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FROM *HORIZON AND STYLE*  
AND *THE SPACE OF "THE MEEK  
EWE'S VISION"*

**A**fter getting more or less accustomed to the chiromancy of the most recondite deep backgrounds [of the unconscious], it is not hard to sense now the secret opening of an entirely singular horizon behind the Romanian wistful folk-song called the *doina*. This horizon is that of the gentle slope. The gentle slope is a high plane, open all around, lying on a green mountain-declivity, down-slanting at the sweetest pace. (...) The gentle slope as the space endowed with certain rhythmic possibilities [being] a limited plane, high, downward-tending, with its horizon closed, and beyond the horizon again an ascent then a valley *ad infinitum*. This horizon is that of an undulant infinite. We have in mind here more than the gentle slope as it occurs so often in the folk songs and in *The Vision of the Meek Ewe's Keen*, (the well-known *Miorița* ballad); rather, we are thinking of the gentle slope which is not evoked by words in our folk verses or music, namely, the ubiquitous gentle slope providing the psychological space of songs. Our wistful folk-song, the *doina* and our ballad have the specific sonority of the undulant infinite. (...) The *doina* - when sung not in the sentimentally urban mode, by feminine artists bedizened in replica folk costumes or by the suburban gypsy rejoicing in useless arabesque mannerisms, but as it is sung by a genuine peasant-woman, or by a shepherdess, bearing in mind the precise and economic sense of the song proper; their voices express the very vitality of blood, and they have gone treading uphill or down the valleys at length and at the call of a destiny - such a song, therefore, evokes a specific horizon: the high, rhythmical and indefinite horizon composed of hill and dale in succession. (...)

What is voiced in a song is not so much the concretely full vista made up of the soil and the rocks, the streams and the grasses - but rather, and primarily so, a scantily patterned space, consisting of lines and accents, some-

what schematic in structure, or at least definitely removed from the contingencies of immediate nature, a space of joints and provided with vertebrae only in so far as its essential static and dynamic existence makes them necessary. How can we account for the singular fact that a given space can in general terms resonate in a song? We are inclined to state that the only answer can be the following: a particular space vibrates in a given song because this space exists somewhere and in a form of sorts in the subliminal psychological layers of the song itself. The only thing left to ascertain is the way in which we should imagine "space" as a creative factor within the soul, namely the modality of its existence.

Cultural morphology (with Frobenius or Spengler and others) as well as art history (with Alois Riegl or Worringer) have undertaken, in tomes which all represent as many weighty, illuminating and intuitive monuments, to elucidate the role played by the "sense of space" characteristic for the people of a certain place in setting up a culture or creating a style in art. Frobenius, anticipating by twenty years and often enough in a more inspired yet more uncontrollable manner, too, some Spenglerian ideas, attributes to each group a specific sense of space, namely to the Hamitic culture the spatial sentiment symbolised by the image of a vaulted cave, and to the Ethiopian culture the spatial sentiment of the infinite. Frobenius regards cultures as if they were plants, growing in the greenhouse atmosphere of a given sense of space. Spengler, in his monumental, much discussed book of cultural philosophy, applies the same point of view to the great historical cultures, discriminating them according to the same spatial criterion and separating them from each other by an impermeably monadic membrane. According to Spengler, the most characteristic side of each culture is precisely its particular sense of space. We are not going to present the Spenglerian theory here, not even in summary form, for we feel entitled to assume that each reader has at least some vague idea about it, if not derived from the original text, then, at least from summaries and reviews. We shall only take the liberty of mentioning some things, in order to refresh the reader's memory and as mere landmarks, namely, we shall mention the modes manifested by the sense of space as implied, according to Spengler, by some of the great cultures. The Faustian culture of the West, a culture of the soul in trouble, of the yearning for expansion, of various perspectives, implies a sense symbolised by the infinitely three-dimensional space (just like the Ethiopian for Frobenius). Ancient Greek culture, Apollinic, measured, luminous, implies a rounded, limited space symbolised by the image of the isolated body. Arabian culture, magic and oppressed as it is by a stifling fatalism, a culture of whose discovery in its whole amplitude Spengler is especially proud, supposedly has as its substratum the sense of the vault-space (to be compared with the Hamitic for Frobenius). The old Egyptian culture implies the spatial sense of the labyrinthine road which leads to death (cf. the "spatial shyness" of Alois Riegl). This theory of the "sense of space", defined by

