

THE MYTH OF CREATION AT HORIA LOVINESCU AND VALERIU ANANIA

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*Abstract: The study aims to analyse the processing of myth creation in *Death of an Artist* by Horia Lovinescu, and *Craftsman Manole* by Valeriu Anania. Although the titles, names of the protagonists of the two operas highlights a deep and sincere attachment of the writers toward a myth, they essentially offers a new and innovative way over sacrifice for creation. The main theme of Anania's creation would be that reality inspires art, and art through transfiguration gives birth to a new reality, negating the model. Thus, Manole sees the future of the new church at a time when he looked at his wife and the child in her arms, understanding that he can build the church if he sacrifices them. And in *The Death of an Artist*, the hero-Manole Crudu sees in art "the sign of the power of man over the chaos and death."*

Key-words: sacrifice, creation, myth, name, eternity

The myth of the creative sacrifice inspired Horia Lovinescu in *The Death of an Artist* and Valeriu Anania in *Craftsman Manole*.

The dramatic opera-*The Death of an artist*, written by Horia Lovinescu, put into discussion the problem of creation, but especially of the creator. The author in order to embrace the ideas in the play is inspired from two Romanian myths: that of sacrifice for creation and that of the transhumance, being highlighted by the old critic Gheorghe Ciompec: "Absorbing in an unitary vision suggestions from two masterpieces of the old song (*Miorita* and *Meşterul Manole*)-so related as a way to conceive the human confrontation with destiny-the play ensures a wide background in the perspective in which the characters' gestures and words sent to archetypes" (1979: 245-246). The manner in which it is noted the destiny of the protagonist is a philosophical and a modern one. He is in a continuous struggle for life, carrying on his shoulders the fear of death. The conflict is typical human one, noting different facets from life. The main character, Manole Crudu is surprised in different limited situations from life, and

his reactions are written with true craftsmanship. The hero is not only symbolic, but gives the reader a chance to refined throughout his evolution, because it is dominated by the same worries that prowling the modern man. The language used in the play is an abstract one, and this thing frame the text in a string of contemporary plays, making use of such abstracted communication.

If in *Arges Monastery* the action takes place during the reign of Negru-Voda, at Lovinescu the time of action is specified as follows: "The action takes place nowadays, from summer to autumn." This temporal index is still a way to update and modernize the text. What the author wants to transmit to us is not necessarily the duration of the events, but rather to astonish Manole along his life (in the text of the drama it is his specified Manole's age 58 years old).

At the beginning it is described Manole Crudu's house and garden from Snagov, sculptor as profession, in other words a creator. His surname itself referred direct to Manole the mythical craftsman Manole, just that his name is suggestive – Crudu, thing that leads us with the thought that of his attitude towards others and itself which has generated a conflict between selfishness and responsibility. Even though the native places should generate peace and fulfillment, the atmosphere is strange and conveys the feeling of insecurity. Everything is diffuse in the night "a light makes its appearance" and "falls off a shade contour image which shake strangely," and Manole Crudu seems to refined the place in which he is. He "touch the objects to seek the way as if he is blind," it was a sign that he was absent from home. He had left the country for four years. This moment it is not by chance, because "in the night disappear the boundaries between the real and the mysteries world, between the death and life world" (Ruști, 2002: 258), and in his mind it is already a struggle on the life and death theme.

The hero is described as "a still handsome man, strong and massive, with very grizzled and dense hair," which found in a specific moment to the second age: on the one hand still good looking man, on the other hand doubtful in his own qualities. This crisis shakes all his universe. The first Manole's words seems to be misunderstood words "I saw the again" but he still makes light regarding his words: "How to be a gap in the garden, you're a fool!", and then motivates that he is tired and this state of exaltation leads him to tell nonsense. When Manole talks about the gap he refers to the world of death; and death scared him. Also "the gap is the place of falling, the place of disappearance and nothingness" (Evseev, 2007: 338) and its significance is related to death. The gap seems the place of coming down inside of the creature, as we will observe along the workpiece.

