a "lodger" in the family's big house. She teaches him what it means to work for others, to give of

[10] Charles Baudelaire, *Artificial Paradises*, trans. Stacy Diamond (Citadel Press, 1996), 5.

oneself without sparing any effort, bringing him children from school to teach them to play the piano (Petru is a talented pianist), which determines Matei's irony at the new "Orpheus" who "tames the proletarian beast's calves". Although he does not become a "communist" in the true sense of the word, Petru believes in the socio-moral value of work, in the possibilities it offers for humanisation, and is ready to make his contribution to building the new world. Nothing is left of the brothers' fraternal love, significant in the beginning of the play, without the collapse of the edifice being attributable to one of them:

> MATEI: Ha-ha! You don't say... You despise me! Wise guy! Sublime master of truth! (*Petru wants to leave, Matei stops him, with a broken voice.*) Don't go, you can't pass me by as if I didn't exist. I am a man, I am your brother.
> PETRU: We have nothing more in common, Matei. We speak two different languages.
> MATEI: But it's not my fault that I am not like you. I'm like an actor forced to play as the author dictates. I didn't write my part. Life, circumstances, education – they wrote it. I have no responsibility. If you don't like it, if you don't like my text, what can I do? Why can't I find understanding and humanity?[11]

The characters revolving around the two brothers effectively and expressively complete the powerful family drama woven by Horia Lovinescu, first and foremost the parents, bizarre and complex-generating figures whose mechanisms are not unrelated to the birth and progression of sibling enmity. The mother, Emilia, of simple and unsophisticated kindness, is a Christian in the true sense of the word, a peacemaker who is hurt by the eternal quarrels between Matei and Petru. With a devotion without shadows, she cares for her youngest son with a gentleness capable of soothing all wounds.

[11] Horia Lovinescu, *Teatru 1* [Theatre 1] (Bucharest: Ed. Eminescu, 1973), 69.

Fig 1: Edition published in 1971, Eminescu Publishing House

Fig 2: Horia Lovinescu in the 60s

Her husband, the retired lawyer Grigore, seems to be a caricatured transposition into the world of fiction of the lawyer Octav Lovinescu, father of Vasile and Horia. He considers artists to be useless beings, always staring at the moon and doing no real service to society, so he wants Petru to go to law school and dare not dream of a career as a pianist. Pious, typical, tactical, he speaks only of work, virtue, economy, honesty, invoking at every opportunity the sacrosanct idea of the honourable family, the foundation of the bourgeois state: "This is how the family should be. A citadel in the path of the waves of life."[12] In his delusion of honourability, Gregory elevates the idea of family to the Roman ethos, giving it a quasi-religious value: "From our Roman ancestors we have inherited this priceless treasure: the cult of the family."[13] Now, this family, "solid as a citadel," will collapse before his bovine

[12] Horia Lovinescu, *Teatru 1*, 32.
[13] Horia Lovinescu, *Teatru 1*, 15.

eyes, unable to understand anything. With his ironic, cutting, venomous way of speaking, Matei describes his father extremely well, referring again to a well-known figure from the repertoire of 19th-century French literature: "A pedantic fool, with the fanaticisms of the half-wit, a sort of Mr Homais, in short, a petty bourgeois flatter than a drawing pin's head."[14] In their own way, each of the two sons refuses the conformist bourgeois model proposed by their father, looking for their own ways to assert themselves in life, which are not always – Horia Lovinescu suggests – the simplest and the most risk-free.

The most prominent figure, respected by some, feared by others, is Grandmother, Emilia's mother (it seems that the Lovinescus had an obsession with grandparents, as in the novel *Grandmother Prepares to Die* by Anton Holban, cousin of Horia and Vasile Lovinescu). Mrs Dinescu, a scholar of international reputation and a doctor of physics in Paris, tries to salvage what she can from the "shattered citadel," prophesying from her first appearance – with disarming lucidity and in extremely harsh terms – the break-up of the Dragomirescu family. The grandmother has an obvious kindness for the blind Petru, which arouses Matei's envy, but she does not despise him, on the contrary she pities his weakness. Although the oldest of them all, it is Granny who adapts best to the new socio-political context, following a line of conduct outlined as early as 1943: she has always been a democrat, even defending some communist students in a national context of Germanic fervour. Untiring, she takes part in rallies, organises the new laboratories where the glory of socialist science is baked, and even strives to understand – together with Peter – the fundamental concepts of marxist political economy, which provokes Matei's sarcasm: "What a touching picture! Grandma and grandson learning marxism! The scientists are preparing the scientific apocalypse, only Grandma is studying political economy. Ha-ha, you're not part of the atomic age, Grandma. Mankind is dancing the dance of death on a tightrope. One day, there'll be a little crack and it'll all be over. We'll take a tumble into nothingness."[15]

[14] Horia Lovinescu, *Teatru 1*, 16.
[15] Horia Lovinescu, *Teatru 1*, 73.

The political dimension of Horia Lovinescu's play, easily perceptible in the portrait of the grandmother, is very complex and basically presents a nuanced apology of communism, to which even a critically-minded reader can be forced to give his/her adhesion. However, if we read things *à rebours* (and it is legitimate to do so!), *The Shattered Citadel* can also be seen as a scathing critique of the communist system, even if (or because) one of the first didascalies states, "It will be played without irony."