all the morphologists above cited in relation to the setting in which a certain culture appears, fails to satisfy us, in more than one respect. There are serious obstacles coming in its way, which can hardly be waived aside owing to the manner in which the theory is formulated. In a previous study, titled *Horizon and Style*, we dealt at length with these difficulties, proposing a new theory for removing the obstacles. In our study we speak about "the horizons of the unconscious". There we show - while employing the requisite argumentation - that the factor which cultural morphology or art history interpret as the sense of space is not a sentiment proper, or even less a conscious sentiment, and it does not depend on our enhanced sense-perceptions within a given setting, but is actually a much deeper factor. In our study, we transfer all the extensive spatial considerations from the realm of cultural morphology to the level of depth psychology, namely in a perspective wherein the unconscious is regarded not as a mere "consciousness differential", but as a very complex reality, a reality that somehow depends on the order of the magmas. There are a great many difficulties that get easily removed by this transposition. Here it is not the right place to go into details. We shall only note that what morphologists interpret as the sense of space depending on a particular vista becomes in our theory an entirely authentic "spatial horizon" of "the unconscious". The unconscious should not be regarded only as an infinitely low level of consciousness; rather, it should be understood as something of a psycho-spiritual reality amply structured and relatively self-sufficient. "The spatial horizon" of the unconscious removed or torn away from the chain of external conditions and crystallised as such will persist in its identity, irrespective of the external site variation. The spatial horizon of the unconscious, endowed with a fundamental structure and orchestrated with accents from the soul ought to be seen to act as a kind of necessary and changeless framework for our unconscious spirit. The unconscious feels organically and inseparably united with the spatial horizon, in which it stands fixed as in a conch; it is not linked to this space by just that kind of tie, both lax and changeable, that usually connects the subject to its object, typical for the tie between consciousness and the setting. When subjected to the most capricious play of contingencies, consciousness is at any time ready to betray its setting. The unconscious, however, will never betray. The spatial horizon of the unconscious is therefore a psycho-spiritual reality deeper and more effective than any feeling could ever be. Thus, in order to explain for our own benefit the stylistic unity of any culture, which represents such an impressive phenomenon, we believe it is impossible to resort only to the setting, or to feelings openly related to the setting. The depth of the phenomenon in question requires an explanation that uses recondite realities of a quite different purport. Now, it appears that a spatial horizon of the unconscious may work, indeed, as a reality of such great depth. The spatial horizon of the unconscious can truly acquire the role of a determining factor for the stylistic structure of a certain culture or a certain spirituality, be it indi-

vidual or collective. As we attribute a plastic and determining function to the spatial horizon of the unconscious, we could call it a "matrix space". Thus our theory naturally leads to a fact, which it was impossible for morphology to assimilate. The fact is as follows: now and then, there may exist a contradiction between the structure of the spatial horizon of the unconscious and the configuring structure of the setting amidst which we live and against whose background the conscious life of the senses is lived. This condition of incongruous horizons - for whose illustration it is possible to invoke sufficient historical examples - this condition, therefore, cannot be accounted for in terms of cultural morphology, which, it is well-known, relates the sense of space to the structure of the place or setting. Similarly, it takes nothing short of our own theory about the matrix-space as an unconscious factor enabling us to explain why sometimes or even more often than not, in one and the same setting or place, there may coexist cultures or basic sense aspirations that have fundamentally different spatial horizons .

While debating issues such as these, we have wondered more than once whether there might not exist or at least whether or not we might hypothetically construct a matrix-space, or an unconscious spatial horizon capable of functioning as a spiritual substratum for the anonymous creations of the Romanian folk culture. This subject is worth any amount of effort. We are lured by the possibility of finding a gold key to fit several locks that would open the gates of our Romanian entity. But maybe we need not restrict our research to the domain of Romanian folk culture. The matrix-space which is about to be hypothetically imagined could work as a threshold on the way to a common point for a whole group of peoples, the Balkan peoples, for example. It goes without saying that we are here interested in the Romanian phenomenon. For the time being, we need to deliberately ignore all the neighbours, suspending as well the question about the extent to which these neighbours have been contaminated by the basic sense and aspiration of our space.

Song, as an art that can best translate the unconscious depths, reveals also what we have earlier agreed to call "the spatial horizon of the unconscious". In the order we have decided to follow here, the Romanian wistful song, the *doina*, obviously acquires a significance never as yet stressed in its full import. The *doina* imposes itself actually, given its special resonance, as a vehicle endowed with perfect transparency: we can secretly sense behind it an existing matrix-space or a spatial horizon completely different. In a first approximation, we have brought the *doina* in close connection with "the gentle slope", just as the Russian song has been previously connected to "the steppe". Let us now take one step forward and go more in depth into the issue, also widening it or probing deeper into it, according to our theory about the horizons of the unconscious. The spatial horizon of the unconscious is endowed with accents of the soul that are missing from the setting as such. We can undoubtedly find in the *doina* as Romania's wistful folk-



