

**THE NATIONAL MINISTRY OF EDUCATION
THE “LUCIAN BLAGA” UNIVERSITY IN SIBIU
THE INSTITUTE OF DOCTORATE UNIVERSITY STUDIES**



SUMMARY

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2017

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**Vasile Lovinescu – Magna Opera. Consensus and
differentiation regarding The Primordial Tradition**

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Born at the beginning of the former half of the previous century, related to Ion Budai Deleanu by mother, descending from the Lovinescus by father, Vasile Lovinescu seems to be an aggrieved of the “cultural dynasty” which gave the Romanian spirituality a founder of modern criticism (Eugen Lovinescu), a novelist and an essayist of European value (Anton Holban), a promoter of theatre of ideas (Horia Lovinescu) or, more recently, a complex personality of the Romanian cultural exile (Monica Lovinescu).

From such a cultural environment, Vasile Lovinescu’s esoteric literature can hardly emerge. A consistent and patient “(re)reading”, guided by the golden branch of intellectual refinement, leads to finding a deep thinker, a “hermeneut”, an often surprising encyclopedic personality, still awaiting full acknowledgement.

It is a very demanding process to plunge in the “pilgrimage of his works”. Any in-depth glimpse dazes and discourages the neophyte. It takes a climber mentality – as Vasile Lovinescu himself used to say - to get to that point wherefrom the perspective on his work is complete; once there, one has the liberty to judge, beyond the roughness of criticism, beyond a modernity which is less and less tolerant with the contemplative people.

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The 30s represented for Vasile Lovinescu a natural involvement in the newspaper environment. He published in the magazines of those times – “Adevărul Literar și Artistic” (“The Literary and Artistic Truth”), “Viața literară” (“Literary Life”), “Viața Românească” (“Romanian Life”), “Credința” (“Faith”), “Familia” (“Family”), “Azi” (“Today), “Vremea” (“The Times”) – essays on folklore, initiating essays, on Tibetan mystic, on Ignatiu de Loyola, on Arthur Rimbaud.

Sympathizer of the new Romanian right-wing, Vasile Lovinescu was not a steadfast follower of time ideology, being brought in this hypostasis by a game of overlaps, explicable by the tumult of the early years.

His early researches have come to a happy end once he met René Guénon. In 1932, Vasile Lovinescu discovers “Le roi du Monde”, which opens his perspective on the centre and on the primordial tradition.

1936 is the year when “Dacia Hiperboreană” appears, published under the pseudonym of Geticus and on René Guénon’s urge. It is a first surprising work, which will find a way towards Romanian readers after more than 60 years, preserving its value and acuity through the years.

In 1964 Vasile Lovinescu starts writing again, feeling the need to (re)establish traditional truths, being in danger of getting lost in this “time of spiritual decadence” of humanity. Between 1964 and 1972, Vasile Lovinescu writes “Al patrulea hagiâlâc”, his only antum work and “Creangă și Creanga de aur”, from which two other fundamental studies emerge: “Ciubăr-Vodă” and “Incantația sângelui”.

After 1972, Vasile Lovinescu will continue to write essays and studies on traditional themes, exegeses on folkloric themes and spiritual works, studies on history and sacred geography. Alongside the almost daily study of rare manuscripts and sacred texts, Vasile Lovinescu keeps a journal – “Jurnalul alchimic” – putting together meditations of high spiritual value, going from doctrine to symbol and initiating technique. At the same time, the journal, together with other studies that we will talk about later, reveals Vasile Lovinescu’s interest in the world’s greatest poetic and tragic works, in Dante, in Shakespeare; in Romanian ballads, especially *Miorița*; in Eliade and Bocete; in Rilke’s, Meyrink’s, Th. Mann’s and Junger’s works; in Mozart’s and Wagner’s music.

After 1980, Vasile Lovinescu retreats to the “oneiric Folticeni”, living his twilight in meditation, prayer and conjuring contemplation, travelling by using his imagination, as he himself confessed.

His intellectual upbringing, based heavily on knowledge, followed three main streams: a cultural, literary and philosophical one, a historical and folkloric one and a mystical-metaphysical one.

These streams, being in a state of shaping, merged in finding a spiritual master - René Guénon. The knowledge of the traditional sacred doctrine was doubled by the duty to pass it on to those with “intelletti sani”, in an exercise of unique pedagogy with national impact.

All these considerations determined us to structure the present exegesis on three

directions: mythical history, refreshing the folkloric tradition and metaphysical, trying to cover most of Lovinescu's work. Therefore, we preferred to go into "architext", opting for this strategy instead of excessive theories, discovering, not once, "brilliant ideas" that were waiting for their reader.

In his intellectual effort to re-build the whole from the "membra disjecta", in order to enlighten the humanity that is on the verge of cyclical collapse, Vasile Lovinescu draws the mythical country, reveals the national epic made up of the Romanian folk tales, contemplating the world metaphysically and, most often, in a lonely way.

