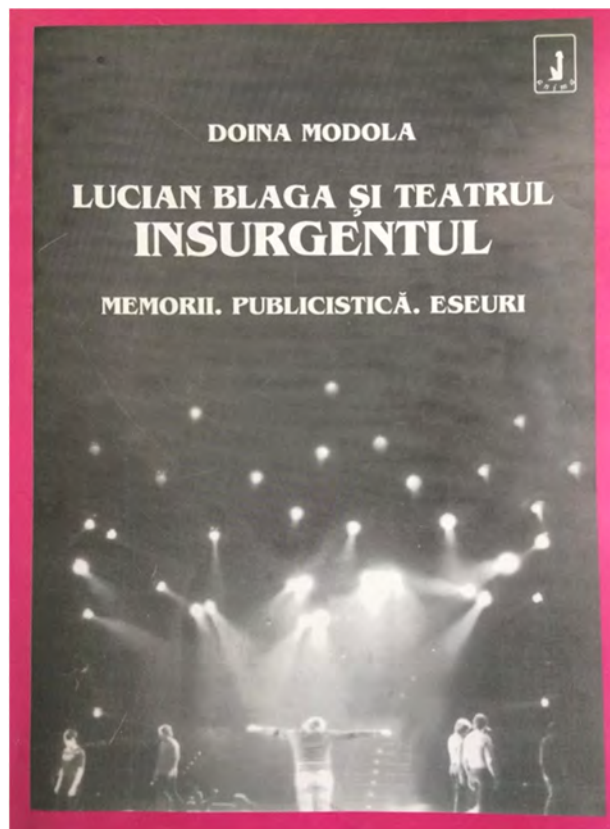


Lucian Blaga as Visionary but Unfortunate Playwright

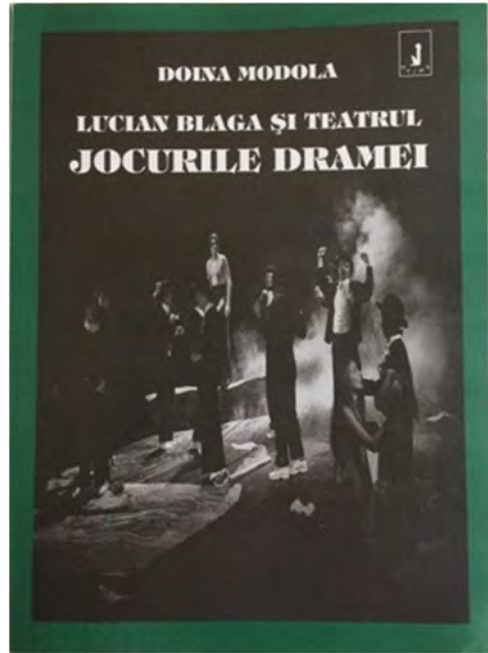
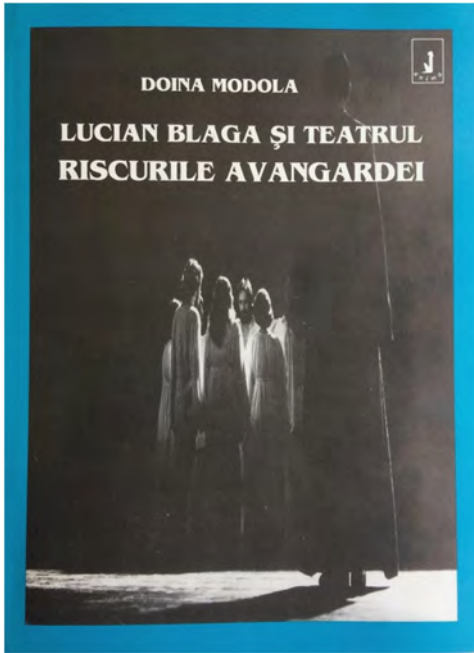
Book review: Doina Modola, *Lucian Blaga și teatrul. Jocurile dramei. Tulburarea apelor, Fapta, Daria, Înviere* [Lucian Blaga and the Theatre. Drama Games. Whirling Waters, The Deed, Daria, Resurrection], Bucharest: Editura Anima, 2017; *Lucian Blaga și teatrul. Riscurile avangardei* [Lucian Blaga and the Theatre. The Risks of the Avant-garde], Bucharest: Editura Anima, 2003; *Lucian Blaga și teatrul. Insurgentul. Memorii. Publicistică. Eseuri* [Lucian Blaga and the Theatre. The Insurgent. Memoirs. Journalism. Essays], Bucharest: Editura Anima, 1999