song a similar horizon partaking of the accents of the soul: in it we can sense the expression of melancholy, neither too heavy, nor too light, the melancholy of a soul who climbs and descends, on an indefinitely undulant plane, ever further, on and on, as well as the expression of a soul filled with a longing to pass beyond that hill which rises like an obstacle placed before the self by fate, a soul doomed to always have yet another hill to climb over, or again, the expression of one soul's fondness while moving in the zodiacal trajectory of some fate having its way up and way down, its ascents and immersions beyond the level line succeeding each other in repeatable rhythms, monotonously, at a never-ending pace. It is with this spatial horizon that our unconscious soul feels organically and inseparably at one, with this matrix-space, indefinitely undulant, and also endowed with certain accents that transform it into the framework of a certain destiny. It is with this spatial horizon that the ancestral Romanian soul identifies in its ultimate depths, and it is about this horizon that we keep in store somewhere, in a tearful corner of our hearts, no matter if we have long ceased to inhabit the gentle slope, a vague reminiscence of paradise:

*Once upon a gentle rise,  
Finest slope of paradise...<sup>1</sup>*

Let us call this matrix-space, high and indefinitely undulant, carrying the specific accents of one particular sense of destiny: **the space of the meek ewe's vision**. This horizon, unevoked by words, can be deduced from the interior melody of the wistful folk-song, the *doina*, from its resonances and outward projections, but it can also be intuitively derived from the spirit of our own folk ballads. Now, this horizon, indefinitely undulant, more importantly derives also from the sense of destiny, namely that sentiment which actually rules supreme in the individual, ethnic or over-ethnic human soul. Destiny is here felt neither like a vault oppressive to despair, nor like an inescapable circle, and it is not even boldly opposed with that brand of boundless self-reliance excessively trusting in one's powers and expansive abilities that can lead only too easily to tragic *hybris*. This soul entrusts itself to the guiding agency of a destiny with indefinite dales and hills, a destiny that, symbolically speaking, descends from the gentle slope, culminates on the gentle slope and reaches its own end on the same gentle slope. The sense of destiny subterraneously inhabiting the Romanian soul seems to be itself structured by this spatial horizon which is high and indefinitely undulant. In fact, we regard the spatial horizon of the unconscious and the sense of destiny as being aspects of one organic complex, as being elements, which once successfully wedded to each other, form together an elastic but essentially unalterable crystal.

Admitting that the Romanian folk song possesses a fully crystallised matrix space, we shall have to conjecture that the Romanians unconsciously

live on “the gentle slope”, or more precisely in the space of *the meek ewe’s vision*, even when they have lived actually and in terms of their conscious life and senses, for hundreds of years, on wide plain expanses. Romanian plains ring with the nostalgia for the gentle slope. And since the inhabitants of the plain cannot feel the gentle slope near enough, their souls create by different ways its exquisite atmosphere: thus, song replaces the gentle slope for them.

The solidarity of the Romanian soul with the space of *the meek ewe’s vision* bears the still, subconscious stamp of a stifled fire, devoid of sentimental effervescence or of the need for conscious fascination. It is thus ascertained one more time that we are moving here on “the other realm” of the soul, or in a domain dedicated to probing into utmost depths. These spatial adhesions belong to the subterranean levels of our psycho-spiritual existence, but they surface in song and dream. The rain coming down in sheets on the gentle slope and the stellar solitude that the shepherd experiences here make him curse each day he has to live in the vicinity of the heights. The shepherd’s feelings suddenly discharged in the bunch of words sown forth through his curses often take the form of adversity to the gentle slope, but, unconsciously, the shepherd remains organically at one with this gentle slope from which he will absolutely never make the tiniest attempt to escape. The *space of the meek ewe’s vision* is inextricably connected with his being. He is as much at one with this space as he is at one with his blood or his own lamented dead. When he sings, this solidarity may chance forth, as it does in that supreme song, handed over century after century, and in which Death on the gentle slope is assimilated in its tragic beauty with the ecstasy of a wedding:

*The sun and the moon  
Crowned me as a ‘groom.  
Firs and sycamores entwined  
Had I in my wedding-train,  
And for priests, the mountains big;  
Strings of singing birds to jig -  
Birds in thousands making chant  
Stars - my torches radiant*

The sense of destiny characteristic for the Romanian folk soul has got entwined with the horizon of *the meek ewe’s vision*, mutually shaping and deepening their respective vistas. In its alloy with the sense of destiny, the space of *the meek ewe’s vision* has permeated like a fragrance all our people’s living wisdom. If we direct the entire research arsenal along such lines, we shall encounter many of the decidedly characteristic features of the folk soul. But let us not overlook even for a moment the fact that we work in terms of nuances, of a mere atmosphere, of the ineffable and imponderable. One thing is sure, namely, that this soul following in its way on bitter-sweet zodiacal

trajectories will neither get overridden by any ferocious fatalism, nor will it assert itself with ferocious confidence in the powers of nature or of fate, which he does not actually regard as final enemies either. Its element is that of a hushed fatalism kept in check, on the one hand, and of a never excessive confidence, on the other hand, which shows it to be precisely what a soul should be, feeling all the while the ascents and descents of its path, going now uphill now downhill, over and over again, as if prompted by and moving in measure to the rhythm of an eternally cosmic *doina* which it seems to him every pace under the sun does obey.