It is obvious that, after 1989, Vasile Lovinescu had to be recovered as soon as possible. His aura of a "mysterious character", unjustly "marginalized", needed completion with the contact with a public that was not always prepared, but thirsty of knowledge. Without any intention to blame those close to him who managed the editing of his manuscripts, we cannot but observe a sometimes chaotic, unscientific and unphilological editing of texts. The good intention – the recovery and the cultural promotion of Vasile Lovinescu's writing – was not always helped by the philological rigour, thematic structuring and historiographical ordering, procedures that would have helped the highlighting of the hermetic "semiosis", of the "mythanalysis" and the "archetypology", the way they were understood and used in his work by Vasile Lovinescu.

The present exegesis has two objectives: the former, to offer a complex interpretation, enriching the critical perspective, of Vasile Lovinescu's work; the latter, complementary to the other one, wants to fill the exegetic emptiness devoted to Vasile Lovinescu.

We operated with relevant collocations and concepts: *esoterism, symbol, primordial tradition, sufism, masonry, massenie, hermetic semiosis, Athanor, alchemy, angular stone, metaphysics, myth, initiation, pilgrimage*, to name but the most important ones.

The set of critical methods includes "imagology", "symbolology", "thematism", "culturology", "mythocriticism" and "mythanalysis", specifying that, for the last one mentioned, its status seems to have been consolidated lately, in spite of the reluctance with which Ioan Petru Culianu excluded it from the critical methods with an established status.

Our analysis tries not only to highlight the faces of the intellectual Vasile Lovinescu, but also the man behind the "mask", in a new hermeneutic of the "Scrisori crepusculare". As well as that, we make a stop on the essay called "Incantația sânelui", in which the author

draws, in a charming way, the image of the inner Moldavia, considered to be an initiating place, mirrored in the literature of the past centuries. The analysis of the Vasile Lovinescu's hermetic "semiosis" is filtered through Eco's concepts, as they appear in "The Limits of interpretation", leaving an open door to magical thinking, to the fight against the ceaseless uncharming of the world.

What is fundamental to understanding the author of the "Dacia Hiperboreană", to understanding his decisive role in the Romanian culture, with all the objections that can be made by a critical eye primarily to the fascination of working with his own tools, is the concept of *symbolical experience of the world*.

Vasile Lovinescu's work is a fascinating "architecture board" from a diachronic and synchronic perspective alike, drawn in the continuity of ordering myths, reiterated magically in rituals meant to hide the great truths until a new-born world recovers them. This great master, paradoxically being afraid of the show of his own failure, defines himself by placing at the base of his magical thinking the "pars pro toto" principle, asserted by J. G. Frazer.

Through the power of the symbol, Vasile Lovinescu tests the uniqueness, saves data that dissimulate "protohistory" and recomposes the parallel of the spiritual axes of the Romanians. As he confessed in his published works, Vasile Lovinescu depicts the history of a *great people*, in Cioran's style; but, unlike his utopic dream, working to prove it. Sometimes brilliantly, other times apodictically, but in a charming manner.

"Dacia Hiperboreană" seems to be written in a single breath, on the spur of a disclosure that cannot be delayed. Vasile Lovinescu breaks any scientific barrier, applying an initiating pattern, which redefines the outline of the national being, and he is one of the few "esoterists" in the Romanian culture who, after Cantemir, sketches again the "board" of a sacred Romania. The idea that the country was, even for a while, the centre of the world, remains one of the fundamental lines of the Lovinescu's works. "O icoană creștină pe Columna Traiană" and/or "Monarhul ascuns" are textual herbariums that will be the target of our hermeneutical choice, centred on drawing the reactive effect of René Guénon's thinking.

The technique used by Vasile Lovinescu is that of decrypting the symbol by means of reverse analogy, procedure that follows a clear sequence of stages: naming the symbol, its horizontal filiation (tradition), its integration by means of strict laws taking into account the number, occurrence and rhythm, and, finally, rebinding with the centre, a vertical link that has

temporarily been hidden.

With the “Dacia Hiperboreană” we find ourselves confronted with a type of discourse that is different from the literary one; or, more accurately, one that includes the literary discourse as well, along with the philosophical and historiographical ones, bearing the sign of a unique metaphysical spirit. Vasile Lovinescu goes beyond “mythanalysis”, beyond the archetype interpretation as Northrop Frye understands it, putting to work (from the perspective of an initiated person) the symbol, which, in Eliade’s terms, he sees as an element that is capable of revealing a sacred reality that no other manifestation can reveal.

The myth as an “ordering agent” capable of developing, in its turn, a correlative, the “rite” – this is an essential observation for understanding Vasile Lovinescu, who is in contrast with the platonic choice referring to the mythos/ logos opposition (as ways of knowing), Vasile Lovinescu being the one who will opt for an essential concept: the myth as metaphysical truth.

Almost four decades after “Dacia Hiperboreană” appeared, the brilliant essay of a youth governed by René Guénon who reached the depth given by so many years of symbolical living of the world, Vasile Lovinescu performs the mythical definition of the Romanian space in two remarkable hermeneutical approaches for the deep reader, used to looking beyond the surface of texts: “O icoană creștină pe Columna Traiană” and “Monarhul ascuns”.

