

A Brief Foray into the Dramaturgy of Lucian Blaga

“Zalmoxis, A Pagan Mystery” (1921) is a dramatic poem in which each character autonomously structures his own discursive lyric, expressing thus a variety of concepts over the spiritual foundation of the Dacians. The charm of each nuance in part relates in the last instance, the mode in which the author understands the proper structure of the actual dramatic perspective above the revolt of our non-Latin foundation. The new god is a vain and vengeful one. His emergence from the data of the natural condition of humanity tries the character who is both chthonic and Dionysiac of the new religion. The solution to transform the prophet Zalmoxis into one of the gods of the traditional polytheistic religion appears rightfully inherent, the only compromise possible for a community unprepared and incapable of being initiated into monotheism. The Dacians would close their eyes to the teachings of the Blind One while in a spiritual night they are complacent, so evident because they cannot perceive the truth; they cannot live the religious revelation the way it is very possible to do. The Dacians were not Greek, but to catalogue their faith whether by the embodiment of the Dionysiac, or the regimentation of the Apollonian means to denature the true spiritual dimensions that were impossible for them to define in the first place. The Dacians configured by Lucian Blaga in “Zalmoxis” have a heterogeneous character in comparison with the concept of humanity. They are an imperfect construct, their community is undefined, and it is but an embryo of society. The interpretation in conformity with Dacians, who would have been more than men, is illusory; Dacians appear as something less than men. Their incapacity to frame within a specific divine project need not be viewed as a spiritual failure. Moreover, the Dacians were not yet ontologically completed and thus were unprepared for the revelation of the new faith of the Blind One. The original mystery of existence cannot be, therefore, overcome: you, as a man, endowed or not, to intuit, however incomplete, imperfect and partial, you are finally forced to let him subjugate you. To recognize oneself bound in the face of the mystery means, at most, to know it luciferically, meaning the guarantee of survival of the secret beyond yourself. It is tragedy from here on in, but all the greatness of the human condition as well, because the ontological destiny of man is to live in the “horizon of mysteries” and to be endowed with “revelation” that is realized through the act of creation, from the prophet. The destiny of the prophet Zalmoxis would have been to sacrifice himself for his entire people, as a kind of scapegoat over whom he concentrates the sins of the community, sacrificed by people in order to be forgiven and saved by gods. Once they have accomplished the killing of the prophet Zalmoxis, killing even his statue, the Dacians earn the revelation of the myth of the Blind One. Post facto they seem to believe that The Blind One is, from this day forward, among them, theirs, themselves. In Lucian Blaga’s debut play he does not reconfigure the cult of Zalmoxis in his historical markings, but rather creates a space in which the creative imagination of the poet begets his own myth. Between the chthonic and the uranic, in Blaga’s play, it is possible that Zalmoxis could have lost contact with his kind. Starting from an existential dimension so specific and familiar of his people, namely the chthonic, Zalmoxis will have estranged himself to Dacians through his overstay in a cave, where in his attempt to embrace a new dimension - the uranic - seemed too much to those below, who, prisoners of their own spiritual limitations, ontological or drastically sanctioned and from within a primary instinct of self-protection. However, the myth is born spontaneously after the disappearance of the prophet, the intuition and consciousness of the Dacians suggesting a revelation. Sacrificing his messenger, the Blind One guaranteed his being in the horizon of immortality.

In the second play Lucian Blaga wrote, “Tulburarea apelor” (“Whirling Waters”, 1923) the author imagines an Orthodox Romanian priest from Transylvania which, at 1540, strives to find out a new spiritual path for his people. This new and yet unidentified religious belief – presumed to be the single authentic one – is different both from the Lutheranism from the citadel of Sibiu (Hermannstadt) and from the Dionysian features the virgin Nona carries out in an erotic behavior. We come to understand that the priest lingers for a religious entity that has not abandoned the world – as the Orthodox God seems to have done – but is a living continuous presence within the immediate reality. All the kingdoms are a manifestation of this ubiquitous spirit called “Jesus the Earth” in a genuine expression of pantheism. For Lucian Blaga this is an aesthetic way of revealing how the assumed religion of the pre-historical Thracian / Getae / Dacian prophet Zalmoxis – the sacred nature – has perpetuated and adapted itself in the medieval Romanian mentality and culture.