The idea herein formulated offers but a few suggestions. It is still to be ascertained to what extent the concrete achievements of the Romanian soul, i.e., its creations and forms, echo forth the indefinite undulant structure of its own space. The effect ought to become manifest under variegated aspects. Let us call attention to one aspect in the houses' layout. Whoever has walked the gentle slopes over ought to have marked some shepherd's abode straddling high on a peak, and from up there commanding the view all the way into the valley beneath it; one has certainly seen how it is then necessary to gently move the eyes round and make up on the top of the next gentle slope's declivity a similar habitation; there is something of the hill-dale rhythm that has lent itself to the pattern of the housing, too. When descending on the plains, we shall notice that there is something of this ordering and rhythm, the hill-dale rhythm, that has been retained to a certain extent for the housing on the plains, too, although here, the respective order would appear as pointless and out of place. The houses in Romanian villages do not become adjoining to form tight-knit, sturdy, compact terraces, functioning as so many meshes in a collective unity (see the Saxon villages in Romania, by comparison); instead, Romanian houses will come spaced from each other either by mere blank stretches of land, or by the green interval of their surrounding yards or gardens which are placed just like some unstressed syllables between the houses. This still retained distance seems to be, as it were, the last token and reminiscence of the dale that separates the hills with shepherds' abodes on them. Thus is marked on the plain, too, the intermittence of the dales as part and parcel of the indefinitely undulant space. We have to do here with an instance of transposition, worthy of being remembered, springing from a particular constitution of the soul.

So far, no style of Romanian monumental architecture has been created, but such a style is not mandatory perhaps for speaking of the basic architectural sense and aspiration which fully reveals itself in a mere peasant's house or in a small church buried under proliferating grass and nettles. As regards, therefore, the forms and architectural design of the peasant houses, we believe we can signal even at this point at least one negative, yet decidedly manifest, effect of our specific spatial horizon. This effect becomes apparent especially by comparison with those architectural designs that imply other horizons. It is acknowledged, for example, that, in its architectural design,

the Russian house yields to a tendency of expanding in plane. Consequently, the Russian house wastes space, as compared to the Romanian house. The in-plane horizon invites it to extend. The various kinds of Russian churches have a single sure dimension: the horizontal; their vertical shows the uncertainty of a derivative: it grows up by degrees, made up of apses, domes and vaults, increasingly higher. Similarly, it is known that Western architecture, and especially the northern one, manifests a clear tendency - issued from some unknown call from heaven - to expand in height. It is easy to trace in both cases the imprint of the spatial horizons specific to people and to places. As our indefinitely undulant spatial horizon precludes from the start any expansion in plane or in height/depth, we shall capture our architectural genius as manifest in an intermediate dimension that has the grace of preserving in an attenuated form both opposing tendencies. The specific horizon precludes dimensional hyper-proliferation in a single direction and it thus intervenes, negatively at least in determining the architectural forms.

The metric pattern of our folk verses might provide an argument, not the sole one, but which works in conjunction with the others, in favour of the thesis about the specific horizon. Our folk poetry, at any rate, evinces a massive sympathy for the verse constituted by stressed and unstressed syllables, staggered or alternated, i.e. for the rhythm consisting of hill and dale or dale and hill. This metric system at the same time manifests a blatant phobia of the sprightly dactyl. We may, certainly, come across dactylic or anapaestic intercalations, but these will never develop; instead, they will get lost, engulfed, as it were, in the rhythmic hill-dale undulation that unflinchingly pervades Romanian folk poetry like a protracted inner lilt. We might find ourselves refuted by voices claiming that the metre as it is generated by the dactyl or the anapaest does not reside in the nature of our language. Or that this kind of metre would be too sophisticated, anyway, for folk poetry. The latter argument is not decisive as we have the example of old Greek folk verse which is really conversant with this metre. Similarly, the former argument derived from the nature of our language, cannot constitute an explanation. It is precisely from here that the problem stems. The Romanian language has probably created an inner rhythm of its own, alongside with the emergence of the rhythmically constituted vernacular space; this rhythm has made it more fit for a meter based on iambs and trochees than for the metres developed from the other rhythmic units. This inner rhythm has communicated its imprint to our language, that will continue in existence for ever; under its pressure, the practice of poetry was bound to adopt some forms and refuse others. We might be also held in check by the counter-argument that the hill-dale metric system cannot be put down to a specific horizon, as it is to be found throughout Europe. This is perfectly true. But the massive option in favour of this metre still remains a phenomenon to be explained by a specific horizon. Also, in our songs there is a preference for relatively short verse, owing to the rhythmic lilt that traverses our poetry, as it were, like