Whereas in “Dacia Hiperboreană” Vasile Lovinescu highlighted, through a mythical approach, Densușianu’s historical work, following Hasdeu’s line, in “Monarhul ascuns”, the resort to history is achieved in view of cult literature, without abandoning for a single moment the desire to reveal the meanings of national folklore, a constant of the creed that enlivens his Opera Magna.

“Monarhul ascuns” is a brilliant study which draws on the interaction of two opposing fields of reporting to reality, fields that are always in conflict. Macrocosm and microcosm, organic continuity and discontinuity above concepts govern the myth whose nature is to operate organic continuity, similar to a tissue, between folk tale, legend, history, without the possibility of a compartmentalization, in opposition to the conceptual thinking which brings fracture, dissolution of the whole.

The chapter devoted to Lovinescu’s “apokatastasis” contains a (re)definition of the concept of Primordial Tradition. In the guénonian view, the sacred history of mankind is

crossed and linked by a “spiritual chain” which has its start and ending in Jesus Christ.

The conveyance of this “perennial tradition” – considered to be the quintessence of universal spirituality – was achieved, in Christianity, by two means – a sacerdotal one and a royal one – both of them intercrossing in spiritual centres and marking cycles of humanity.

Thus, we are talking about a message conveyed – as a rule – by means of analogy, overtaken from the past and pointed towards the present. Only the Primordial Tradition is the one that links the human to the divine truth, to that concept regarding the spirit transcendence, the absolute to which the human being aspires, regardless of the historical era, regardless of the place of being.

We believe that a (re)defining of this essential concept would be equally necessary and of interest, regarding the role of balance of traditional function: close to the “apokatastatic” doctrine of Origen, according to which the world harmony, broken by the initial sin of the first men, will be re-established at the “end of time” through its (re)bringing to the original state, with a view to universal redemption, through Jesus’ grace.

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Vasile Lovinescu used the traditional doctrine and symbolism in order to reveal the sense of our folk tales in “Creangă și Creanga de aur”. Apart from folk tales, Vasile Lovinescu shed a new light upon our ballads and carols. Thus, “Miorița” acquired not only a pastoral meaning, but also a metaphysical one, by projecting it in the contemplative brilliance of the fixed stars in the sky, going beyond the cosmic meanings and getting close to the Dantean paradise. Just like *The legend of Master Manole* is a Christian echo of operative masonry. As for carols, they acquire in Lovinescu’s symbolical interpretation, not only a Christian meaning, well-known as-a-matter-of-fact, but also a pre-Christian one.

Starting from the idea included in the study on “Craii de Curte-Veche”, according to which the process of turning succession into simultaneity is more striking in the so-called folk literature, Vasile Lovinescu expresses his disagreement with the “academic doctrine”, defeating the nucleic substance of folklore, a gesture which explains the “remoteness” of contemporary folklorists towards Lovinescu.

Searching other perspectives on folk literature, Vasile Lovinescu comes into contradiction with Mircea Eliade, whose definition of the myth as sacred history, telling an

event that took place during primordial times, in the fabulous period of the beginnings, gives Vasile Lovinescu the opportunity to introduce – in opposition with “illo tempore”, the concept of “illud tempus” (defined as non-time, in the everlasting present or synonymous with eternity and having principles), of the relationship of myth continuity.

Vasile Lovinescu’s mission – in the terms of his master in Blois – is an “apokatastasic” one, to re-assert the Centre of the world and its secondary Centre. As the hyperborean centre left traces on the Dacian territory – in archaeology, folklore and megalithical formations – it is the duty of this “abstractor of quintessence” to (re)enlighten the initial centre, revealing its meanings, completing the symbolical meaning of folk creations gathered by others, updating their acme and fulfilling the apokatastasis.

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The 30s are a moment of effervescence for the embodiment of a traditional and national current, whose preoccupations go far away back. The theme of Dacism came in handy to an intellectual for whom the historical stream had become essential, in points of his cultural formation.

Vasile Lovinescu is attracted by Pârvan’s writings, whose monumental work, “Getica”, appears in 1926. The (re)discovery of the “traco-getic” origins needs to be approached in a different way; anyway, not in the strict-positivistic one, of logical analysis based on indisputable documents. Vasile Lovinescu has an inclination towards the mythical-symbolical approach, through which the past, hard to penetrate scientifically, reveals itself in its divine abundance of meanings in an apokatastasic way.

That is why Vasile Lovinescu feels more like Ion Heliade Rădulescu’s or Asachi’s follower, or the descendant of an encyclopedic spirit like Hasdeu. But, beyond any shadow of a doubt, he thought up his historical work under the influence of N. Densușianu, author of “Dacia Preistorică”. Lovinescu continues Densușianu, placing his efforts in a symbolical plan, defining himself as the sole representative of traditional esoterism, in a decade so fabulous for the Romanian culture, but so torn between traditionalism, nationalism or politics.