Lucian Blaga’s play “Daria” (1925) is a bourgeois melodrama or a psycho-analytic drama. Our approach is from a perspective which goes beyond both the triviality of the surface theme (i.e. is the lack of satisfaction a wife experiences in domestic love) and the artificial speech the protagonists resort to. The underlying characteristic which eventually redeems this rather peculiar dramatic experiment is the very significance the author assigns to human instincts, seen as an essential feature and a true innate value of humanity. The whole play is a plea for the will and the possibility of humankind to find out by itself the ways to step into the transcendental absolute, to make the “ontological leap”, to become part of the great unbeknown by means of events of the “profane” creature: love and creation. To what extent is man successful in such a naïve and ambitious undertaking we are yet to interpret. We also draw a parallel with other contemporary European expressionist artistic works that might have influenced Lucian Blaga, most notably Frank Wedekind and Edvard Munch, in an attempt to outshine the limitative Freudian outlook.

Styling in art has both the lure and the hazard to oscillate between the achievement through the aesthetic sublime and the unfulfillment in the marginal areas of the aesthetic that bear the name kitsch. A cycle of intellectual concerns of the author Lucian Blaga are embodied in the existential obsessions of the characters of the drama “Ivanca” (“The Deed”, 1925) in such a way that the artistic transfiguration at an elevated level makes easy way for the conceptual and formal schematization, with uncertain outcomes. The essential features of the new drama do not produce intellectual or artistic revelations, they are not outposts of a bridgehead but suggest a lonely dead end, an itinerary that may be interesting for its path, but is also surprising for its incapacity to find a different solution of the resolution, other than conventional patterns. “The deed” of Luca the painter may be accounted for positive constraint of the hence enlightened obsessions. “The deed” of the playwright Lucian Blaga looks more like a stalemate. The three cardinal points of the drama are three slices of life that make up a personality: Luca the painter, The Father, Ivanca. It would be an error to account any of the three protagonists a viable autonomous ontology. Hypostasis of a tout ensemble, the three fragments make up a puzzle. The Father and Ivanca act for the vitals, they are shades of the profound diapason that circumscribes human individual. The superficial shell, apparent and fake, is embodied by Luca the painter. The metaphysical (or, more prosaic, psychoanalytical) essence is to be the final value of two antagonistic powers that do not balance out each other in the end. The centrifugal power of the painter who is lingering while brushing up (a way of evasion after all) is transfixed in a silent facing with the centripetal power of the other two fragments of being. The Father and Ivanca seem to carry it off well, outnumbering the young artist by their innate way of self-being. Luca

the painter is tormented and alone on the rampart of a face-off where he infers the falsehood of his undertaking, of his stand and of his resources. Thus the nature of the painter experiences an ever increasing stress, up to the incumbency of an identity implosion. This institutes the necessity to commit the redemptional and illuminating deed, a unique resolution to surmount the existential impasse.

We endeavor to point out the aesthetic perspective the philosopher, poet and playwright Lucian Blaga offers in his unique pantomime, "Înviere" ("Resurrection", 1925). The author made full use of Silence as an aesthetic textual technique and a virtual feasible stage device in order to experience and to appropriate a passage to (and a revelation of) "the absolute". Mythology and mythological reason are transitional steps in this spiritual journey, which is made up of a combination of successive "synthesis images", similarly found in the folk ballad "Vochita", along with the pagan rituals and beliefs of the Romanian patriarchal world.