a wind hitting into the rows of a cornfield. This fact cannot be explained by a so-called primitive character of folk verse in general. We are referring the reader at this point to Neo-Greek poetry with the span of its internal poetic breath as ample as the open sea (its verses have fifteen up to sixteen syllables). We have our eyes set right now on a volume of original texts, accompanied by translations in German, which consists almost exclusively of such verses (*Neugriechische Volkslieder*, ges. v., Haxthausen, Münster, 1935).

I have already stated that the spatial horizon of the unconscious is made up of essential structures, tensions, rhythms and accents. One particular matrix-space may emerge and crystallise in practically any kind of natural setting. The physical place would thus play but a marginal role in the creation of a matrix-space. We are dealing here with a theoretical fact that we have dealt with elsewhere. But there is something which seems to us very palpable and easy to verify: in one and the same space you may find existing side by side souls that are unconsciously fixed upon entirely different matrix-spaces. Here is an example: for about eight hundred years now, the Saxons from Transylvania, transplanted from some place on the banks of the Rhine, have been erecting in the Transylvanian setting their own cultural and civic standing structures, sombre and stone-like in aspect, in accordance with the unaltered spirit of their own Gothic space, their vernacular space of yesterday, as of all times. The Saxons have brought along this permanent seed of their own sense and aspiration from elsewhere and they keep it immersed deep in the river of their blood, just like the marvellous gold buried in the bed of the legendary big river. Next to them, the Wallachian shepherds keep pacing in their lilting rhythm at the foot of the tall, dark towers and castles bespeaking of another destiny; the shepherds lead their sheep to pasture while going up and down the hill and celebrating through the music of the pipe their own space, which belongs to nobody but them. There are two kinds of people who live in the same setting but in different spaces. Although so inextricably close to each other, they are so far apart through their matrix spaces that the eight hundred years of their neighbourly habitation have not been enough to wipe out and defeat the other distance that exists on a subconscious plane between them. This is something blatantly disregarded by the voices of those in pursuit of the uselessly sterile utopia underlying the so-called Transylvanianism supposedly uniting the ethnic groups which live side by side in this setting.

Neither the diligent philologists, nor the productive historians are in a position to specify the time when the Romanian people was born. We are not, of course, all that childish as to expect them to give us a precise calendar date, but we feel we have the right to demand a more or less defining theoretical specification. The language has evolved in infinitesimal stages, uninterruptedly, but giving no signs of any caesura which might enable us to date the moment of its birth. As regards history, this is a more recent reality, which appeared relatively late comparatively to the duration of the pre-his-



torical existence that preceded it. It is only the stylistic judgements and the in-depth psychological analysis that could put us in a position to answer the question we have raised. The Romanian people was born the moment the matrix-space sent roots and acquired form in its soul, the form of the inner space or specific unconscious horizon which, together with some other factors, opened to the soul potentialities for determining the interior style of its own life. The Romanian vernacular may have evolved and suffered mutations, the geographical setting itself may well have failed to be stable; but what has endured, steadily unchanged like a crystal gem, is, beyond the tongue and the setting, the matrix-space. With this detour we return now to the "gentle slope". For the unconscious spatial horizon has given to the Romanians, wherever they have been, the nostalgic craving for the gentle slope. This relentless nostalgia carried the Wallachian shepherd of the Middle Ages far and wide over the Carpathian ranges, from the waters of the Danube river to the north of the country, in Maramureş, and farther away from here to Moravia and back; then, similarly, he may have got carried over all the Yugoslavian slopes as far as Pannonia, wherever the setting satisfied the ingrained appetite of an unconscious horizon. In times immemorial, throughout the long period when the prelude of the current ethnic formations was being played, when the Romanians had no kind of homeland - then, the gentle slope, the hallowed gentle slope sanctioned by a particular sense of destiny, acted as their homeland.