Guided in the beginning by René Guénon, Vasile Lovinescu finds his own vision on our reality, builds a national mythology with which he charges – symbolically- a people that was in the final stage of its desymbolization. As for the utopic approach, this is, by no means,

a "deviation", but comes to complete his vision about *mundus imaginalis*, an idea that was conceptualized by Henry Corbin at the edge of the Iranian Islam.

The term "imaginal" is an epithet which applies to the event that is neither "historical", nor "imaginary"; the "imaginal" world, according to Corbin, is the world of emerald cities in the Iranian Sufism, somehow the subtle duplicate of our world, an intermediary between the sensitive world and the purely spiritual world.

The "imaginal" citadel that belongs to an "ubique", an everywhere, in "quarta dimensio", can only be seen by the initiated admitted after serious tests, and who afterwards are not able to describe what they saw.

Vasile Lovinescu is, maybe, the only one in our thinking who lives in *mundus imaginalis*. Not being able to tell what he felt at the end of his initiation, he tries to re-build a celestial world above the terrestrial citadel, imperfect by its own nature. The apokatastatical vision, centred on the power of the myth and the emancipation of the symbol, completes his singular endeavour.

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Once we have admitted that the conceptual pattern is Guénon and that the "Tradition", respectively the function of the "Primordial Tradition", represent the essence of Vasile Lovinescu's way of thinking, it seems obvious that he cannot be placed within the canons of a folkloric school of thinking. For the simple reason that the lovinescian hermeneutics is equally unique, agnostic and polemic.

Vasile Lovinescu opens two polemic lines within his studies dedicated to Romanian folk tales and ballads: one, with the official school, academical, studying folklore, and the other, more acute, with the guiding line of modern national history, "in rem", rather than "in personam".

The second polemic line, the historical one becomes evident regarding the modern interpretation of the 1848 Revolution. Vasile Lovinescu resembles Nicolae Iorga's conception, considering him moderate when he calls the unionists and the 1848 revolutionaries "enthusiastic rotters".

Resorting to irony, more was written about "Creangă și Creanga de aur" than read. Our slightly polemic approach comes from a simple observation: apart from some recurrent themes

noticed by the critics, every folk tale is deeply analysed, bringing surprising interpretations, allowed to be (re)discussed. Upon a unifying, general look, the details are shadowed. And it is exactly here that lights strike, ideas that look for debating. That is why, as in the case of “Dacia Hiperboreană”, we chose the “carver’s way”, paying attention to every line, equally careful not to affect the harmony of the stone of the vault.

In essence, the folk tale and the initiation promoting a double direction of truth, Romanian ballads have their essential element in Death and Transfiguration, the defining specific, the central element, essential to all religions, *y compris*, of Christianity.

Alongside “Ivan Turbincă”, “Harap-Alb” was conceived and compiled in the torment caused by the crisis of the Independence War, as its extensions, says Lovinescu. Certain doctrines considered the years 1877-1878 to be the starting point of the last sub-cycle of Manvantar, when the Orient Keys, the power to solve-coagula, will be in the hands of Russians and Anglo-Saxons. For Vasile Lovinescu, to possess these keys means following René Guénon’s line, possessing the keys of traditional knowledge, coupled with an exclusively quantitative, geographical possession, a simple division, an usurpation and a sacrilege. It is what the Apocalypse calls *the ugliness of desolation in the Saint of Saints*.

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“Harap-Alb” is considered the meeting point of many symbols, coming from all traditional horizons, but without giving it an inconsistent character. The folk tale is a pilgrimage to unity, left from a pre-existent world, dominated by chaos, virtually governed by two principles, subordinated to one another - Împăratul Verde and Craiul – being a Ianus Bifrons. At the end of the pilgrimage, Harap-Alb himself will be Ianus, abolishing the initial duality.

If “Dacia Hiperboreană” is considered the “song of the swan” and the synthesis of old traditions, “Ivan Turbincă”, which appeared one year later, in 1878, is considered by V. Lovinescu the deepest value of judgment of the Russian people from a traditional perspective.

“Dănilă Prepeleac” and “Povestea lui Stan Pățitul” are considered by Vasile Lovinescu two myths from the countryside.

In “Dănilă Prepeleac”, the character uses intellectual, direct, synthetic, succinct, “purely quality” weapons, in front of whose light and temperature Satan melts. In “Stan

Pășitul”, the process of elucidation goes up to its conceivable limit: the devil serves Satan (Scaraoschi), only because he, the devil, broke a cosmic rule.

V. Lovinescu does not think that we can see in the two folk tales the action of two dual complementary forces, because opposition supposes equivalence, a valuable equality in dissimilitude, as in the day-night or male-female principle.

There is no complementarity between Dănilă and Stan, on the one hand, and the devil, on the other hand, fact which would give the myths a manifest quality. Creangă’s two heroes have the right to use the same force, to oblige them to serve them, exactly because they do not have a common measure.