A qualified literary critic and theatrologist, rewarded in 2007 with the award of the Romanian Theatrical Union for career achievements, Doina Modola has a multi-volume publishing history: *Dramaturgia românească între 1900-1918* [Romanian Dramaturgy between 1900 and 1918] (1983); *Actori pe scena lumii* [Actors on the World Stage] (1990); *Chipurile Traviatei. Reprezentația lirică* [The Guises of La traviata. The Lyrical Representation] (2002); *Seducătorul și umbrele: Gib I. Mihăescu. Dramaturgia prozatorilor* [The Charmer and the Shadows: Gib I. Mihăescu. the Dramaturgy of Prose Writers] (2003). The certain thing, however, is that her capital work, currently unfinished, is dedicated to the theatre of Lucian Blaga (1895-1961), one of the most important Romanian writers and philosophers, a creator whose presence has marked, inspired and guided the author ever since her childhood, as revealed by the “dedications” that open two of the three volumes. The most recent of them, *Lucian Blaga și teatrul. Jocurile dramei. Tulburarea apelor, Fapta, Daria, Înviere* [Lucian Blaga and the Theatre. Drama Games. Whirling Waters, The Deed, Daria, Resurrection] (Bucharest: Editura Anima, 2017) is the third volume of an expected cycle on the theatrical concept of Blaga, Blaga’s dramaturgy and its reception from the beginning to the contemporary age, as well as on the theatrical productions that this dramaturgy has generated. The volume was preceded by *Lucian Blaga și teatrul. Insurgentul. Memorii. Publicistică. Eseuri* [Lucian Blaga and the Theatre. The Insurgent. Memoirs. Journalism. Essays] and by *Lucian Blaga și teatrul. Riscurile avangardei* [Lucian Blaga and the Theatre. The Risks of the Avant-garde] (Bucharest: Editura Anima, 1999 and 2003).

The plays *Tulburarea apelor*, *Fapta* and *Înviere*, which, together with *Daria*, are the subject matter of the book published by Doina Modola the last year, were hidden away on her mother’s shelf of “forbidden items”. What were these “forbidden items”? These were the books by Romanian (and foreign) authors banned in communism, in the 1950s-1960s; owning them was very dangerous during that age (this could have even led to the incarceration of the “transgressive” reader). On the aforementioned shelf, Blaga’s works had the good company of Mircea Eliade’s novels written in his youth. In fact, the plays *Tulburarea apelor*, *Fapta* and *Înviere* are also the works of a young man who foreshadowed, by some aspects of his rebel, “insurgent” spirit, as described by the author, the emergence of the radical generation '27 of writers and philosophers asserted in inter-war Romania (Emil Cioran, Mircea Eliade, Eugen Ionescu – later to become Eugène