(...) We have dedicated a whole chapter to Byzantine architecture, focusing on the Hagia Sophia [basilica in Constantinople]. We were showing there that this cathedral, through its articulations and architectural forms, gives concrete expression to the metaphysical sentiment of a transcendence which descends and becomes visible. This was shown to work by opposition to Gothic architecture, on the one hand, which rather expresses man's ascent towards transcendence, and to the architecture of the Romanesque basilica, on the other hand, which expresses a parallel life but is entirely exterior to transcendence. The "Sophianic" is essentially this diffuse yet fundamental sense familiar to any Orthodox man, that the transcendent descends, revealing itself of its own accord, and that man and the space of this transient world may become vessels of transcendence. Starting from here, we shall call "Sophianic" any spiritual creation, be it artistic or philosophical, that gives shape to such a sentiment, or any ethical preoccupation informed by this kind of sentiment. (...) To illustrate the Sophianic, it is possible to cite numberless examples of religious literature, liturgical hymns or lyrical texts of an elevated allegorism, meant to be antiphonally sung in alternation from one lectern to the other. It is generally known that the authors of these texts are largely the great Orthodox mystics themselves. The Sophianic taming power the liturgy has over rebellious human instincts is admirably revealed by the fact that in Byzantium cathedrals antiphonal choirs were made up of groups of people who in everyday life were bitter enemies. Contrary political par-

ties that spent most of their time plotting against each other with all the implements of infernal perfidy were nevertheless bent on sublimating their adversities in church in the antiphonal dialogue. But we shall have to go beyond the realm of religious literature proper. We feel sure that the creative spontaneity of the Orthodox peoples got contaminated by the Sophianic potency in quite a few of its manifestations. Folk literature offers rich documentary material for revealing the element in question. It is to be found in some varied, extremely complex images or visions. One need not even look too far, since the documentation itself seems to beacon to the researcher. So, we shall stop at the most often quoted example, extensively analysed but not exhausted as yet, the *Miorița*, i.e. *The Vision of the Meek Ewe's Keen*. Our literary criticism and the ethnographic analysis have concurred in identifying in the *Miorița* some primeval pagan motifs, some considering them Iranian, others Thracian, or Scythian. Some of our researchers regard *The Vision of the Meek Ewe's Keen* as if this song which transfigures Death, or this hymn with a ballad's sill, as it were, really held some runic significance, namely, an archaic, lost sense which is there only to be rediscovered. We could not deny that there is a whole range of significations to one creation, like strata of different kinds, some deep buried, others closer to the surface, such as some runic substratum, yet we are going to deal here mainly with the circulating significance of *The Vision of the Meek Ewe's Keen* or the *Miorița*. Some years hence, a scholar envisaged in the *Miorița* traces of some cryptically encoded ancestral hints of a "ritual slaying". A strange custom allegedly adopted by God Zamolxe's people. ("The ritual killing of the king" was discovered by the ethnologists as a very strange pristine practice of certain Central-African tribes. It is interesting to note that these kings who know themselves to be in advance condemned to the ritual killing show their resignation to dying, which resignation resembles that of the shepherd talking to the ewe lamb in the *Miorița* keen. But we cannot dwell at large on this issue here). Tempting though a discussion of the issues just raised may be, we must refrain from any polemical exercise which would only make us stray from our main interest. We shall only allow space for expressing our astonishment at the fact that our scholars, caught as they are in their impassioned search for ancestral motifs which are naively all the more praised the older they are, like wines, have not recognised the very Orthodox and still current elements of *The Vision of the Meek Ewe's Keen*. The elements in question are sheltered in the innermost cell of the poem. In *The Vision...*, it is a known fact, "death" is equated to "the wedding ceremony". The shepherd who is going to get killed is sending the news – sounding so amazingly like an Annunciation - that he has been wedded to "the bride of the World". The wedding is here not only a manifestly Christian element but more specifically, an Orthodox element. In being equated to a wedding, death stops being a biological fact, or an epilogue; it is transfigured, acquiring the elevated aspect of a sacramental act and becoming a prologue instead. It is a

wedding, a sacramental union with a cosmic element. Let us not forget how and where the wedding is staged:

*The sun and the moon  
Crowned me as a 'groom;  
Firs and sycamores entwined  
Had I in my wedding train;  
And for priests, the mountains big,  
Strings of singing birds to jig -  
Birds in thousands making chant  
Stars - my torches radiant.*

Here is the whole of nature turned into a “church”. Death as a sacramental act and nature like a church are two grave and essential visions of nature in an Orthodox transfiguration. Here we have instances of truly Sophianic transfigurations. One can wonder what would be the use of abiding by the runic signification, when the intimate and unadulterated sense of the poem appears to be sufficiently easy to decode by referring it to the atmosphere of the soul that envelops the poem in the context of its actual circulation.<sup>2</sup> And we should not forget that *Miorița – The Vision of the Meek Ewe’s Keen* is the most widely-circulating folk poem in Romania. One folk researcher has numbered over two hundred variants; the motif is endemic in all the provinces of the country. The Sophianic potency has contaminated the creative spontaneity of our people. The Sophianic potency is not to be searched, therefore, only in the religious beliefs and religious art. It is definitely more comprehensive than the dogmatically fixed creeds and than religious life proper. The Sophianic represents a stylistic determination, the most characteristic one of Orthodox spiritual life. And beyond the dogma, the ritual and religious art, the “Sophianic” is a hypostatic determination for some still actively creative grand possibilities in the realm of folk spirituality in Eastern and south-eastern Europe.