In the garden, Manole meets with Domnica, an 85 years old lady, who was a nanny. She puts him several uncomfortable questions, from the desire to find more about him, because of his long absence from home. Asking him if it is true that he is sick, she just note a sensible point for the hero who sends him indirectly to death. He is in a state of denying of his physical vulnerability "Do you see? ... I am in all my power. "The old lady is curious to know why Manole came back: "Are you a great man, Manole? It is written in the newspapers about you? Or you became poor and that's why you come home?" She doesn't know that by questioning him she twists a knife in his soul, who found in a crisis of his career as an artist, but also of his personality.

Manole finds out from Domnica details about his sons, Vlad, of 30 years old, and Toma, of 24 years old. Now Monole finds out that Vlad likes the daughter of a maid Aglaia, but he refuses to believe that his son would like "whipper-snapper." Manole laughs at the news brought by the old lady and suddenly changes the subject, putting into discussion the "death." Domnica says that death is very close for her and recites some verses: "Death comes in the garden/with a glass and a light/you hear how it beat the bells/ Arise, arise and hear it." Suddenly Manole got sick, putting his hand at the heart and enters into a state of unconsciousness.

The second day is announced to be busy. Cristina, daughter of Aglaia, of 17 years old, answers at the telephone of the family and argues to all the callers why Manole cannot be at the receiver. The appearance of the young girl is very important, being nice, "but not that it matters, but also her grace and healthy, of young animal and clean." The words that describe Cristina outlines the importance of life and healthy, aspects will be assessed throughout the drama. She is the opposite of death, she represents everything that is more beautiful and more cherished in life, and she is the protection of the artist in front of the son. Vlad takes in ridicule what the press wrote about his father, after seeing that the girl is surrounded by newspapers: "What do they write? Eternal chatter of course..." Cristina is annoyed of attitude of the son towards his father and declares that the great sculptor is for her "a God." She leaves taken from wave and thinks with loud voice in front of Vlad: "To be his girl, ah, how I love and care him! The whole life I would worship him only." From here we can understand that common human perception over the man of genius: total admiration and willingness to give everything to the master.

At the time of the discussion between of the two young men, Manole comes from the room together with the doctor. Now, he meets Cristina for the first time, since he returned home: "Look, how she grew up. When I left, she was bellows with eyes, and now she is like a butterfly coming out from the chrysalis ... Cute, very cute!" To Manole doesn't come easy to see the young girl, because he is put in the situation to face up his own aging. He lights up a cigarette in front of the doctor: "You must, you must! I am not learned with this word. I've always done all my pleasures." His words are very significant regarding himself. The selfishness for the creation was above any other value, including above all the family, children, and eros. Manole could support any defeat from life, but not the one losing his career as a sculptor.

Cristina takes the master's defence and in the discussion about the healthy of this with his mother. Agalaia, more realistic, says that Manole "is dying," trying to persuade the girl to make it enjoyable, in order not to lose the job, if Manole would die. Aglaia is in the antonymous relationship with Cristina; she sometimes runs by petty interests, while Cristina is relying only on clean feelings, on the pure and unadulterated feeling. Cristina, with a naïve and young enthusiasm revolts: "I'm going to show him that there is a clean soul in this house." At Cristina love can't be counterfeit. She is the prototype of the angelic being of which any man can fall in love. Even if the theme of the drama is that of pride of the artist and the struggle with his own destiny, we cannot neglect any facet of love presented in the drama. Cristina is pure, innocent and fits perfectly like a balm on the inner "wounds" of Master Manole Crudu.

If Cristina represents life for the artist, Domnica is like a messenger of death. The appearance of the old lady stirring him and her many years sacred him, because he leads a permanent struggle in thoughts with "death gap." His nanny, who was like a mother for him, now she terrifies him.