Ionesco -, Mihail Sebastian, Constantin Noica, Bucur Țincu, Miron Radu Paraschivescu, Belu Zilber, etc.). Doina Modola's triptych focuses on this young, active, restless and very daring man rather than on the canonized and "embalmed" writer who had been buried alive in all sorts of preconceptions and clichés. "An «avant la lettre» Artaudian", as described by the author in the first volume, owing to the propensity for the elemental, the orgiastic, the metaphysical, the archetypal, to the accent on the theatrical image, Lucian Blaga is also, in terms of humor, irony and grotesque, the link that connects the universe of the prose writer and playwright Ion Luca Caragiale (1852-1912) and the one of Eugène Ionesco, she claims, following behind critic Nicolae Steinhardt, in her most recent volume. (In fact, the two directions converge, Caragiale and Ionesco themselves having affinities with Artaud, as shown, in the case of the former, by another Romanian critic, Ion Vartic.) Both descriptions are a challenge launched by Doina Modola in relation to a specific (limited, still) tradition of interpretation of Blaga's dramatic texts. While, as shown above, her exegetic work is not completed, a circle closes, however, with *Jocurile dramei*, because this marks the end of the extremely thorough analysis of Blaga's youth plays written by the writer in the time interval 1921-1925, which – notes the author – overlaps the period during which "the Romanian theatrical avant-garde had a meteoric enactment", represented by groups such as *Teatrul Nou* (1920), *Studio* (1921), *Insula* (1921), *Poesis* (1922), *Teatru sintetic* (1925), and so on and so forth. This led Doina Modola to an unequivocal – and very accurate – diagnosis (in the first volume of the series): "Organically linked with this theatrical avant-garde and found in its most advanced line, without Lucian Blaga being actually included in a group, the five plays (*Zamolxe*, 1921, *Tulburarea apelor*, 1923, and especially those written in 1925: *Fapta*, *Înviere* and *Daria*) stood for its innovating tendencies in the Romanian space, at its most symptomatic state, while also being its most significant dramaturgic successes" (1999, 14). Therefore, the three books signed by Doina Modola cover Blaga's years of training, of theatrical apprenticeship and of crystallization of his own "theatrical mission", but also the stage of the first creative results in the dramaturgic sphere.



Blaga saw the first stage play when he was 7 years old, in 1909. The “passion for reading” was triggered in him when he was 13 and he read a fragment from the beginning of the dramatic poem *Faust* (which he would translate many years later), Goethe remaining a major reference and model for his entire literary and philosophical works, “his guardian spirit”, as noted by Doina Modola in the first volume of the series. Therefore, she says, “one of the first pivotal experiences in the development of Lucian Blaga” occurred “symbolically, predictively, under the sign of theatre” (1999, 16). In 1916, Blaga took the first trip to Vienna, where he would settle, soon thereafter, for his studies. There, he got in contact with expressionism and with the avant-garde artistic orientations, which prompted him to abandon classical and realistic poetry and to adopt, systematically and knowingly (in the opinion of Doina Modola), while seeking to synchronize the Romanian theatre with the Western one, the “latest” tendencies “of modern art”, which he would apply, by experimenting, to the dramaturgic plane: *anti-mimesis*, revisiting “the non-Aristotelian mystery formulae” (the ancient mystery in *Zamolxe*, the Renaissance mystery in *Tulburarea apelor*, the medieval mystery pantomime

in *Înviere*), the aesthetics of stylization, distancing, the grotesque, the irony, the tragicomedy, and so on and so forth (1999, 24-25). Back home at the end of the First World War, Blaga assisted the Great National Assembly of Alba Iulia, on 1 December 1918, which voted the union of Transylvania, Banat, Crișana, Sătmar and Maramureș with the Kingdom of Romania. On his debut of 1919, with *Poemele luminii* [*Poems of Light*], followed shortly thereafter by the volume of aphorisms *Pietre pentru templul meu* [*Stones for My Temple*], which had flaming success, Blaga (born in Lancrăm, near Sebeș and Sibiu) was considered the most precious gift that Transylvania offered, artistically speaking, to “the motherland”, after the long-awaited Union. However, soon thereafter, the playwright started to be misunderstood by his contemporaries. The strong influence of Freudian and, especially, of Jungian psychoanalysis on the writer (and philosopher), which meant a new field, at that age, for the Romanian sphere, generated great difficulties for the author, notes Doina Modola, damaging “in particular the reception of Blaga’s plays, prompting violent reactions of rejection from the established critics, hindering the texts’ staging not only at the time of their writing, but also a long time later, because of the inculcation of persistent preconceptions” (2017, 154). In the opinion of both the experienced (with several exceptions) and the unexperienced audience, Blaga’s dramatic work had come to be obscured by his poetic and philosophic work, an anomaly that continues to be perpetuated even nowadays: “his trouble was not an ignorance of the laws of the dramatic genre or the inadequacy of the styles used in drafting the plays, but a theatrical-dramatic competence by which he exceeded clearly his age and his commentators”, writes, to this end, Doina Modola in *Lucian Blaga și teatrul. Insurgentul...* (1999, 27). And the author’s current three volumes on the subject matter prove it heavily. Certainly, a very important input to the preservation and strengthening of the aforementioned anomaly was also provided by communist censorship, by the intrusion of the political in culture, to which the writer and his work fell victims after 1945. This is how we can explain (at least partially) that, of the Blaga’s four youth plays discussed by the author *in extenso* in *Lucian Blaga și teatrul. Jocurile dramei...* only one – i.e. the psychoanalytical drama *Daria* – was put on stage during the playwright’s life, a short time after its publication. The other were staged only after the fall of communism, in the 1990s.