Let us look now into the second widely analysed example of our folk literature. We are thinking of the ballad of Stonemason Manole. The motif of the human sacrifice for erecting a building dates back to geological times, when man held the belief that it was in this way that he could secure his abode from the evil forces of the earth and from the deities of darkness. In the Middle Ages we can still find traces, either clearly observable or vague, of this custom or belief, in many European peoples. The quite anaemic traces were then completely forgotten, being only unearthed from the archives of forgetfulness for the sake of comparative folklore studies. The essentially primeval motif of the human sacrifice for erecting a building has been retained through poetic processing by almost all the peoples in south-eastern Europe. The Bulgarians, the Serbs, the Romanians, Albanians and Szecklers call the motif theirs, and each of these peoples jealously defends its paternity

as exclusively their own. (Which is naïve, as the motif dates back to the geological age!) This disputing jealousy had better be used for another matter! There is, however, another far more interesting question: to what extent or how much have the different peoples managed to sublimate this motif? The respective peoples' ballads are sufficient proof of this. In one place, the human sacrifice should be made for a royal abode, in another place for a bridge, in yet another one for a defence citadel. It was only the Romanian people who believed the sacrifice to be the counterpart of a heavenly deed. Stonemason Manole sacrifices his wife for a church. Here we have an almost incredibly cruel "Sophianic" sublimation of the age-old motif<sup>3</sup>. How deeply ingrained must have been the Sophianic orientation in the soul of the Romanian people, if it managed to lend this kind of transfiguration to a motif all the neighbours of the Romanian people grappled with but without being able to sublimate it and remaining instead shipwrecked, as it were, into the shallow waters of a practical attitude or stationed in mere heroic medievalism!

Our folk mythology, scattered as it is in fragments in the villagers' imagination, enumerates some visions liable to be interpreted in the Sophianic sense without much difficulty. Here are a few examples:

*The transparent earth.* According to a Romanian legend of regional circulation, the earth was initially translucent as water, so one could see through it. The earth enjoyed this transparency, however, only until Cain killed his brother Abel. After the murder, Cain buried Abel's body; but the dead body could be seen as if through water. Consequently, God darkened the earth, so that the traces of such a frightful deed might not be discerned any longer. The vision about the transparent earth is "Sophianic". The attribute of the crystal is granted to the earth as the bearer of a primordially divine purity.

*The Christophoric wheat.* As the peasants of certain Romanian regions believe, if you take a closer look at the wheat grains, you can discern Christ's face stamped on each grain of wheat.

*The neighbouring sky.* According to another Romanian legend, the sky was at first very close to the earth, so close that you could reach it if you threw a stone in the air. But the sky was soiled by people's wickedness and so God lifted it high up. At any rate, it is interesting to note that our Romanian peasant has never managed to put up with the thought that the sky has always been so far away. The Romanians seem so confident in respect to the divine presence in the world that they imagine the sky itself must once have been very, very near, neighbouring on man, really.

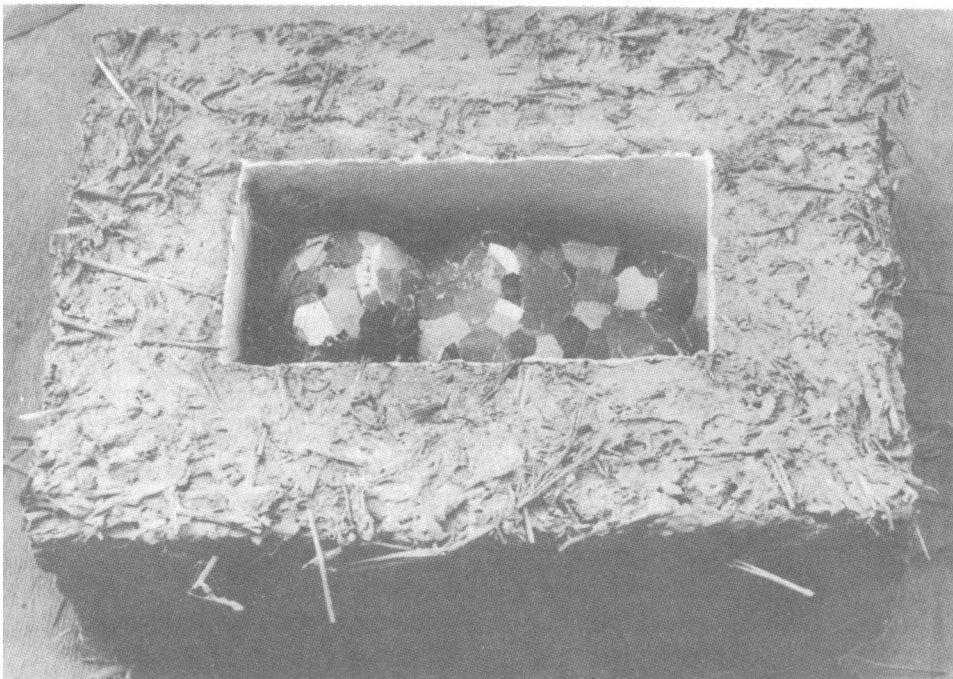
*The ministration of the wind.* According to another legend, the spider, as the embodiment of evil, once chanced upon the ill-advised idea of preventing the light of the sun from reaching the earth. So the spider started weaving its web in the thin air, to stave off the light. As a result, God conceived the wind and sent it to tear the webs. As the world had borne since time immemorial the Sophianic stamp, the peasant couldn't have failed to