Manole's state of restlessness and dissatisfaction is amplified at the time of the meeting with Claudia Roxana, "a famous actress," fact that causes him to affirm as a reproach: "None of those who are close to me have not really enjoyed my return." The master suffers because he is considered on the second place in the lives of his friends. Even if art headed his life, he searches to be fulfilled also in the family plan.

Manole thought that meeting Claudia will bring him peace and regaining his balance. After the departure of the woman, Manole's monologue sounds like this: "I didn't tell you any word of tenderness ... Neither that I am seriously heartsick. Nor that I'm scared of death." Manole

finds out that between him and Claudia occurred a separation at the level of heart and conscience. He did not find safety and strength to go forward with the woman he loved a big part of his life. Finding this saddens and surprises him. Their discussion is for Manole a door closed in front of him.

Not just the relationship with Cristina affects him, but also the one with his son, Vlad. When the sufferer father reproached the son that he did not come to visit him on his own initiative, Vlad tells him: "I knew that you have visits. And then, we've used us not bother you uncalled." Vlad's reply transmits many things. Manole, as a father, kept his sons far away from him. The workshop was for Manole a sacred place, and his children did not enter uninvited. Now, past by the youth and ill, Manole would like his boys' affection, but he cannot longer benefit from it all at once. The distance between the two is steeped also by their ideas about art, which is observable when father criticizes son's works: "In what are you doing is a lack of security and also an aggressive ostentation, which may be admitted to an amateur, but not at a true craftsman. And you have thirty years." His words are hard for Vlad, why he reproaches to his father that always have been important sculptures, marbles, than their own sons. Now Manole launches a challenge: "Listen, Vlad. Let's give the damn the past and to work side-by-side, like the craftsmen. Father and son, solidarity in the same job, comrades up to anonymity, the same hand and the same thinking." Manole asks Vlad this collaboration, because the inability to work with his hands disturbs him: "If I don't have anything to stop, if it don't flow rows of welders on me, I have no sense, I feel like a cloth, like a rag." Crudu was the type of the artist who has put all his life at the feet of art; if he didn't carve anymore, he considers himself a lost man, senseless and useless. After the critics that Manole has brought to his son Vlad regarding his work and his workshop, the son does not except the proposal. On the contrary, Vlad has a moment of maximum sincerity: "Your art, in its entirety, I do not like it... You have an outdated philosophy, of a humanistic preacher, father. You do not understand nothing from the true spirit of the time. Even if I want to work with you, I couldn't. I have a different conception of art." Manole is in a new situation: thus to fight with his son's defiance. Maybe for the first time Manole finds out that not all things are on his pleasure. Manole starts to know what means defeat.

The ideas about art and life of the master came off from the discussion with Claudia: "the function of art is to affirm and to order, not to deny and to dissolve." Manole still believes in the force of art to reorganize a world in chaos and to bring the joy of life. Bringing into discussion

the marriage, Claudia says some impressive things: "You've never really loved, man. And anyone. Besides your sculpture. The rest was surplus of wealth. Waste." The woman now has the power to tell the facts straight and does not forbid to tell him in a trenchantly way what she thinks about his love towards her or towards any other thing outside the art of carving: "you're a monstrous selfishness, rapacious and unscrupulous in everything that's your art does not have." His selfishness is not an act of bad faith, but simply so it's written in his artist destiny. The creation (work of art) has absorbed him, isolated him from the outside world and had him fully. His reply comes very quickly: "But my art focuses precisely what is best in me. With what would you like to feed it, if I would scatter?" Manole is honest and from his words it appears the fact that he just gave the maximum potential of his art and that art helps him to get and give you everything he has.