Dănilă is an outcast in this world, just like the great spiritual people who put on masks to hide their mission. “Prepeleac” is a nickname and an axial symbol: in the gesture to force the cross in order for the church to last, V. Lovinescu sees an essential masonic ceremony - the establishment of the Temple, thus initiating a spiritual centre; all these qualify Dănilă as the Great Architect/ Great Carpenter of the Universe. The building of the Church is the architectural expression of turning Chaos into cosmos, and Dănilă does not blame the devil for his existence, but for the fact that he took over all the things in the world, which goes beyond his mission.

Vasile Lovinescu’s cultural references are clarifying; the whole world’s mythology participates in his hermeneutics, in an articulate, impeccable, surprising net.

The story of “Stan Pășitul” changes the paradigm; there cannot be any adversity; complementarity becomes collaboration, Satan raises his veil even more.

Lovinescu catches, once again, Ion Creangă’s “impish” ability to give doctrines a “peasant, cordial face”, “in the mask of humour” put on the face of the Abyss.

Called “folk tales-novellas” – because the supernatural grafts on the most precise, the most rigorous rural Romanian reality - “Soacra cu trei nurori”, “Capra cu trei iezi”, “Punguța cu doi bani” and “Fata babei și fața moșneagului” are, rather, “an outer cover”, the concentric inners of a sanctuary formed by the two folk tales – “Harap-Alb” and “Povestea porcului”.

Small family tragedies become, by means of a hidden but real logic, through filiation and genealogy, the mirror of a cosmic becoming.

It is interesting that ”Soacra cu trei nurori” was placed among folk tales, because, from a profane perspective, nothing motivates this; the story has nothing supernatural; in George

Călinescu's terms, it is just a novella narrating a rural tragedy.

In three of Creangă's folk tales, the old and ageless pair appears in different stances, but, in all of them, as witness of the folk tale's career, in reality, conditioning it. In "Punguța cu doi bani" the pair is hostile, after a kind of Manichaeism which separates the parties, forgetting the common principle. Disorder is even greater in "Fata babei și fata moșneagului", the war being brought about in the same household. In the former folk tale, in a cyclical disorder, the old man "emits" the Rooster, and the old woman, the hostile forces that try to annihilate his solar and potent restoration. In the latter one, femininity almost totally overwhelms masculinity, like in the times of the Amazons, but a woman too re-establishes the female dignity – the old man's daughter.

"Punguța cu doi bani" is a folk tale which achieves its main goal by transmutation, cohabitation and transfiguration of the sexual power. The solar and the phallic characters are joined in the case of the rooster.

The world in "Capra cu trei iezi" is an astral one, because this goat is Amalthea, the nanny of Zeus child, on mount Ida in Crete. In the traditional exegesis of the myth, Cronos, the regent of the intellectual sky, swallowing his children, he renews them, transfigures them, hardening in them the olympic spirit, an idea which also appears in the famous goethean "Stirb und werde" ("die and become!").

Vasile Lovinescu speaks again in "Interpretarea ezoterică a unor basme și balade populare românești" about the concept of the four meanings of the text. He gets to Dante through René Guénon, avoiding remote patristic and scholastic sources. In order to refresh our study, let's remind the fact that the meanings – in Dante's vision - are: literal, philosophical-theological, political, social and, finally, the initiating, esoteric one, belonging to metaphysics.

The "Lostrîța" folk tale – gathered by Nicolae Labiș, in the Baia village and handed in to professor Vasile Popa, friend of Vasile Lovinescu's – is the illustration of Oedipus' myth. Our tradition, which preceded Christianity, is a mythological one in shape, alongside Brahmanism, Hinduism and the old Greek tradition. The Hegemonic does not do "what He wants" not because of inferiority, but because He is the one that enforces the cosmic Law. That explains why, in our folk tales, the Fairies are sent by God, whereas in the above-mentioned myth, God Himself descends and says a prophecy in the fatal house.

Another dominant symbol in the Lovinescu's hermeneutics is that of the "Widow", in

correlation with that of the “Son”. The Widow represents the vacuum of initiating organisations, void of “their spermatic verbs”, of their deep fulfillment. The widow’s son is called upon to fill this void. In “Lostrița”, the hero is both a son and a husband, and the mother is a widow even before she became a wife, which gives the folk tale a mythical complexity.

Vasile Lovinescu’s hermeneutics does not cease to amaze – through the mobility of connections and/or their completely unexpected impact. Hinting to the “active fire”, a remembrance of the *Firing pyre* seen by Moses on the Horeb mountain, Lovinescu says that the sitting of the chairs around the fire of Sumedru shows the folkloric and initiating roots of Brâncuși’s “Table of Silence”.

Starting from another folk tale, “Poama Roșie”, an exceptional creation, Vasile Lovinescu discovers in the formulae “Iana Sânziana, Floare albă, nu de nalbă” (“Iana Sânziana, White flower, not hollyhock”) (a hieratic formula) and “Ileana Cosânzeana, din costiță ruja-i cântă, nouă împărați ascultă, Dumnezeu se minunează” (“Ileana Cosânzeana, from her braid her rouge is singing, nine emperors are listening, God Himself is wondering”), alchemic references to the two “works”, Albido and Rubedo, to the transmutation of the white fruit in red fruit accomplishing house and in the plan of Tradition, the passing from the northern one to the atlant one, whose colour is red.