The Dragomirescus – with few exceptions – belong to the anti-communist part of Romanian society, because of their ideological, mental and behavioural horizon, which remains functionally unchanged throughout the play. Grigore, however, like a true, chameleonic bourgeois, defends on principle any installed political regime, abhorring change and being deeply obsequious to any authority. Once the communists are in power, he writes articles of debunking for the "wall gazette" [*gazeta de perete*], calls everybody in the house "comrade" to get used to the tone of the new times and tries to make others forget his troubled past as a member of what was then called the exploiting class.

Another branch of the Dragomirescu family embodies the "reactionary forces" in the full sense of the word. Grigore's sister Adela and her son Costică, big businessmen in the bourgeois regime, make all sorts of dubious financial combinations, live from speculation and smuggling, exchange currency and gold on the black market, but they will be exposed when they try to flee the country to Switzerland, where large bank deposits are waiting for them. Their scheme, in which they try to implicate Matei, Irina and Dan, fails thanks to the vigilance of the communist authorities. They are joined by Marie-Jeanne, Costică's wife, and her lover, the noble Găttescu, whose grandfather hanged all the peasants on his estate upside down in 1907, during the great rural revolt of that year. Marie-Jeanne, snobbish and affected, and a coterie of friends form a resistance group against communism, and their gesture is not without a certain nobility: "We have to show them that nothing can destroy a nobility earned over generations. In fact, we call ourselves the "Resistance Group". Next time I'll take Kessel's book *Nuit des Princes* with me to the flea market and read it ostentatiously there. You know, it's about the tragedy of Russian aristocrats who became chauffeurs on the streets of Paris. I'm sure the gesture will make an impression. It will be talked about."[16]

[16] Horia Lovinescu, *Teatru 1*, 76.

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A play quite similar to *The Shattered Citadel* is also *The Boga Sisters* (1959), which deals with both the theme of family and the establishment of communism and the response of three women to the new social order, imposed by Soviet troops. Everything here is under an almost Sartrian-existentialist sign of choice: the characters know that in the new historical circumstances they will be forced to choose a path, which may not correspond at all to their previous expectations. The ideological polarisation into positive/negative characters is here seemingly more brutal than in *The Shattered Citadel*, though there is no lack of nuance and subtle perspective-taking. Valentina Boga, married to the civil servant Miluță Petrescu (a vaguely Caragialian name) for the simple reason of not living alone, will discover only after long procrastination that she loves Professor Mereuță, an idealist obsessed with love between people, who joins the communist movement only because he cannot continue to "defend" what he "hated" and "strike" at what he "hoped for"; even though the methods of the new masters are "disorienting" him[17]. Valentina's discovery comes too late, only when Mereuță is murdered in a bourgeois plot by those who want to sabotage the new communist regime, led by Radu Grecescu / Gorăscu, the husband of the youngest of the sisters, Ioana. In Radu, Horia Lovinescu succeeds in constructing an almost Nietzschean character, obsessed with war, killing, violence, as his cousin (but in a situation of not knowing this kinship), the painter Alec Gorăscu, well observes. After the war against the Germans is over, feeling useless, Radu gets involved in the fight against the new regime, together with his aunt Catinca Gorăscu, from the great local nobility, who has also raised Radu in a military way, without telling him that he is the fruit of the relationship between her nymphomaniac sister Eleonora and an administrator from their estate. Interesting for its psychoanalytic connotations is the scene in which Eleonora makes advances to Radu, who rejects them in horror at a femininity that has become plethoric and barren. Alec Gorăscu, an interesting painter with a passion for Paris, is also secretly in love with Ioana, confessing it to her only towards the end of the play, when

[17] Horia Lovinescu, *Teatru* [Theatre] (Bucharest: Editura Eminescu, 1971), 140.

he also tells her of his decision to settle in the French capital, leaving behind the portrait of his beloved, one of his most vibrant works. In a dry musing, he says a memorable thing: it is no problem that the guns have been turned on the Germans, who for five hundred years have done nothing but paint badly and have occupied Paris, the only place in the world to which Alec feels truly soulfully connected. Nothing prevents him from leaving, we are given to understand, not even the insistence of party members who would like to put his art at the service of the communist revolution, such as Pavel Golea, the lover of Iulia, the third sister. A conversation with Ioana shows Alec to be totally hostile to such an enlistment, and the passage I transcribe below seems to me – read today – remarkable for its "double" writing:

> IOANA: [Pavel Golea] He was of the opinion that it would be a pity for us and for you.
> ALEC: I know better than he does what I need. As for my usefulness here, he's wrong. I'm a bad citizen, and I'd be in your way.
> IOANA: He said we would need art here to serve.
> ALEC: What a utilitarian you've become! Art serves no purpose. It refines and innervates people's sensibilities, and discredits immediate realities. If I were a political ideologue, I'd outlaw art as public enemy number one.
> IOANA: How can these paradoxes amuse you, when there are so many painfully serious things?
> ALEC: Serious? What?
> IOANA: Suffering, hope... death... people... (*Smiling*.) As Golea would say, you're an incurable individualist.[18]

Golea and Iulia are a couple worth keeping our attention. Helped by the woman-doctor, the illegalist communist worker always revolves around her after the so-called "Liberation". Having given herself body and soul to her new life, Iulia helps to control the typhus epidemic in the county, just as Ioana – after the death of Radu, whom she herself denounced to the communists when he was preparing to make a terrorist attack on Ghighi Mirescu, Iulia's former boyfriend from her youth – consoles herself by carrying out "literacy"

[18] Horia Lovinescu, *Teatru*, 142.

campaigns in the villages. Valentina is no stranger to the tide of history either, preparing to adopt a child to console her for the failure of her marriage to Miluță and the death of Mereuță.