find some good use for such an apparently purposeless thing as the wind. And it is possible to extend at will the number of conclusive quotations drawn from folk mythology.

*English version by Ioana ZIRRA*

## NOTES

1. These are the two lines which open the famous *Miorița* ballad (formerly translated as “The Meek Ewe’s Keen” ), lines taken up as a refrain and as a signal of the dying shepherd’s quoted discourse in the body of the ballad.
2. The Sophianic interpretation of *The Vision of the Meek Ewe’s Keen* cannot be too much removed from the truth, as is to be ascertained from some variants of the poem in which the motif of the shepherd who is the subject of the keen is fused with some Christologic motifs. The speaking shepherd in *The Vision of the Meek Ewe’s Keen* turns into Jesus Christ himself, while the addressee of this visionary keen, the shepherd’s “beloved old mother” who is going everywhere to search for the slain and sacrificed one, turns into the Mother of God herself.
3. In the *Ballad of Stonemason Manole* the wager with the divine helper or with Destiny itself consisted in Stonemason Manole’s promise to sacrifice the first creature welcoming him and his team of masons on their way back home for erecting the church. It so happened that Manole’s wife, who was pregnant too, welcomed them first and she thus became the “almost incredibly cruel” embodiment of the sacrificial victim.





LUCIAN BLAGA (1895-1961), studied Philosophy at the University of Vienna beginning with 1917. In 1920 he was awarded the doctorate by the University of Vienna, for a thesis on *Kultur und Erkenntnis*. At the same time he was already publishing a volume of poetry, *Poems of Light* (which was awarded the Prize of the Romanian Academy in 1921), and a book of reflections, *Stones for my Temple*, both in Sibiu (1919). Between 1920-1940 he was one of the editors of the influential Transylvanian review *Gândirea* (*Thinking*). He also published articles and philosophical papers in other magazines of the time, both in Romanian and German. In 1924 he published in Bucharest one of his main early philosophical texts, *The Philosophy of Style*, and one year later the volume of essays *The Original Phenomenon*. All along this period he was writing and publishing philosophical drama, of which *Master Manole* (Sibiu, 1927) is the most important, and many volumes of poetry, among them *Ode to Sleep* (Bucharest, 1929). Blaga translated Goethe's *Faust*, works by Lessing and various German and English poets. He was also active as a diplomat, in Warsaw (1926), Prague (1927), Bern (1928-1932), Vienna (1932-1937), and ambassador to Portugal (1938-1939). In 1939 he became professor of Philosophy at the University of Cluj. In 1948 he was expelled from the University and worked as a librarian, then as a researcher at the Institute of Literary History in Cluj. In the early '30s appeared his major philosophical works: *The Trilogy of Knowledge*, *The Dogmatic Aeon* (1931), *The Luciferic Knowledge* (1933), *The Transcendent Censure* (1934). *The Trilogy of Culture* starts in 1936, with the volume *Horizon and Style*, followed in the same year by *The Mioritic Space* and *The Genesis of Metaphor and the Sense of Culture* (1937). In 1939 he published *Art and Value*, the first volume of the *Trilogy of Values*, followed in 1942 by *Science and Creation* and *Religion and Spirit*.

*The Mioritic Space* (also translated as *The Space of "The Meek Ewe's Vision"*) contains the quintessential Blaga, that is not only the philosopher, but also the poet, the essayist and the playwright, sketching the grounds of his entire endeavour to establish the national features of an a-temporal stylistic matrix that unconsciously informs and configures every cultural creation.