For a people without epopees, the folk tales are, for Vasile Lovinescu, “membra disjecta” which provides – actually – our epopees which are richer and more metaphysical than any other epic.

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The symbolic experience is the keystone of Vasile Lovinescu’s metaphysics, by “being” understanding both life, and his creation, “being as being”, in the Aristotelian conception. But no frontier can be traced between the approximation of our thinking’s possibilities of manifestation (Kant) and the exploration of oversensitivity beyond the outer world (Thomas d’Aquino), because, in the variant that Vasile Lovinescu suggested – myth-wonder – they complete each other, intermingle, consistently define each other.

The conviction that drove Vasile Lovinescu all along his hermeneutic endeavor is that “symbology” remains an exact science, even more rigorous than the other sciences, as it starts from immutable axiomatic principles, as old as the hills.

Motivated “de facto”, through an internal “name architecture”, the “symbology” cannot be obliged to prove its legitimacy. The symbols, by their nature, “flowers of the *Abys*”, are impossible to pinpoint, their meaning being essentially volatile. Vasile Lovinescu’s choice, in Goethe’s terms, is clear: everything that is transient, in other words, that has enough reason to justify itself, is only a symbol.

The two ways that make ciphering possible, are *nonfeeling* and *intellecion*, assumption inspired by René Guénon, who asked introspection and intuition from his readers and interlocutors, in order to unleash the symbolic load of the world.

The symbolical thinking represents a particular way of understanding things, of understanding man’s relationships to the world, of assessing a surprising variant of alternative and complementary eligibility of discontinuity. Wondering about the difference between thinking in concepts and thinking in symbols, Vasile Lovinescu concludes that using reason as a means of explaining the world was possible only in the stage of mental laziness of the current mankind.

The “hermeneut” places himself in the role of “the traditional man”, judging like him, in opposition with the moderns, who took the liberty to reduce the metaphysical significances of the myths and of the symbols to simple cultural codifications or to ones that refer to particular religious ideologies. Identifying the ontological values from the perspective of the Primordial Tradition, Lovinescu gives the symbol back its metaphysical dimension, bringing the “traditional man” in a permanent present, in whose life the transcendent is a defining presence.

Just like an alchemist in some contemporary Middle Ages, Vasile Lovinescu possesses that “*imaginatio vera*” which makes him see the liveliness of substances and of elements, governed by the correspondent stars. This alchemist imagination, beyond fantasy or poetic creation, allows Vasile Lovinescu to contemplate the irreducible quality aspects of the world.

The equation that illustrates Vasile Lovinescu is achieved through *myth*, a concept which enlightens his whole creative existence and to which he returns all the time, defining and (re)defining relationships, within this fascinating concept. There are three essays whose analysis is compulsory and fundamental: “Adnotări despre mit”, “Mitul sfâșiat” and “Mit și uimire”, gathered in the volume “Mitul sfâșiat”.

“Adnotări despre mit” constitutes an “ars mitica” of V. Lovinescu; his passion for

meditation on myth is a hierogamy under the sign of ambiguity.

Situated between two worlds, the myth reveals its ambiguity: one of its faces, turned towards the “under the moon world” is an “indecipherable mask”, and the other one is turned towards the “fixed stars’ sky”. The way to the myth is a singular one - the one of metamorphosis of the ascending pilgrim, when every flap of wings makes another ten new wings grow.

The myth is a fundamental “ordering agent”: accepted/loved or refused/blamed, he continues to weave the world organically, preserving its stellar roots. Precisely this placement “in divinis” makes it indefinable, because amazement is not theorized. The solution chosen by Vasile Lovinescu is that of a continuous exemplification, the only way to communicate the fluster of the fable to the reader, the “exemplification” being a substitute of man’s primordial vision, when a reality is seen all of a sudden in all its facets, simultaneously.

The study called “Mit și uimire” opens many programmatic ways, being essential to understanding Vasile Lovinescu’s work and “in divinis” thinking. The feeling seems to be that an exhaustive critical approach remains an unattainable dream; any road branches, in its turn, opening new hermeneutics, sometimes unexpected ones.

With all this perpetual intellectual challenge, it seems appropriate to discuss about a theme that was not encountered when analysing Vasile Lovinescu’s work – the condition of the initiated, according to which the Moldavian mag defines and, at the same time, self-defines, creating a real *initiated creed*.

There has been a lot of hasty talk about Vasile Lovinescu’s Sufi initiation, about his status as an initiated, even slightly accusing him of turning to the Islam. This careless labeling threw Vasile Lovinescu in a false umbra, from where he can be recovered only by the pilgrim who embarks, willingly, in his works’ pilgrimage and with the necessary intellectual opening.

As a matter of fact, he returned to the country in 1936; after the initiation rite performed by Schuon, Vasile Lovinescu will continue Opus Magnum, which he will place at the confluence of two complementary axes: the love for the Romanian tradition, the worship for Jesus and the Christian way of life and – on the other hand – the practice of Sufi invocation, performing with the infallible power of the symbol, of the mythical experience, preserving wonder as an inner supreme definition.