Quite remarkably conceived in terms of the relationships between characters, Horia Lovinescu's play – despite frequent moments of ideological dryness – remains readable even today through its vigorous dialogue and moments of inner tension. Direct and indirect allusions to Chekhov's *Three Sisters* (1901) link Lovinescu's text to the great tradition of universal drama. The play opens with a discussion about Chekhov between Ioana and Mereuță. He has lent the girl a book and wants to know what she thinks, though he is annoyed when Ioana reveals that she has guessed: the book had been given to her as a reference to her and her sisters. The whole theory of happiness that Mereuță believes in is inspired by Chekhov, and this draws Pavel Golea's contempt for the articles the professor writes: "What are we putting out, Easter almanac, or Party gazette?"[19] Instead of writing about universal happiness à la Chekhov, Mereuță is advised to write about the propaganda obsessions of the new political regime, i.e. "land, bread, soap, political power, heavy industry", which can only be achieved by "crushing with hatred those who resist"[20]. And yet, Mereuță remains attached to his old ideas, clearly expressed in the initial scene with Ioana: "I think that's not what Chekhov was referring to, but a lasting, general happiness. Sometimes I sit at night and think of that world that Chekhov's Olga foresaw, and I too would like to know what kind of face those people who will come after us will have."[21]

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Moartea unui artist [The Death of an Artist] (1964) must be interpreted in relation to the historical context in which it appeared, after a decade of proletkult theatre, to whose "development" Horia Lovinescu himself had contributed with creations such as *Light from Ulmi* (1954), *The Shattered Citadel* (1955), *The Boga Sisters* (1959), etc. Lovinescu's attempt is in this sense original, because it brings to the stage a successful artist who, even though

[19] Horia Lovinescu, *Teatru*, 143.
[20] Horia Lovinescu, *Teatru*, 143-144.
[21] Horia Lovinescu, *Teatru*, 96-97.

he lives in an era of "comrades," owns a sumptuous villa in Snagov, close to the lake and the forest, with at least two sculpture studios, a terrace, a living room, frosted glass walls and so on. Manole Crudu lives like a bourgeois, has the interested Aglaia as his housekeeper, who tries to arrange a marriage between the sculptor and her young daughter, barely out of her teens. He travels to the Orient, exhibits in Paris, and his cosmopolitanism leaves no hint of the bleak society in which the author of the text actually lived in Romania in the 1950s and 1960s[22].

Manole's art itself – the mythical references to a seminal story of Romanian folk an theatrical culture[23] are obvious and hardly need any comment – is balanced, serene, classical, a successful art that brings the sculptor the glory of numerous critical comments, carefully collected by Cristina, Aglaia's daughter, in several files. Crudu extols the greatness, the "creative power of man," the "triumph of reason"[24], affirming the belief that has guided him all his life with strength, especially as Lovinescu shows him near death, suffering from a very serious heart disease: "And this has always been the ultimate aspiration of my art: to be awake. I never sculpted larvae and monsters. I am human. And for me, man is free and strong. (*With a defiance in which a note of despair permeates.*) Free and strong!"[25]

Another element of originality, inevitable in any "historicist" (historicized) rereading of the play, is the subterranean references to psychoanalysis. Manole Crudu has a 30-year-old son, Vlad, who also sculpts, but the father does not like that kind of art, too marked by modern anxieties, by "literature", by distrust in the Promethean force of the human being, and he has the courage to say it to the young man who is searching for his real self: "Psychoanalytic

[22] Centa Mariana Artagea, *Horia Lovinescu, un scriitor în Infern* [Horia Lovinescu, a Writer in Hell] (Galați: Editura Fundației Universitare "Dunărea de Jos", 2022).

[23] Mircea Eliade, "Master Manole and the Monastery of Argeș," *Zalmoxis the Vanishing God. Comparative Studies in the Religions and Folklore of Dacia and Eastern Europe* (Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press, 1972), 164-190; Simone Reicherts-Schenk, *Die Legende von Meister Manole in der Rumänischen Dramatik : aspekte eines kreativen Schaffensprozesses am Beispiel der Dramen von Adrian Maniu, Lucian Blaga, Horia Lovinescu und Marin Sorescu* (Frankfurt-am-Main, Berlin, Bern, New York: Peter Lang, 1994).

[24] Horia Lovinescu, *Teatru 1*, 174.

[25] Horia Lovinescu, *Teatru 1*, 201.

babble has always repulsed me. The fact that the entrails are placed lower than the head does not give them depth. False depths, like false heights, make me tense. As for formal quests, Vlad, they are fruitful only when you know what you have to say. And that it's worth saying."[26] Although Manole is not fully aware of what is at stake, his intuition works wonders: the son refuses his father's artistic model of success because of an inferiority complex, an unrestrained "envy", which he ends up confessing in one of the harsh, frontal discussions the two have on several occasions. The son is, artistically speaking, a castrato, a "stammerer", lacking in verve, inhibited by the spectacle of his father's grandiosity, but also by his own ironic faculty, which makes him masochistically turn on himself impulses impossible to satisfy – sadistically – outside.

