

TabThe PAST

CRIN TEODORESCU:
ÎNVINSUL
ÎNVINGĂTOR ____
INVESTIGAȚIE
CRITICĂ.

**RADU
CRĂCIUN**

UNATC
PRESS

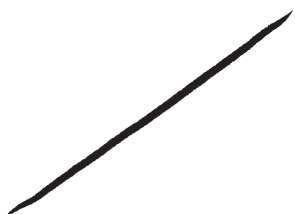
THE MYSTERIOUS CRIN TEODORESCU¹

*Crin Teodorescu: Învinsul învingător:
Investigație critică*

Bucharest: UNATC Press
2024 (262 pp)
ISBN: 978-606-082-043-7

Editor: Liri Chapelan
by Radu Crăciun (Author)

MIRUNA RUNCAN



Babeș-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca, Romania
mirunaruncan2@gmail.com

¹ This review was originally published online in Romanian in *Observatorul cultural*, no. 1224/ 13 September 2024, and is available at:
<https://www.observatorcultural.ro/articol/misteriosul-crin-teodorescu/> (Accessed at: 13 November 2024).
Translated for CONCEPT by Victor Mongescu.

Abstract: Radu Crăciun's volume *Crin Teodorescu: The Defeated Victor* (UNATC Press, 2024) is fascinating and makes a valuable contribution to restoring a truly exceptional artistic personality to the Romanian cultural environment. The volume is not a monograph, according to the conventional definition of the term, but rather what the author refers to in the subtitle as a "critical investigation". More specifically, he proposes an extensive (re)contextualization of the historical, socio-political, and legal framework within which the tragic destiny of a director with a deep reflexive and even theoretical vocation unfolded, a director whose theatrical significance has not been the subject of extensive writings and discussions.

Keywords: Theatre History, Crin Teodorescu, Radu Crăciun, *TabThePast*, critical investigation.

How to cite: Runcan, M. (2024) "The Mysterious Crin Teodorescu", *Concept* 2(29), pp. 230-234. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.37130/6j1xfp62>

An essential part of the large series of events, productions, and debates organized by UNATC within the ambitious research and creation project *TabThePast*², dedicated to bringing to life the relationship between past and present in the performing arts, Radu Crăciun's volume *Crin Teodorescu. The Defeated Victor* (*Crin Teodorescu: Învinsul învingător*, UNATC Press, 2024) is not a monograph, according to the conventional definition of the term, but rather what the author refers to in the subtitle as a "critical investigation". More specifically, he proposes an extensive (re)contextualization of the historical, socio-political, and legal framework within which the tragic destiny of a theatre director with a deep reflexive and even theoretical vocation unfolded, a director whose theatrical significance has not been the subject of extensive writings and discussions.

It is worth mentioning from the very beginning that Radu Crăciun's volume is, according to contemporary theatrical research, an event in itself – in that rare category of revelatory intellectual writings, which, after being read, give you the feeling you've been waiting for them for decades without even knowing it. By cleverly combining comparative bibliographic research – history volumes, monographs, critical synthesis books, journals, and memoirs – from different eras, the "investigation" attempts and succeeds to produce a moving portrait in a landscape that is itself constantly changing.

2 *TabThePast* is an international project of recuperative and performative research of the archives from the period of the communist regime in the Romanian Socialist Republic and the German Democratic Republic, emphasizing the mechanisms of censorship over the period 1960-1989. The project was carried out by UNATC I.L. Caragiale Bucharest in partnership with Replika Educational Theater Center (RO) and Citizen.KANE.Kollektiv (DE).

Structured on several levels that have shaped his exploratory interest over time, *The Defeated Victor* (a diagnosis drawn from the political and philosophical meditations of Crin Teodorescu's own journal, as published in the collection dedicated to the director, coordinated by Valeriu Moisesescu also at UNATC Press, in 2001), the study first focuses on the cultural context of the establishment of communism in Romania, the connection with the protagonist being provided during Ion Sava's directing courses held by ARLUS (the Romanian Association for Strengthening Ties with the Soviet Union). The next and probably the most fascinating and consistent section is the one dedicated to the "Memorialists of the gay elite" in Romania: biographical fragments from Petre Sirin's memoirs, *Castles in Spain* (*Castele în Spania*, Humanitas, 2013), the journals of musician Mihai Rădulescu, *The Game of Death* (*Jocul cu moartea*, Humanitas, 1999) and that of Teodorescu himself are intertwined, reconstructing, at the same time, the tumultuous and labyrinthine path of the group of young people temporarily brought together around semiotician Roland Barthes, who was a lecturer at the French Institute of Bucharest between 1946 and 1948. I believe the chapter is a real embroidery of events, with ups, downs, shocks, melancholy, and especially depression, gradually building up an emotional/empathetic reaction that is unusual for a product of cultural archaeology. On the other hand, probably the most important reflective effect on the reader stemming from the chapter is created by the revelation of the seeds of suicide, which comes back hauntingly both as an existentialist philosophical perspective and an act in itself, not only in the notations of each of the three above mentioned writers but also in group discussions. This can provide a partial explanation for the director's mysterious suicide in 1970.