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“Al patrulea hagiâlâc”, the only novel that was released during Vasile Lovinescu’s life, is built on a surprising logic for the time of its appearance, 1981. The hermit behind the mask (“obrăzar”) speaks freely about masonry and knight templars, drawing a surprising network of ideas, unmatched in the critique of the time. It is precisely what, in that period of time, hinders the approach from this perspective, as the topic was not only taboo, but it also lacked inside vision. Vasile Lovinescu is rightly referred to as the “mythography”, the folklorist, the historian, the symbolist, the essayist, which are all realistic approaches. It seems appropriate to add to this hermeneutic corollary the hypostasis of all these critical masks: that of the master, the initiated, the prince of arcana, “the wearer of the masks”.

The necessity of the mask is unavoidable when the individual dedicates himself to a hidden inside activity, which has no connection to his social being. This is a double hypostasis of Vasile Lovinescu, he himself and the one who hides behind one fact or “another”, writing about people and occult ideas in a mythical country. The one we are interested in is the other Lovinescu who writes to store truths of the Tradition, an ensemble of cultural, pragmatic and spiritual values of the people who demonstrate their historical and moral durability.

The status of Vasile Lovinescu is that of a confessor, an ascetic who lightens the way. Nothing for himself, nothing conceited, controversies censored in time, no trace of calofilia.

“Al patrulea hagiâlâc” is a stunning and unpredictable (“capricant”) exegesis. The most seductive and nonconformist hypothesis for the most part of our critique finds its way, in an initiated zigzag for the understanding of those who, in their own pilgrimage, follow in the Master’s footsteps. Behind broken bridges remains the others’ misunderstanding.

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Considered a small treaty of royal art, “The Alchemic Journal” of Vasile Lovinescu has nothing to do with the strict rules by which literature considers this moral analysis (dates, people, occurrences). Such references are extremely rare, insignificant in relation to the metaphysical substance of the notices, understood as an interchange of principles, symbols and offerings. All these form the basis on which the mysteries of pacts, alliances and blessings are based, in fact even the disposal of spiritual influences to which Guénon makes reference in

“Domnia cantității și semnele Timpului”.

Written between 1964 and 1966, after a short silence in writing, The Journal of Vasile Lovinescu consists of 3 volumes – “Jurnal alchimic”, “Însemnări inițiatică” and “Meditații, simboluri, rituri”.

The eight chapters which form the fundamental basis of this work as the “traditional message” of Vasile Lovinescu - metaphysical doctrine, knowledge and love, chronology, symbol and myth, sacred history and geography, pray and initiation, initiating method and technique, esoterism and orthodoxy. We consider that the directions of Lovinescu’s journal are the metaphysical doctrine and initiating method and technique, shrouded in esoterism.

The basic phrases are: the state of “awakening and meditation”, “exiled in light”, “a guide’s consciousness”, “the wild wickedness of the environment”, “chained in this world”, “the art of placing yourself in creative passivity”, “the fight against inertia”, “to immerse into the inside of our being”. The guide runs away from the supposed show of his own failure, in his fight against a hostile environment, in front of which he withdraws in a passive creativity, melting in an alchemic way his own self.

Vasile Lovinescu speaks in general in the terms of “entelahia”, a concept according to which perfection is the inner target of all things, as a passage through “barzach” of the initiated who symbolically dies to gain a new life dominated by wonder, by the miraculous, by the power of the symbol.

The faith, which René Guénon reveals in “Criza lumii moderne”, meets in a fortunate way, the consciousness of the guide of Vasile Lovinescu, involved in forming two initiated groups, circles of learners that he will inspire, through different forms, with a significant break, for more than thirty years.

The first initiated group is founded in Bucharest, with the help of Mihai Vâlsan in 1948 and will be dissolved ten years later because of the hostility of that period of time.

The meeting in Fălticeni in 1958 with the poet Lucreția Andriu gives birth to the second circle of studies and traditional meditation called in some letters “the fraternity of Hyperion”.

The continuity of the group guided like a “spiritus rector” by the Master is an exceptional cultural event. His activity, rather diffused, but all the same real, appears like a more than ever obvious necessity, the main purpose being the printing of Vasile Lovinescu’s

works, to which the perpetuation of the authentic traditional soul is added.

The preface to the volume “Scrisori crepusculare” hides willingly, as we can add, the truths that lie beyond the intellectual weaving of the letters. On the surface, the volume contains essays structured on some themes, recurrent in Lovinescu’s Opus Magnum: Romanian folklore, sacred history regarding Romanian monuments, traditional and metaphysical aspects from Romanian and world literature referring to fundamental symbols of different traditions. The edition comprises a part of Vasile Lovinescu’s letters, characterized by an epistolary content, extremely rich. In total, the correspondence resumed in the pages of the volume is with his friends and members of the group of traditional studies and meditations. Vasile Lovinescu restates the value of Romanian folk tales, which he considers - from the perspective of the symbolic value - at least equal to the Western ones, resembling them to the Taoist stories.