In Blaga's masterpiece, "Meșterul Manole" ("Manole, the Master Mason", 1927) Mira is the perfect purity where the demonic of the master mason has no access. The craftsman's wife is the embodiment of innocence, the heavenly depiction of mankind as opposed to demonic Manole. "Serenity" and "light" are words that repeatedly occur in her monologue thus suggesting the plenitude of being she is about to conceive when she would be raising into the light her perfect precious, the church. Găman is the embodiment and the expression of the dark, ancient faith of the earth's powers. The very appearance of the character in the story of the play seems to be part of a different logic, the fabulosity, the heresy, "fairy-tale like figure". He utters the words dissonantly and links the sentences into texts that have seemingly no logic for he professes a magic ritual, usually unconsciously, while falling into a trance, ecstatically, mediated by sleeping commonly. Through this ritual he enables the connection with another world, that of the powers of the earth. The builders imagine through their sensitive responses a generic humanity. They are masons by spiritual vocation, actually emissaries of the anonymous crowd. Manole's journeymen stay for the dramatic swing between the ideal and egotism, which precedes the collective creation of a miracle, if committed in the name of humanity. The third mason, while explaining the work of art, metamorphoses it from an aesthetic to a religious asset. The sixth mason is the most outlined of all builders for he carries out a separate part that is to constantly gainsay Manole, to incite to insubordination and rebellion. The eighth mason is fully aware of the outstanding artistic accomplishment of all builders, their edifice about to become a cultural and even political symbol of the nation. There are several characters with a brief appearance in the history of the drama, thus having an apparent minor significance in designing the play. They seem to be mere "working tools" for the playwright. However when relating them to the major issues of the literary product and if integrating them in a larger vision of the whole creation of the author their significance and role can be outlined in a more adequate manner. The Herald may stand for the impossibility of the common man to understand the drama of the artist, for the incapacity of a mediocre person to assimilate the aspirations of the genius. The Second Carter is a good opportunity to express the Middle Ages relations between the Orthodoxy of the Romanians and the Lutheranism of the Saxons in Transylvania, the Protestantism and the whole religious Reform having been rejected naturally by the Romanian people. The Third Carter is the pretext to express in an artistic manner a historical reality, i.e. the major role Târgoviște played as a spiritual focal point for the Romanian Middle Ages Orthodoxy, but also as a centre for the religious printings in Romanian or Slavonic languages. Also one can distinguish the suggestion of a light irony on the behalf of the author with regards to the human prosaic hypostasis of the Romanian Orthodox priests when associating their two fundamental habits, anointing the priests

and taking care of their own housekeeping. The Voivode is an image of a person with a subtle, diplomatic intelligence that leaves room for a waggish wit. He is fully aware of his condition as patron of church building. He hesitates between two decisions he should make concerning Manole the Craftsman: either to highly praise the artist, the creator or to sentence to death the human murderer. Whichever decision he would make, he knows very well his prerogative as a ruler is absolute and supreme, the Middle Ages autocracy allowing him anything. Having a refined spirit, the Voivode understands from the very beginning both the superlative features of the creation and the sacrifice of the creator. His attitude seems to be benevolent, conciliatory, as he is very satisfied with the “gift” of the Masons – in his view the church belongs both to the ruler and to God. It becomes obvious the Voivode urges Manole to enjoy the “fruit of his endeavor and of his hands”. He forgives Manole, having been convinced that at the Last Judgment the church Manole has built would exculpate him of all sins. After Manole commits suicide the Voivode pays him the proper respect. The whole portrait configures the Voivode as an exceptional ambassador of his people, at a far distance from the bloody figure portrayed in some variants of the folk ballad, closer to the real historical character, the benefactor of the Argeş Monastery, Neagoe.