In her books, Doina Modola engages in a very careful and detailed close-reading of Blaga's plays, while also including various openings that relate to the field of comparative studies (she establishes sources, filiations, potential influences, etc.) or of genetic criticism (she monitors the changes that occur from one version to the other of the commented works). She provides very many pieces of information with regard to the Romanian and European, Western theatrical context of the publication of Blaga's plays, as well as to the dramatic forms revised by him, according to his extremely ambitious plan (which, in fact, he did achieve!) to create "forma matching those present in Western Europe" and to also create "a theatrical-dramatic epic of wide scope, including key-moments of Romanian history and culture" (2017, 12). Directing or play suggestions are not missing; they were brought about by the staging or acting errors noted by the author. This already rich picture is completed by a (commented) panorama of the critical reception both of Blaga's plays (so of the texts) and of the staging of the same, radio drama included. In the second volume of the triptych, *Lucian Blaga și teatrul. Riscurile avangardei*, which focuses on the dramatic poem *Zamolxe*, the section dedicated to reception occupies nearly half of the book. For pragmatic reasons, the author limited the space dedicated to reception in the third volume, without abandoning it completely. (The gathered material may, perhaps, compose another stand-alone volume). Given the prolificacy of Lucian Blaga's playwright activity – he also wrote the "founding tragedy" *Meșterul Manole* [*Manole the Craftsman*] (1927), "the symbolist play" *Cruciada copiilor* [*The Children's Crusade*] (1930), the "historical fresco" *Avram Iancu* (1934), "the biblical parable" *Arca lui Noe* [*Noah's Ark*] (1944) and the "play upon masks" *Anton Pann* (1945) – Doina Modola's ongoing project, by the weight of the three volumes she has already published, turns out to be straightforwardly titanic, but extremely necessary for the Romanian culture. Its continuation is absolutely mandatory, like the retrieval of Blaga's play writing in the theatrical field and its integration in the live circuit of the Romanian stages. (At the time of the writing of this review, the National Theatre of Cluj is staging *Meșterul Manole*, but this continues to be too little for this world-class creator and thinker.)

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Les âges du Théâtre National de Yassy

Book review: Ștefan Oprea, *The Ages of the Stage*, 2 vols, Junimea Publishing House, 2016. At the celebration of the bicentenary of the first theatrical performance in Romanian – in Iași, December 27, 1816, the theatre critic Ștefan Oprea presented the analysis of the theatrical activities of the National Theatre in Iasi (performances, portraits of stage directors, actors, theatre critics) covering thus more almost 50 years of stage life in over 1000 pages.



Réunis et secondés par Gheorghe Asachi, un groupe de jeunes, issus des boyards roumains, joua le troisième jour du Noël 1816 le tout premier spectacle en Roumain. *C'était Mirtil și Hloe [Myrtil et Chloë]*, pastorale d'après Gessner et Florian, qui eut lieu dans les maisons de la famille Ghica. Ayant un lien profond avec le courant de modernisation de la société roumaine au début du XIX^{ème} siècle, l'initiative de créer un théâtre à caractère national

est associée à l'affirmation de l'identité nationale. « La aniversară » (à l'occasion de l'anniversaire) – comme le disait Eminescu, car la présence de notre poète est inséparable de la vie théâtrale de la Cité, et on lui doit à toujours une juste révérence – donc au bicentenaire du premier spectacle en Roumain, paraît *Les Âges de la scène* par Ștefan Oprea, ouvrage en 2 volumes, dans la Collection *Colocvialia* de l'Édition *Junimea*, dédié aux deux siècles d'art théâtrale à Yassy.