The work “Scrisori crepusculare” represents a real lucid catechism of melancholy, born in his vital space, “Folticeni”, its surroundings, secular Moldavia, in general.

Lovinescu’s universe, the secret Moldavia in its long-lasting life reminds of Sadoveanu’s space, but with a fundamental difference; for Lovinescu, the place is the one where the “symbiosis of Amor with Gnosis” takes place, “the miracle of Luce inttelletual piena d’ Amore”. And in this way, Lovinescu proves his uniqueness.

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The essay “Incantația sângelui” represents one of the essential coordinates of Lovinescu’s work, completing the astral coordinate of Magna Opera and (re)affirming the fact that Vasile Lovinescu lives, spiritually and affectively, in an “inner Moldavia” beyond time and place, exiled in the dream-like “Folticeni”, like an “agarthian Moldavia”. In the external Moldavia one must cross a narrow deck, like a “barzach”, like an isthmus between two worlds.

The volume under discussion is one of the most stunning exegeses of Eminescu’s poetry, Vasile Lovinescu considering the great poet a participant in the polar secret, superlative attributed to Creangă.

Considered by Lovinescu an “opus hierarchicum et catholicum”, the alchemic concept “Opus Magnum” is in fact the expression of a permanent inner search, a momentum of the whole being towards integration. Lovinescu borrows the terms of Eliphas Lévi, the author of a

famous history of magic and the creator of the theory of astral light, which undoubtedly, the Romanian “hermeneut” must have read even though nobody has mentioned so far an intellectual connection with the author of “Marele arcan”.

Vasile Lovinescu creates his own “semiosphere”, as called by Eco, his own symbolic universe, like a protection wall in front of the violence of things. The refuge into a world of signs is a way of protecting himself against “cruel ambient” for Lovinescu.

Undoubtedly, the man and the signs mutually educate and generously borrow the same substance, the man living in the symbolic universe, and the myth and religion are parts of this universe.

All these make the man a “reader”, an “interpreter” of this world, and Lovinescu is one of them. A unique one, breaking bridges with every step he takes in his climbing, but being able to continue, despite the others’ silence.

Each essay, creation, analysis is the fruit of an alchemic process. The passing from mercury to sulphur, from silver to gold, from brute stone to philosopher’s stone, in this *opus alchemicum* lies the full spiritual fulfillment of Lovinescu’s Magnum Opus.

In the case of a spiritual, writing is for the beginning a separation from the frivolous exterior, then an auxiliary of concentration, a support that favours the matter as a source of meditation, following coagulation around a topic.

The next stage is a “solve-coagula” which reduces the substance to the essential - “excesus mentis” - for the process to be fulfilled alchemically through sublimation.

All the pages which we alchemically call *Opus Magnum* are in fact jumps from light to light on the scale of wisdom, being attentive to gather and preserve everything that is precious, in a decaying world. Loyal to the alchemic slogan “Rassembleur ce qui est epars”, Vasile Lovinescu remains the man born to be knowledgeable.

Regarding Lovinescu’s critical perception, I have used two terms, hopefully, original - the *near* criticism and the *far* criticism, trying to render an honest understanding of Vasile Lovinescu in Romanian culture.

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Referring to Lovinescu's books that have survived, as "hermeneut" of the sacred, he has, by definition, a limited public, and the attempt to get close to him is doomed to failure, when there is no superior determination. Not once other people's lack of knowledge has led to an incorrect "legend", an example in point being the turning to Mohammedanism is the most eloquent. We have no doubt that time will work in favour of Vasile Lovinescu, and for this nothing is more useful than a critical image centred on the track of an objectivity, found at the crossroad between two concepts – the *near* criticism and the *far* criticism – in an effort of intellectual recovery.

We have opted for an interpretative approach, in Eco's terms, by applying a "mythocritical" approach, supported traditional critical methods, in my attempt to fulfill the hermeneutic puzzle, we have considered things from the inside, which means that our own initiating method has almost always encountered the way drawn by the initiated Vasile Lovinescu, in a world of masonic symbols.

Exiled in a "miraculous country" as if in an "Agartha of hermetists", Lovinescu seems, at a glance, a fighter against modernity, one of the last representatives of a culture more open to Neo-Platonism, predominantly orthodox, having difficulty in becoming modern due to antimodernist context.

It is not appropriate for us to discuss the connection between orthodoxy and modernism in Romanian culture, but we can propose this topic of debate, focusing on Vasile Lovinescu, a "unique hermenoet".

Beyond the terms that can define him – "mythography", folklorist, historian, ethnologist, "symbolologist", "hermeneut", essayist, Vasile Lovinescu remains the accomplished spiritual man, who immersed from "the state of Cain and Abel" to build "the sacred Romania", on the principles of The Primordial Tradition.

Paradoxically or not, the more Lovinescu's Opus Magnum carries us back in time, the deeper meanings our future will acquire. On one condition: to restore him considering the light he emerged from!

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