An Oedipal relationship – reversed, let us say – is also established between Manole and his second son, Toma, who nevertheless resembles his father in his robust confidence in life, his behavioural vigour and his manifest incompatibility with the mysteries of the abyss. Here too, however, there is a kind of generational conflict, but one of a more historical-ideological nature. The father defends with determination a still romantic model of the world, in which art is above all and even science is crushed by it, while the son, who has gone abroad to study physics, has become "less sensitive to art" because "for the thirst and formidable means of science, the universe of art has remained too small"[27]. It is as if the new man of Soviet communism is speaking here, a proletkultist who dreams of establishing new relations between man and the world, which would be "expressed" by a new form of art, stripped of the idealizations and myths of the past, and committed only to communist ideology.

Ideologically rejected by both his sons, like "King Lear"[28], Manole Crudu will also enter into an "erotic" conflict with Toma, which will precipitate his final downfall. Infatuated with the teenage Cristina, in whom he sees the pure, animalistic graces of youth manifesting themselves unabashedly, and who worships the "Master" without pursuing any kind of petty interest (as

[26] Horia Lovinescu, *Teatru 1*, 172.
[27] Horia Lovinescu, *Teatru 1*, 205.
[28] Horia Lovinescu, *Teatru 1*, 205.

Aglaia suggests), Manole collapses mentally when he discovers her kissing Toma. From that moment on, he will shut himself up in his studio, surrounded only by his old nurse (and let us remember that only the heroes of Greek and Latin tragedies, or classical French tragedies of the 17th century, are accompanied by a nurse), and will create his final work, a group of statues whose characters are filled with the horror of death, an extreme feeling, a fear of the abyss, which Manole will end up accepting as an integral part of the universe of "motifs" specific to artistic creation[29]. The group of statues horrifies Cristina, who has entered the studio at the thought that the Master was waiting for an explanation for what happened the night he surprised her with Toma, and provokes cries of admiration from Vlad, who discovers that his father is indeed a "great sculptor", that he has produced a "panic object", a "palpable negation", in relation to which he himself produced only "hysterics" and "aesthetic jests"[30]. A final artistic conversation takes place between father and son, the latter's attitude being marked by a psychologically interesting duality. On the one hand, he is curious to find out what an artist can do after such a work and exults when he is told that he must always start from the beginning, but on the other hand he ends up confessing his old love, a love whose strength and persistence was fed, in fact, desperately, by the disinterest shown towards the children by a father totally absorbed in artistic creation. His total dedication to art also redeems Manole, helping him through a cathartic process of great complexity:

> Now this fear is no longer in me, but there, on the pedestal, vain and shameless. That's why I laughed before, because I suddenly discovered... I'm not afraid anymore. (*With exultation.*) Never have I been so free and strong as now. (*He suddenly puts his hand to his chest, with an expression of terrible pain. He almost gasps.*) It's all right, it doesn't mean anything. The corpse is tired. He's asking for rest. That's all.[31]

[29] Alin Ștefănuț, *Dramaturgia lui Horia Lovinescu: explorări ale abisului* [Horia Lovinescu's Dramas. Explorations of the Abyss] (Cluj-Napoca: Casa Cărții de Știință, 2018).

[30] Horia Lovinescu, *Teatru 1*, 219-220.

[31] Horia Lovinescu, *Teatru 1*, 221.

The Death of an Artist is, broadly speaking, the story of an almost Balzac-like monomania, and I think Horia Lovinescu's play retains echoes of Balzac's *La Cousine Bette*, where the sculptor Steinbock collapses into a mediocre marriage rather than produce an astonishing masterpiece. All the characters Manole Crudu comes into contact with are touched by this monomania, when they are not affected or even destroyed by it. This is what happens with Claudia Roxan (a totally uninspired name!), Manole's lover, often deceived, whom – after an absence of four years devoted to an artistic trip to the Orient – he asks to marry, not out of love, but because he fears death, because – like Pascal – he feels an "abyss" opening up in front of him. The beautiful actress (beautiful though she is forty) refuses the marriage, but agrees to be a "charity sister" and does not leave Snagov until she realises Manole's almost senile passion for the younger Cristina.

As a psychological play and a drama of ideas, *The Death of an Artist* makes an honourable figure in the context of post-war dramaturgy, also because it renews a certain tradition of Romanian interwar theatre, represented by Camil Petrescu, Hortensia Papadat-Bengescu or Mihail Sebastian, for example. This – perhaps programmatic – inclusion in the great interwar tradition also prevents Horia Lovinescu from taking a more radical modernist stance. In the 1964 play, the major questions raised by the meaning and value of art are posed with the means of traditional drama (plot, literary architecture, conflict, characters), liberally peppered with cultural references to Shakespeare, Poe, Dostoevsky, René Huyghe.

The impression of a very moderate modernism, despite the ideological disobedience (which was nevertheless manifest in the 1960s in all sectors of Romanian literature and culture), also comes from the rather serious folkloric background of Lovinescu's plays (in *Petru Rareș*, for example, Horia Lovinescu stages a healing dance of the *călușari*)[32]. Even if we do not refer to the myth of Master Manole, transparent in a number of textual details (and in the theme of the sacrifice of the family on the altar of art), there are still many elements capable of supporting this hypothesis. The subject of the group of statues

[32] Natalia Stancu, *Horia Lovinescu. O dramaturgie sub zodia lucidității* [Horia Lovinescu. A Dramaturgy under the Sign of Lucidity] (Cluj-Napoca: Dacia, 1985), 134-136.