We strive to reveal to what extent Lucian Blaga’s seventh drama, “Cruciada copiilor” (“The Children’s Crusade”, 1930) is to be reduced to the status of an aesthetic antagonism of two Christian denominations, Catholicism vs. Orthodoxy. Though the author imagines two monks and a western crusade through eastern land, we come to realize that the most important aspects of the play are its other characters, i.e. the Lady of the Fortress, her child and Crazy Ioana; moreover, the Fortress itself, a place that could not be geographically mapped for it is not a real realm, but a mythical world, an imaginary boundary between reality and fairy-tale, a mental concept where the authentic ancient spiritual features of the patriarchal original Romanian culture and civilization still survive. We conclude that the drama is an artistic attempt to save the paradisiacal innocence and at the same time a philosophical warning to the futile death spiritual corruption implies.

The Romanian apriorism, the presumed autochthonous ancestral mentality had no means to express itself through tragic drama in the antiquity. Thus the playwright Lucian Blaga introduces the presumptive conception by means of modern methods, the author being concerned with the metamorphosis of the native spirituality from prehistory to the ontological failure of modern times. With regards to “Avram Iancu” (1934) the mythical dimension seems to grow indistinct due to the historical facts. It reduces itself to the appearance of the protagonist from the legend and his final departure into the legend. Yet the well documented plot of the historical drama is merely an opportunity to cogitate on the insinuation of the absolute in the fatal development of the daily existence towards the “original, archetypal and eternal phenomenon”.

“Arca lui Noe” (“Noah’s Ark”, 1944) is based on a folk tale influenced by Bogomilism. Brother and Unbrother stand for the antinomic duality of the absolute principle. Fellow and Unfellow are indestructibly united. Unbrother cannot be mastered and Brother would be an ontic sterility if his fellow absent. However the Bogomilic vision becomes complicated in Blaga’s meaning. The greybeard Brother, the Patriarch is “the forefather of all ancestors” who comes “from here and from further away”, that is the archetype monad. Yet, if Unbrother is the shadow of Brother, one has to conclude that he dates from the same beginnings, also “the forefather of all ancestors”. Therefore, who and where might be their father? If not “in existence” anymore, then the mankind might have been left at the mercy of an amicable but eternal facing of the two brothers. The prototype of humanity looks like a waste, a spiritual mutant so the will of the

Patriarch arises with a drastic determination. If the mankind created in the likeness of Brother bears more resemblance to Unbrother, then the Patriarch himself is about to find his own needlessness. Thus a new series of ontology is to be created in order to provide another chance to the ontic itself. Through a *coincidentia oppositorum* we can assert that in “Manole, the Craftsman” life is a receptacle for creation whereas in “Noah’s Ark” the creation is the sole receptacle for life. One could argue a Sophianic expectation (adapted by the philosopher Lucian Blaga from Spengler and Frobenius, the transcendent descending, revealing itself in a embodiment of the universe): the Ark itself rises as the supreme receptacle of Life, assigned by the absolute.

“Anton Pann” (1945), Lucian Blaga’s last drama is highly autobiographical. When writing about the popular poet, musicologist and composer Anton Pann, about his love for life and his sacrifice for his literary work, Lucian Blaga is writing, more than ever, about himself. “The Story of the Word” is to be made up out of the people’s proverbial sayings brought together by Anton Pann. The book becomes an artistic expression of the Romanian apriorism, of the ethnical genius in a balance realm. This is possible for the autochthonous “mioritic” space has preserved its connections to the magic even in the modern prosaism. The contacts with the age of the superstition, of the myth are not lost forever. The poet finds himself in a tragic state, caught between vow and denial. Just like Manole the Master Mason, he has both the awareness he is predestinated for the daimonic mission to create and the intuition he cannot dissociate the act of creation from the most specific feeling of human life, which is to be sacrificed, the love. On the night he creates “The Silent Song” the poet gives away everything for his work. The poet is anchored both in the near horizon and “beyond”, bearing both the human bit and the daimonic predestination in his genius nature, leaving from history and making a halt, eternally, into the story.

In English by Lucian Bâgiu and Doris Plantus-Runey