Historien et critique du théâtre, professeur à la Faculté de Théâtre de l'Université des Arts „George Enescu” de Yassy, directeur des revues *Cronica*, *Cronica veche* et *Dacia literară*, Ștefan Oprea a depuis toujours mis sa plume et sa pensée au service du Théâtre National de Yassy. Le premier volume des *Âges de la scène* rassemble des chroniques écrites à l'occasion des premières que le Théâtre National de Yassy a eu pendant cinquante années (1966-2016) et montrent un critique attentif et enthousiaste, qui reste pourtant un lucide témoin. Le second volume rassemble des essais, des présentations de livres, des portraits et interviews d'artistes qui y ont animé la scène roumaine.

Le parcours d'un millier de pages – impressionnante preuve de conséquence et incessante curiosité professionnelle – met en évidence un instrumentaire théorique adéquat, utilisé par l'auteur pour créer une nouvelle fois le trajet de la pensée à l'acte scénique. La critique telle que Ștefan Oprea la conçoit, aborde l'analyse de l'acte théâtral en partant du texte, option due à sa formation d'homme de lettres et au fait qu'il est lui-même auteur de pièces de théâtre et docteur *ès lettres*. Les intentions de la mise en scène sont déchiffrées, et on suit la manière dont elles se définissent sur scène, on apprécie leur réalisation dans l'ensemble du spectacle, par l'intermédiaire de l'image et du rythme scéniques, par l'apport de la construction scénographique, par l'orchestration de la distribution.

L'œuvre d'artistes importants, appartenant aux générations différentes, surpris en diverses étapes de leur carrière, sans par autant négliger les productions des réalisateurs un peu plus écartés de l'excellence (qui, maintes fois, dans l'histoire du théâtre ou d'une troupe, s'avèrent inévitables) est mise en valeur par la pensée de Ștefan Oprea. Pour fournir quelques exemples, la chronique visant le début de Cătălina Buzoianu, autant bien que celles visant d'autres productions que le même metteur en scène a fait au Théâtre National de Yassy – *Celestina, Iașii în carnaval/Yassy au carnaval, Istoria ieroglifică/ Histoire hiéroglyphique, Poveste de iarnă/ Conte d'hiver*. Ce n'est pas peu chose que d'imposer un artiste, dès ses premiers pas, dès ses premiers essais scéniques, surtout quand le critique lui-même n'est encore qu'un

jeune chroniqueur théâtral (au début des années '70), mais muni d'un sens de l'observation et de l'expression bien exercé. L'ouvrage nous offre encore bien d'exemples – Anca Ovanez Doroșenco, Cristian Hadji-Culea, Irina Popescu Boieru, Ovidiu Lazăr ou d'autres personnalités que le lecteur est invité à découvrir.

Dans la *Chasse aux canards* (1983) – spectacle important pour la scène de Yassy, aussi bien que pour la compréhension d'Alexandre Vampilov en Roumanie –, Ștefan Oprea remarque la « discrète poésie du quotidien » (ce qui donne d'ailleurs le titre du matériel) comme sur-thème de la conception du metteur en scène, Nicolae Scarlat. En 1981, à la fin d'une nouvelle production de *Chirița în provincie* [*Kiritza en province*] signée par Alexandru Dabija, un couplet revenait toujours à l'esprit: „C-așa e lumea, o comedie/lar noi, artiștii care-o jucăm/N-avem dorință alta mai vie/Decât aplauze să merităm” [„Ainsi est la vie, une comédie,/ Et nous, artistes qui la jouons/ Pour plus haut désir n'avons / Que mériter d'être applaudis"]. Trente ans après, dans sa chronique couvrant la première de *Iașii în carnaval* due au même Alexandru Dabija – production qui rouvre, en 2012, la Grande Salle du Théâtre National de Yassy fraîchement restauré –, Ștefan Oprea souligne l'usage du même couplet en début du spectacle en guise d'élément de continuité. C'est un autre exemple de la perspective par laquelle le critique de théâtre construit avec rigueur ses commentaires, tout en soulignant l'élément symbolique et les directions des stratégies concernant le répertoire du théâtre, la manière dans laquelle elles se concrétisent ou, par contre, se font attendre. À cet égard, plus qu'éloquent reste l'essai *Répertoire ou programme?* compris dans l'ouvrage.