Manole is working on, and for which he proposes (ironically enough!) a collaboration with Vlad himself, who is to be the "hand" while the father is to be the "head", is *Zburătoul* [The Flying Vampire], one of the four fundamental myths of the Romanian people, as read by George Călinescu. The character of Nanny Domnica, a simple woman, has the dramatic function of reconciling the sculptor with the idea of death. The eighty-five year old woman recites to Manole verses "of our own, of the peasants", the first two being convincing, the other two betraying slightly an inexperienced scholarly hand (and an undeniable influence of Lucian Blaga and of his poetical play *Master Manole*[33]): "Death comes to the garden, / With a glass and a candle. / Hear the bell as it sings. / Rise, rise, and listen to it."[34] If here Domnica is quite credible, she becomes false when she starts speaking in Blagian parables and metaphors ("Do you know what I think, Manole? That this whole world is a wedding mystery. Darkness is wedded to light, evil to good, and always, always, unceasingly, the sun appears."[35]), or when she recites verses from *Mioriţa* about the death-wedding analogy, which are not really folkloric, marking Vasile Alecsandri's most visible intervention in the Romanian folk ballad he transcribed and published in the 1850s. To end the drama with such a quotation is a terrible technical mistake made by Horia Lovinescu, in the sense that the whole effect of the sculptor's death after the completion of a testamentary work is completely cancelled, deflated.

It should be pointed out that Horia Lovinescu's play may encounter certain difficulties in staging (if one imagines an exact staging, in accordance with the playwright's intentions), because of the static nature of the conflict, primarily psychological. Moreover, the abundance of didascalies, almost all external, marked by specific graphic processes, is likely to confuse a director. These, real novelistic insertions in the dialogical text, provide information of microscopic precision, important and interesting for the reader, who can move freely in the act of reading, speeding up or slowing down the pace depending

[33] Elena Silvia Mogoș (Terpan), "Lucian Blaga și Horia Lovinescu: jertfă și sacralizare prin artă" [Lucian Blaga and Horia Lovinescu: Sacrifice and Sacralization through Art], *Journal of Romanian Literary Studies*, issue 32, I (2023), 979-984.

[34] Horia Lovinescu, *Teatru 1*, 157.

[35] Horia Lovinescu, *Teatru 1*, 217.

on the circumstances, but undoubtedly sometimes embarrassing for the director who would approach Horia Lovinescu's text with the thought of staging it. The didascaly in the play's overture is illustrative in the sense of sliding towards the novel and cancelling out the theatrical effect through descriptive over-emphasis.

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Another play that involves a psychologizing interpretation, partly inspired by the myth of Master Manole, is *The Man Who Lost His Humanity*. Here, Manole is a craftsman who sacrifices everything to build the greatest edifice of all time, the Tower of the Moon: he gives up his family, his sleep, his human feelings and passions, any other artistic project. Although slaves die by the thousands, of exhaustion or hanged by the Master's grotesque (and linguistic!) double, Elonam, Manole will not make a human sacrifice to complete the vault, which is only one brick short. After the sixth collapse of the vault, despite mathematical calculations of extreme precision, Manole goes out into the world to find himself, to find his "humanity". On the site of his own home, in the heart of the forest, he finds a young hunter endowed with extraordinary strength. He lives with his mother, locked in a room and returning as a tormenting spirit at intervals. From word to word, the young man reveals to the stranger – whom he initially regarded with undisguised reluctance – that he has no other plan than to kill his father, who is guilty of leaving the family and killing his mother. He will also take action, with a sword in which he will stab himself when the father tries to disarm him, this crime being loaded with symbolic and psychoanalytical connotations.

Manole cannot be counted among the thieves, because they are honest thieves who seek "freedom" and "superhumanity," including the one who takes a sadistic pleasure in killing. To the outlaws, the master craftsman appears as an unsettling "wizard" whose dark eyes drip a strange poison. It was only when Manole met his old master, in "a room like in Rembrand't canvases depicting philosophers"[36], that he learned what the "cornerstone" was, the one that would make the whole construction stand up: "the sense of humanity" and "solidarity with the human being"[37]. These truths the very old master

[36] Horia Lovinescu, *Teatru 2* [Theatre 2] (Bucharest: Editura Eminescu, 1973), 232.
[37] Horia Lovinescu, *Teatru 2*, 233.

communicates to his former disciple in a language imbued with alchemical sentences, which Manole also guesses as such ("I see the ears of the alchemist coming out"[38]): "finis coronat opus", "what if your rational universe is in fact alienated, and the world you consider insane has reasons that you no longer understand?"[39]. Manole, "the man who lost his humanity," according to the old man, is the one who extinguished the "flame" in the workers of the Tower, that's why the "cornerstone" can't finish the construction. The play will end in an optimistic key, although marked by Manole's death, but not before he has gone through the "market of sins", imagined with great scenic-visual plasticity: "The demons of sins will be played by actors wearing masks inspired by J. Bosch, Goya, Romanian folk masks, etc., in a mix devoid of any pretence of local colour."[40]

After the devilish sarabande, in which the actors are left free to "improvise," Manole arrives in the sunless citadel, depicted in a sort of magical incantation, where he confronts his double, Elonam, who has become an apocalyptic prophet with speeches calling for the extinction of humanity, and hands him over to the executioner, whose joy is not bad when he hangs the villain on the gallows, plastically named Eleonora. Manole will regain his humanity before his death with a family of simple peasants, with whom he works the land and whose daughter, an almost nubile fourteen-year-old girl, somewhat in love with the stranger, he saves by communicating his own vital fluid...