A crucial moment is the appearance of Cristina in the garden with a document to be signed and Vlad's remark: "Why don't you sit on the profile, to see your breasts? They are not ugly. Did you notice, Dad?" Vlad's remark is brutish and provokes repulsion and discomfort so to Cristina and also to Manole. Claudia assists at this scene and takes an ironic attitude. She is not agree with Vlad's behaviour, but she doesn't take part to Cristina. Claudia has towards the girl a sort of jealousy, especially when Manole begins to draw her (immediately).

Manole is very excited about his muse, Cristina, and she does not forbid to describe her like a man on his lover: "It's like an indecipherable mystery. And has a carnation of fruit that has not completely lost the greenery... It's a passing moment in the beauty of a woman." Manole, involuntarily, disregards the presence of Claudia in those moments and admires loudly the youth, innocence and the beauty of the young girl. Manole is again captivated totally by the muse that determines him to create art. Manole dresses up again a coat of selfishness, ignoring Claudia and taken by wave while he was drawing on a paper the young face of Cristina. Manole feels again the vibration of life; death is somewhere very far, because he is happy and pleased again. The sculptor feels that he is reborn this only thanks to the creator. The appearance of Cristina in his life seems to be a highly beneficial event.

After Manole's pleading towards the girl's beauty, Cristina's reaction is interesting: "I cannot support to analyse me so, as an object of study. I am also a soul." The notion of *anima* is like a shrill sound of humanity. Maybe he forgot, but people around him have soul and feelings. For Manole the creation means everything; but not anyone can walk over feelings in the name of

art. Cristina revolts honestly and naïve, disturbing the peace which the master thought that regained it.

The second part of the drama begins with a new discussion between Domnica and Manole. The old woman tells the artist that her dead parents calls her, but she refused them constantly "My dear, I still cannot come because Manole came back." Domnica carries to Manole a love of a mother and the attachment between the two persons is strong. But to Manole does not like the company of Domnica, because her words about death frightens him and it generates in his minds other black thoughts: "I got to get frightened of some words of an old lady with dark mind." Suddenly Cristina appears, who returns from bathing. Manole invites her to sit on a chair, and then found himself in a freedom of expression of thoughts and tells the girl: "I feel your breath, I know you have your hair wet, and you smells all of the herbs. I hear the life from you." If Domnica inspires him death, Cristina inspires him life. Manole is fascinated by both female presences, noting that he wants one to be far away, while the other search to approach her (Cristina).

Manole recalls the moment when Cristina kissed his hand and told her what she represents for him: "For me you mean more than you can imagine, because you, your presence ... It is life. Do you understand?" And the young girl reveals the motivation which determined to act like this: "Was from adoration!" Reporting Cristina to Manole is like that of a servant to his master. She respects him enormously. But her admiration has its basis in what Manole is as an artist, not as a man. Her reporting to Manole is not defined by eros, but simply by a real consideration towards the master. The young girl becomes the artist's muse, a fact recognized by Manole: "When I will start to work again, I will cast your face in bronze." Here Manole is similar to the mythical one; those who wants to have something from her lover for eternity. If Manole from folk ballad built his dearest person in the walls, now he wants Cristina's face cast in bronze, idea that delights her mother. But her joy is clouded by Cristina's surprise, the woman loved, by Toma, his son, in a moment of affection. Manole perceives the delicate moment between the two of them as a gesture of betrayal. It encompasses the fear and he blocks himself. Then he declared defeated: "You have won, ghostly girl!" with reference to Domnica, at whom he reminds of death.

Manole is closed in the workshop and no one is allowed to disturb him, except Domnica. He works tirelessly, fifteen hours a day cutting with the chisel, in spite of his illness. He wants to

finish a work of art, even with the cost of his life. If other craftsmen have sacrificed others for the fulfillment of the purpose of their lives as artists, Manole Crudu isolated himself and wants that his own sacrifice to finish the work of art. Creation is for Manole Crudu beyond of health. He has sacrificed from selfishness along his life all his loved ones. Now it is the time to sacrifice himself.