Gens de théâtre – comédiens, metteurs en scène, dramaturges, chroniqueurs et écrivains – deviennent les héros du livre *Les Âges de la scène*; dont les deux tomes s'adressent tant aux professionnels du théâtre, qu'aux différents publics de théâtre. On y trouve des invitations à la lecture faites aux spectateurs qui sont fidèles aux metteurs en scène contemporains comme Felix Alexa, Radu Afrim ou à bien d'autres encore plus jeunes; ou à ces spectateurs qui ont constamment admiré, dès leurs respective jeunesse théâtrale, un autre artiste, Teofil Vâlcu, acteur auquel Ștefan Oprea est lié d'une grande amitié et à qui il a consacré un ample étude intitulée *Măria-SA, Actorul Teofil Vâlcu* [*Sa Majesté, le comédien Teofil Vâlcu*]. Les admirateurs de Mihaela Arsenescu Werner, Sergiu Tudose, Dionisie Vitcu, Cornelia Gheorghiu, Adina Popa, Violeta Popescu, Emil Coșeru, Doina Deleanu, Despina Marcu y retrouvent leurs idoles. En surgissant des pages écrites,

s'animent, prennent contour et couleur les portraits faits aux gens ci-mentionnés, auxquels s'ajoutent les présences de Miluță Gheorghiu, Eliza Petrăchescu, Mihai Codreanu, Sorana Țopa. Une place à part est réservée dans le livre à la « génération d'or », *id est* la génération des années 1920–1970, avec un important essai sur un spectacle-événement du théâtre, *Spectacolul pensionarilor [Le Spectacle des sociétaires]* (2012) qui avait rassemblé quelques anciens comédiens comme Margareta Baciuc, Anny Braeschi, Ion Lascăr, Costache Sava, Costache Cadeschi ou Mihai Grosu.

Les artistes appartiennent à Yassy, et chacun lui apporte un plus, ils sont adaptés à l'esprit de la ville, aux esprits positifs des lieux de maintenant ou de jadis. L'intérêt de Ștefan Oprea porte aussi bien sur leur destinée professionnelle que sur leur trajectoire humaine, le chroniqueur fournit son compte pour les gens présents et ceux à venir; Ion Aurel Maican, Ion Sava, Sorana Coroamă Stanca, Crin Teodorescu ou Aureliu Manea – car peu sont ceux qui se souviennent de *Philoctète* (1969), par exemple, qu'il a mis en scène au Théâtre National de Yassy. Le regard pénétrant du chroniqueur redouble celui de l'incessant lecteur des livres de ses confrères; ainsi, avec leurs œuvres, Sabina Bălănescu, Constantin Paiu, Florin Faifer, Călin Ciobotari et bien d'autres encore deviennent à leur tour les héros de ces volumes.

L'élégance de l'écriture, la pertinence et l'exactitude des observations, l'humour fin – rarement, très rarement parsemé d'accents sarcastiques – font que les deux volumes donnent corps à un livre exemplaire pour la condition de chroniqueur de théâtre en Roumanie à la fin du XXème et début du XXIème siècles. Très utile est la nouvelle publication des chroniques-mêmes, telles qu'elles ont paru dans les magazines de l'époque, bien que mentionner ces publications aurait été souhaitable. Avec ces pages, l'histoire du théâtre roumain se trouve complétée car elles restent un témoignage précieux pour ceux intéressés à la connaître.

„Comme la fumée est la gloire de la scène” affirme l'auteur. Mais par ce parcours-même, il montre la nécessité d'une mémoire théâtrale et culturelle. Les centaines de pages dédiées aux créateurs qui peuplent la scène du Théâtre National de Yassy – „la Maison d'Alecsandri”, comme il lui plaît d'appeler l'institution – consacrent Ștefan Oprea comme un des constructeurs inlassables de la ville culturelle de Yassy.

Crenguța MANEA

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