A mythical, parabolic play, *The Man Who Lost His Humanity* still captivates nowadays with the impression of a heteroclite bazaar that it imposes on any reader. Sharply modern themes and echoes of Nietzsche sit alongside folk songs and incantations, alchemical references are juxtaposed with the quasi-comic speeches of thieves, in a variety of stylistic registers typical of some of the author's plays. There is also no shortage of medieval clichés of macabre dance and an allegorical death cart, which reminds me of a famous painting by Pieter Bruegel the Elder. The successive tableaux of the play, with no direct connection between them other than that conferred by Manole's return, are

[38] Horia Lovinescu, *Teatru 2*, 233.
[39] Horia Lovinescu, *Teatru 2*, 233, 234.
[40] Horia Lovinescu, *Teatru 2*, 238.

nonetheless of an overflowing and varied theatricality, not unlike a profession of faith by the Executioner of the Sunless City, Elonam's murderer: "I stand by Eleonora and look at all the fools gathered in the square, who laugh and think themselves the center of the earth; and then I see them all playing and swinging in unseen ropes. All of them. Even the prophet. Man is a puppet pulled on strings and the world is a panorama. Do you understand?"[41]

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It is clear that Horia Lovinescu's play dedicated to the Moldavian prince Petru Rareș (1527-1538; 1541-1546), *The Locum Tenens*, is modelled on Delavrancea's *Evening Star* (1910), which – although considered the weakest of the trilogy of Moldavia – seems to have some features that put it above the other two[42]. There are many memorable moments in Delavrancea, such as when Petru Rareș presents himself before the people and is recognized as Stephen the Great's son and a lord (after several proofs that are rejected one by one in a subtle game of logic), the prophecies of the old woman Dolca, or the moment of the unmasking of the boyars who planned to abandon the country to the Ottomans. Delavrancea excels at unravelling carefully woven plots, only here, unlike in *Apus de soare* [Sunset], the unmasking is done through staging, double-dealing and clever baiting by the plotters: Rareș is more diplomatic than his father, who was inclined to settle matters with the sword, cutting off two or three heads and "rather shedding innocent blood". Delavrancea's play is also interesting for the prince's extra-marital relationship with Genunea, the daughter of the logothete Baloș and sister of the valiant Sandomir, a relationship full of ambiguities, sub-meanings and erotic valences. As static as *Sunset*, *Evening Star* seems stylistically less cumbersome to read, with remarkable metaphorical devices and a tension of writing that makes it more energetic, more muscular, more alive and more palpitating than anything Delavrancea has written in the field of drama. The character of Petru Rareș is patriotic, prophetic, apocalyptic, brave, speaking with a pathos that becomes slightly hallucinatory in Act V, after the loss of the throne.

[41] Horia Lovinescu, *Teatru 2*, 247.
[42] Natalia Stancu, *Horia Lovinescu*, 90.

In Horia Lovinescu, there are many echoes of Delavrancea's cycle inspired by Stephen the Great (here, Delavrancea is in the position of a literary father, who must be challenged and overcome), primarily the theme of the plot, woven by the same traitorous boyars, Mihu and Trotușan, to whom Dumșa is added, boyars who overthrow Rareș from the throne with Turkish help at a critical moment, when the country is being squeezed by several enemy armies (Polish in the north and Tatar-Turkish in the south). It is, in fact, as in the early drama written by Delavrancea, the only core of genuinely theatrical tension in this static play, whose main interest does not even lie in the careful construction and portrayal of characters. The battle scenes, humorously punctuated by the devotion of the common soldiers to their lord, as in Barbu Ștefănescu Delavrancea, barely enliven the ensemble. Horia Lovinescu also takes from his precursor all the material relating to Petru Rareș' escape through the steep mountains towards Transylvania after the interruption of his reign, as well as his encounter with the rescuing fishermen, who disguise him as one of their own, so that he is not caught by the soldiers massed at the foot of the hills. We find the same prophetic pathos in Horia Lovinescu's as in Delavrancea's play, to such an extent that *The Locum Tenens* seems like a rewriting of *Evening Star*.

After all, *The Locum Tenens* has value, and still quite high value, as a play-portrait – and this would again be an important point of contact with Delavrancea's drama. The son and follower of Stephen the Great has here the sense of a great historical mission, that of standing up to Ottoman power in the name of the Christian cross, even at the cost of a temporary alliance with the pagans. Any betrayal seems justifiable to Rareș in the context of this ideal beyond time and historical circumstances, which led him to request the representation of the famous scene of the siege of Constantinople by the Persians in the 7th century on the wall of the monasteries he founded: a sort of reminder and warning to all the princes of Christianity! In order to accomplish his mission, this ruler from the Mușat dynasty does not back down from any compromise, sacrificing his beloved illegitimate son, Ioniță, to the Sultan's lust for revenge. This son, understanding the anti-Ottoman policy in a limited sense, had killed Ștefan Lăcustă [Stephen Locust], the lord sold to the Turks, and had attacked the citadel of Tighina with a handful of soldiers from Orhei,

arousing the anger of the pagans: he must therefore pay, and Rareș promises his death before knowing the identity of the perpetrator of the attack. The final meeting between son and father is a time of misunderstanding, with the young man spitting in his father's cheek before he dies and accusing him of selling his soul in the name of will to power.