From Domnica's discussions with Manole found out that each of the two of them perceive the death in a certain way: "The death which my stone people see is not like yours." Domnica's recommendations, the only one who entered in the workshop and who saw the work, is not showing the world those who were sculpted that they are too "frightened." She draws him attention to the song of a nightingale, which is heard outside. Night and song frightens Manole and asks Domnica to leave the room.

By turning to the work as a sculptor Manole apparently seems to accept his condition and end, the death, but at the same time death frightens him yet. Not the gesture of Cristina to give up Toma has no longer any value. Her gesture came too late and the love who had it for the girl has turned into hate. Manole thought that he could find happiness in domestic quiet, into the arms of a woman, but he was wrong. His only happiness comes from art. He feels really fulfilled only when he hits with the chisel and creates. Vlad observes the new creation and says exalted (about the work): "Any addition would dishonour it. What a great sculptor are you, father! ... It's almost beyond human and art." Manole is reconfirmed by Vlad as a great artist, as a genius of creation. Seeing the masterpiece, Vlad can no longer remain in that state of defiance against her father; now he looks again at him with immense admiration.

Manole gives some advices to Vlad: "If you want to be an artist, you are obliged to accept this Sisif work." Manole wants to say that art is like a virus, that when catches you, you can't stop. The real artist, in his conception, never gives up, not even when the death is near. For Manole, the sculptor, the perseverance in the way to perfection of creation is very important.

The play ends with the song of the nightingale, which "shows us in a strikingly way, all the feelings that are born in us, the intimate connection that exists between death and love" (Chevalier, Gheerbrant, III, 1995: 127-128) and which Manole hears louder and louder. He accepts the passing serenely, with Domnica by his side: "Ready, dada. It's time. Give me your hand." Death is now for Manole an event, paradoxically, specific for life. Manole wants rest that is why he is full of peace.

Manole was freed from the fear of death through art. With the perfection of creation, our artist has finally the feeling of fulfillment. Manole looked at art as a download of the most profound emotions. Even if he lived all his life absorbed by his profession, the selfishness is a feature of artists. The creator has the right or obligation to reserve the most valuable resources for creation.

Manole Crudu is the type on the perfect artist, who managed to overcome the limits of everyday life and to enjoy the abstract things of life. He loves the life in its depth and because he understood that we are all ephemeral, he accepts the death.

Manole is an immortal artist through his art, through his creation admired and appreciated by the posterity. Manole's mission has been fulfilled: he became forever through his art. The central character of the drama unimagined in an exceptional manner.

The narrative theme of popular ballad is resumed and in the dramatic poem of Valeriu Anania – *Craftsman Manole*, placing the hero in new situations and thus reveal a new scenario. The author does not remove too much from the popular text, "only ramify, moderately, the skeleton of the ballad subject" (Micu, 1982: 224), that the theme "seems to be detached from a general treaty aesthetics: art starts from the reality and transfigured it into a new reality organized after the laws of beauty, cancelling the model" (*Ibidem*: 233).

Comparing to the "pattern" Valeriu Anania introduces three characters-Safirin, Iovanca, and the Woman-with role to potency the poem's dramatics. The monk Safirin, pupil of Leonardo da Vinci and Iovanca, the niece of Mrs. Milița are a reply of the main couple, Manole, the master from Argeș and of Simina, Manole's wife. Through the presence of Safirin and of the lady from the high aristocracy deepens the meanings implied by the evolution and destiny of the main heroes. Like his master, who had stolen the face of Giaconda, so Safirin wants to kidnap Iovanca's beauty in an icon: "I knew a craftsman called Leonard/ Righteousness, and in the body without righteous./ He once portrayed a young girl/ Floating in beauty, but lady with man./ And the craftsman little by little, lit up; it is sin;/ Don't think to do it, but the passion melting him./.../ He was falling in love with her, that he forgot the model./ And passion is finished in his work. And the fruit/This: in the icon Mona Lisa lives,/ But here he died, that the master killed/ Beauty by the nature beauty by grace/ You understand, this is the law, with its bitter taste:/ **When the human nature creates the beauty,/ It is condemned the model to perish in the bored fruit./** Here on this canvas and on the wall I will close/ Me **the shadow**, the lady's shadow, to close and