"The Romanian theatre in the «anarchic phase»", an expression borrowed from one of Sorana Coroamă-Stanca's³ articles (part of the re-theatricalization debate from 1956), attempts to recover, on the one hand, fragmentary reactions to the director's own work and, on the other hand, his universe of artistic and theoretical ideas, as it emerges from the essays published in the press and from the personal notes scattered here and there, especially in some theatre programmes of performances from Brăila, Galați, Ploiești, at the Little Theatre or the Bulandra Theatre. Radu Crăciun carefully maps this route somewhat independently at first from the texts approached, some of them deeply propagandistic; he discreetly emphasizes the differences in position between the director and his generational colleagues, who were direct participants in the above-mentioned important debate; besides, I myself introduced, in the book dedicated to re-theatricalization, *Theatricalization and re-theatricalization in Romania. 1920-1960* (*Teatralizarea și*

³ Sorana Coroamă-Stanca (1921-2007) was a Romanian theatre director and writer, with a consistent contribution in the media debates related to theatre directing between 1956-1957.

reteatralizarea în România. 1920-1960, Eikon, 2003), several hypotheses to justify the absence of his name among the signatories of the “The Report of the Young Directors’ Circle” drafted during the Conference of theatre makers in December 1956. But Crăciun is right: some of the essays on directing, dating from 1965-1970, seem to suggest, in this respect, his spiritual and professional proximity to Radu Penciulescu⁴. The final chapter, dedicated to “Criminal file 128628”, could easily be turned into a script, be it for stage or for screen: it narrates, quite literally, the hallucinatory weave of denunciations, malicious fantasies, and obvious lies through which, under the circumstances of the Periș labor camp, prisoner Crin Mugur Teodorescu, initially convicted for moral offenses, is framed in 1963, along with three others, in a political trial for undermining the state order, for the crime of having narrated classic or contemporary plays in the rooms of the camp, making so-called hostile comments on the communist leadership. Disregarding the withdrawal of some initial statements made by other prisoners, and the arguments of the defense, the court added another seven years to his initial sentence. The general amnesty ordered by Gheorghiu-Dej in 1963 put an end to this unthinkable nightmare. The final solution in this chapter, following the case file with an analysis of Eugen Ionescu’s production, *Victims of Duty* (Bulandra Theatre, 1968), I believe is a brilliant and well-reasoned idea.

However, a few nuanced comments need to be made: first of all, I was lacking documentation, however small, yet substantial, regarding the circumstances of the director’s initial arrest. Hence the need for a more thorough political contextualization of the events of 1958-1960. According to several historians and memorialists (*Internaționala mea / My International* by Ion Ianoși was more relevant in this respect than the volume of interviews with Paul Cornea, cited by the author), we are dealing with a Night of the Long Knives triggered by Dej, apparently shocked by the Hungarian revolution: in reality, it was a pretext to get rid of former legionaries from the field of culture, but also, and above all, of the illegal left-wing intellectuals. One argument is the simultaneous arrests and persecutions of Ion Negoïtescu⁵, but also I.D. Sîrbu⁶, Marietta Sadova⁷, and Sorana Coroamă etc.

4 Radu Penciulescu (1930-2019) was a theatre director and also one of the most important professors at the Theatre and Film Institute of Bucharest from 1965 to 1973 (when he left Romania for Sweden and continued his teaching activities).

5 Ion Negoïtescu (1921-1993) was a Romanian literary historian, critic, and memorialist. He was also arrested for being gay in 1957.

6 I.D. Sîrbu (1919-1989) was a Romanian theatre critic and playwright, novelist and essayist, arrested and imprisoned in 1957 by the communist regime.

7 Marietta Sadova (1897-1981) was an actress, theatre director and professor of acting, but also a member of the fascist/legionary political parties before WWII. She was arrested in 1959 for spreading Western anti-communist writings.

On the other hand, the hypothesis of Ion Sava's latent fascism is quite questionable. As far as I'm concerned, we are dealing, and I have already suggested it, with a double-oriented conjunctural opportunism – Sava goes to Italy with a state scholarship to study filmmaking under a cooperation contract between the two countries for the construction of the national film studios in Fundeni, the Romanian Cinecittà. The procedural, organizational, ideological, and even aesthetic similarities between the Soviet sphere, that of the Weimar Republic, and that of Mussolini's corporatism are a fascinating subject already largely documented, and the echo of these contaminations in our space is, until 1944, more than pale. Yes, Petru Comarnescu (a champion of survival under all regimes) may have somewhat embellished the scholarship matter and that of the Romanian-Italian propagandistic co-production *White Escadrille* (otherwise, a trivial melodrama) in his monograph dedicated to Sava in 1960. But the signs of a latent fascism in Sava seem insufficiently convincing to me, compared to the handful of Romanian intellectuals and artists who acted, without hesitation, at both ends of the political spectrum.

Radu Crăciun's book, apart from the above observations, is fascinating and makes a valuable contribution to restoring a truly exceptional artistic personality to the Romanian cultural/theatrical environment.



Radu Crăciun is a researcher PhD at the Performing Arts and Film Research Center (CeARFi) within the Research Development Innovation Department of I.L. Caragiale UNATC. He is the author of *Spectrele lui Yorick* (UNATC Press, 2020) and *Crin Teodorescu: Învinsul învingător. Investigatie critică* (UNATC Press, 2024). Theatre director and playwright, he collaborated with both state and independent theatres. In 2022 he directed and adapted Strindberg's play *The Dance of Death*, at the Apropos Theater and, in 2023, at the same venue, he directed *Insecte (Insects)*, an adaptation after the homonymous play by Karel Čapek and Victor Pelevin's novel *The Life of Insects*. In 2022 he directed the play *Till*, written by Ioana Petre at the Ion Creangă Theater, in Bucharest. In 2024, part of the *TabThePAST* international project, he held a workshop on the performativity of the socialist regime secret police archives that was turned into a performance: *Crin Teodorescu: Învinsul învingător (Crin Teodorescu: The Defeated Victor)*, written by Sabina Balan. The same year, he also worked as a director, alongside assoc. prof. PhD Alexandru Berceanu with the residents of the "Phoenix" Therapeutic Community from the Bucharest-Jilava Detainment Center (State Penitentiary) at the making of the play *Recuperări (Recoveries)*.