At a first level, Rareș' mission in Moldova seems purely political, and Ioniță understands it only in this way: hence the final rift between father and son. This rupture at the heart of each family, constantly rethought and re-staged in the plays discussed in this article, refers to elements of Horia Lovinescu's biography, but has much deeper meanings in the existential and artistic realm, thematizing the difficult emancipation of the Son in relation to a Father deified and then despised, but never understood as the one who really is. Reading *The Locum Tenens* between the lines, we discover that the Moldavian voivode considers himself anointed by God, the repository of an ancient wisdom, transmitted by initiation within the Mușat dynasty. In Horia Lovinescu's play, the discussion of the Moldavian Prince with Sultan Suleiman, set in Constantinople in 1540, is based on equality, because Rareș is addressing not the worldly ruler of the Ottoman kingdom, but the "caliph", i.e. a prince invested with a primarily religious and trans-worldly dignity. Suleiman feels that for Rareș, too, the reign has a mystical function, asking him an unequivocal question: "You consider yourself the keeper of a deposit, don't you?" The answer befits the question, "Yes, Your Highness. And this deposit must float on the sea of ages. It is not mine, it belongs to my ancient land and its inhabitants. I am but a rafter, who, while he lives, must direct this cargo to the future." Suleiman continues to speak to Rareș in the same deeply religious tone, with references to Hermetic symbolism: "At great depths, beneath the ruggedness of continents, the watery veils meet. Day and night form a whole. (*He looks longingly at Rareș.*) That's why the Caliph understands you."[43] Read correctly, this scene, crucial for understanding the motivations guiding Rareș's politics, reveals Vasile Lovinescu's profound influence on his younger brother. This influence is also repeatedly seen in *The Locum Tenens*. It is known

[43] Horia Lovinescu, *Teatru 1*, 341.

that Vasile Lovinescu was also very concerned with the era of Petru Rareș and in particular with the interpretation of the "alchemical" symbolism of the monasteries the Prince founded. In good esoteric spirit, Horia – as his brother Vasile – makes of the Moldavian ruler a first-class initiate, "keeper" of a "deposit" of mysteries that must reach his descendants. Rareș, as he himself confesses in his long monologue after the loss of the throne, has also been involved in the magical arts, the arcana of which he has mastered: "I'm not saying, I've done a little astrology, I know I live under a purple star, and I know other things, but that's another story. But as for alchemy, ha-ha, all the alchemists you pay big money for are rogues who are leading you around by the nose, pardon the expression. Lead can turn to gold, that's no lie, Magnum Opus exists, but first you have to discover the philosopher's stone in yourself, as Roșca says."[44]

Roșca is therefore the one who taught Rareș the main truth of the Hermetic art, namely that the transmutation of lead into gold never happens without a transformation of the self. Moreover, the philosopher's stone is in man, not outside him, the gold discovered in the alchemical process being spiritual. But – to return to the question in the play – who is this Roșca? A cousin of the Prince himself and metropolitan of Moldavia, Grigorie Roșca, the author of the iconographic programmes of the monasteries from Bukovina, sometimes appears as a hesychast monk imbued with the spirit of God, and sometimes as a skilful political adviser, a "sophist", who does not forget to remind Rareș that "Christ also bears the sword"[45]. Roșca also plays the role of the great pontiff, the transmitter of the crown, addressing the former fisherman with the title of "locum tenens". Is it the lieutenant of Stephen the Great, by whose tomb does Rareș receive his right to rule? It would seem so, but the discussion with Suleiman makes things clear: Rareș, like all the lords from the Mușat dynasty, is a "locum tenens of the White Aurochs", a totemic beast whose spiritual energy radiates over all things in the world.

The folkloric elements in Horia Lovinescu's play are, of course, quite specific to his artistic manner, but they can also be considered a glimpse into

[44] Horia Lovinescu, *Teatru 1*, 334.
[45] Horia Lovinescu, *Teatru 1*, 295.

Vasile's traditionalism. In his wanderings through the mountains, Petru Rareș is recognised by the fishermen as belonging to the fishermen's guild on the basis of ritual forms connected with catching the first trout (organisation of the catch, proper gestures, silence, avoidance of contact with the women, the incantation to be said when the fish is taken out of the water, etc.). In order to awaken him from the lethargy into which the wounds received in the battles have plunged him, these fishermen also play a "healing *căluș*"[46] [ritual dance], which the play's didascalies present according to "the documentary film from the Institute of Folklore". The dancing troupe has four members, plus the "leader" and the "mute", and they perform a symbolic transfer of the illness from the feet of the wounded man to a lad in the group. The illness of supernatural origin ("you were writhing like a devil") is also magically resolved, as Rareș is snatched from the hands of the "fairies" who are making him sick. Towards the end of the play, Horia Lovinescu once again exploits the data of folk culture, staging a symbolic funeral for a young dead man, a group of women singing the tree song, following the model contained in "the Institute of Folklore's band, which must be respected to the letter"[47]. The young "dead" is in fact one of the sons of Rareș, sent as a hostage to Istanbul at the hands of the Sultan. A Western emissary – at the sight of the ceremony – protests that he has seen no priest, to which he is retorted that "the ritual is older than the Church" and that the ritual "tolerates" the people, not the people tolerate it. After all, these moments in Lovinescu's play, parasitic both in relation to the unfolding of the "action" and to the portrayal of the hero's features, do nothing but illustrate a belief of his brother Vasile: "integration into folk tradition is integration into esotericism".