to kill her!" The monk's sacrifice, which through painting the icon dominates his love for Iovanca, has the same essence as Manole's to build his wife in order that the collapse of the dome should no longer take place (the difference is only of tragic register). The idea "When human nature creates the beauty/ It is condemned the model to perish in the bored fruit." It is to be found along the poem in order to highlight the fact that for the continuation of creation is required sacrifice on the part of the creator. This principle is amplified by the appearance along the work of an anonymous character, called generic-Woman, who demands to give back his son's shadow "... tell them/ To give me back the shadow!" and reminds to Manole the symbolism of the shadow: "A stolen shadow and in the wall closed/ At it calls the body again and again. In the bird-soul only the soul is alive." Valeriu Anania, through symbolism of the bird-soul, captures very well the Romanian folk beliefs about the scarified shadow in the foundation of a building and about the soul which comes out from the human body that takes place the appearance of a bird. About these superstitions Tudor Pamfile speaks in *Romanian Mythology*, recalling that some craftsmen in order to give solidity of a building and do not directly sacrifice a human being, they measured with a cane or a stick a man's shadow and then buried the object that served as a measurement at the basis of the construction, and the person whose shadow "has been stolen" dies within forty days from this ritual then it turns into "ghost" haunting the surroundings and defending the new building (1997: 219-228). In other words, the shadow-the symbol of the soul-represents the double of the man, a sort of "ghost" which continues its existence after death. Generalizing the symbolism of the shadow, we may say that the church built by Manole and his comrades is the "stolen" shadow of life. The bricklayers from Anania's dramatic poem has the obsession of "stolen the shadow" which ensures solidity of creation, they becoming "thieves of shadows and tricked by the shadow" (Ghitulescu, 2001: 191). Safirin, after stolen Iovanca's shadow by drawing on the wall of the contours, "kills it" by idealization of the Virgin Mary icon. Manole makes the ultimate sacrifice, is not pleased with the building of his wife's shadow, but of her wife herself, Simina's body becoming the body of the church. About the creation of this shadow himself Valeriu Anania told that he wanted the originality of the poem (1995, 2000). Safirin's gesture is a mimetic one, while Manole's is a by tragedy.

Simina's beauty destroys Manole and determines him to postpone the moment of absolute option. Only after understanding the creator act which assumes asceticism, and then he can act. It can see that the woman, love has "a role with dual meanings, and, paradoxically, at the same

time complementary: on the one hand, the limited passion to passion realizes a contingency censorship process of creative fulfilment of the artistic man, on the other hand, the human creator cannot find the reason and artistic inspiration than thinking at his lover-and infused by the equation with unknown factors of Eros" (Bâgiu, 2006: 256).

The moment of inspiration to complete the edifice is that when he thinks with love at his wife and child appearing on the sky, in front of the door "Simino, today through you grace has entered/ Into my dream! ... The church is ready!" But all this moment is a dramatic one, the craftsman has to sacrifice love for the family in the name of art.

The supreme sacrifice that is capable the hero gives him the power to accept his death (determined by Neagoe) with calm and without to revolt, just saying the words: "It is finished-. Amen!" which remind us of the words of our Savior when he was on the cross, "Jesus said: It is finished! And bowing his head, He gave up his spirit." (John, 19: 30).

Both *The Death of an Artist* by Horia Lovinescu, and *Craftsman Manole* by Valeriu Anania are a series of original Romanian literature works together with *The Monastery of Curtea de Argeș* by Nicolae Iorga, *The Craftsman* by Adrian Maniu, *The Craftsman* by Victor Eftimiu, which has as a source of inspiration the sacrifice myth.

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