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[46] Horia Lovinescu, *Teatru 1*, 336-337. Ewa Kocój, "The Romanian Ritual of Calusari Between an Obsolete Meaning and a Preserved Structure," *Anthropos*, 108, 2 (2013):565-575; Ileana Benga, Bogdan Neagota, "Căluş and Căluşari. Ceremonial Syntax and Narrative Morphology in the Grammar of the Romanian Căluş," *Archaeus. Études d'histoire des religions / Studies in the History of Religions*, no XIV (2010): 197-227.

[47] Horia Lovinescu, *Teatru 1*, 352.

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The Game of Life and Death in the Desert of Ashes (1973), a play that at times exudes great expressive force, manages to combine, in a synthesis of great intensity, echoes of Shakespeare, Dostoevsky and Beckett, with numerous reminiscences of Judeo-Christian mythology, treated sometimes in a serious register, sometimes in a grotesque or ironic one. The mood of the play is extremely gripping, we are in a post-apocalyptic period, and of all mankind only the most famous enemy brothers of the Bible, Abel and Cain, seem to have survived, together with their jester and strange father, in whom critics have rightly seen a sort of Feodor Karamazov. The scheme of the parent-child relationship and the relationship of the sons to each other refers, to mention Charles Mauron, to a series of haunting images, defining Horia Lovinescu's creative psyche. The three, as in *The Death of an Artist*, revolve around a woman, a sixteen-year-old teenager, Ana, in whom an immense purity is combined with the raptures of the flesh and the troubled calls to the voluptuousness of love. Abel loves her like a brother and refuses to marry her in the name of an idealism of love, the old man desires her with impotent snarls and is whipped by her – on demand – with the nails intended for weaving a basket, experiencing a masochistic ecstasy that seems to have come out of Sacher-Masoch, but the one who will "have" her (in every sense of the word) will be none other than Cain.

This one returns to his father's house after being missing in the play's overture, but without the "prodigal son" behaviour that the Father expected of him. On the contrary, sour and mean, Cain is like him altogether and brings with him only the despair of a mercenary who seems to have returned from Congo, tired of all the people he has had to kill. Out of boredom, Cain will rape Ana, revealing to her the animal nature of human beings and the shameful pleasure of the senses. The woman is pregnant, and the old man kills himself in despair when he learns that it is not Abel's child (whom he still considers a mere "poor in spirit"). The wiser brother achieves a kind of reconciliation between Ana and Cain, getting the latter to accept the child and help perpetuate life, but ultimately "kills himself", somehow forcing the ex-military man to fire the last bullet from the barrel of his gun into himself during a "let's see who's tougher" fight that he seemed to relentlessly dominate.

But the relationship between the brothers here goes beyond mere rivalry and seems to obey an almost gnostic dualistic principle. Abel is a pure and forgiving Christ, and Cain a kind of Satan whose sole purpose is to "defile" his brother, to brutalize his innocence, forcing him – since childhood – to witness all sorts of repulsive spectacles: impaling frogs, gouging out the eyes of little birds, even the sexual intercourse between the parents that he shows him through the keyhole (there's a kind of "primal scene" here, to use Freudian terminology, which explains all of Abel's horror of sex and his refusal to marry Ana).

Cain is an embodiment of the blind forces of nature, an unrestrained telluric, an anti-intellectual ("symbols have always made me nauseous, not an intellectual nausea, but a real, physiological nausea"[48]), while Abel represents a principle of reason and balance, a thinker who likes to split the differences between things and find the hidden motivations of phenomena. And yet, despite the irreconcilability between the two, love is a very powerful driving force in their relationship, with Cain's love remaining virtual, subject to conditioning ("if I could have polluted you – that expression reeks of the most disgusting idealism, but it suits you – I think I would have loved you as one seldom loves one's brother"[49]), whereas Abel's love is always real and finds its culmination in the ultimate sacrifice. Horia Lovinescu's play is remarkable, managing to become, one by one, lyrical, grotesque, tragic, allegorical, boring, but always maintaining a deep human vibration and a stylistic tension of a very good artistic level.

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Horia Lovinescu's dramaturgy, read with tools inspired by psychology in a close reading system, reveals fascinating connections between biographical and historical facts, and artistic creation. The theme of sibling enemies and the relationship with the father runs through it, gathering around it constellations of psychological and aesthetic meanings. We find it associated with the competition of the two brothers and the father for the love of a young maiden who is either transfigured or perverted by the struggle of the men around

[48] Horia Lovinescu, *Teatru 2*, 172.
[49] Horia Lovinescu, *Teatru 2*, 171.

her. The figure of the mother, of simple and sublime goodness, or totally absent, does not polarise the psychological energies of the characters and the author, leading to the over-dimensioning of a substitute maternal figure: the grandmother. In order to sublimate his traumas and obsessions, the playwright constantly refers to how the European cultural tradition has dealt with sibling enemies and symbolic parricide, from biblical myths and Greek tragedy to Dostoevsky. The cultural references both clarify and disturb the psychic energies on which they are superimposed, making the exegete's task difficult, but – however – it is clear from some "haunting metaphors" that Horia Lovinescu's work is set up as a protest against the father and as a dialogue, sometimes polemical and violent, with the writings and worldview of his elder brother, the occultist Vasile Lovinescu. Horia's work speak about self-affirmation, about artistic creation, about the dilemmas of modern man with such a personal pathos that the proletkultist form that the author has given it – constrained by the "terror of history" or opportunism – does not hinder the reading at all, on the contrary, it gives it an additional documentary and literary interest[50]...

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[50] Natalia Stancu, *Horia Lovinescu*, 151-153.

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