

COMPTE RENDU / BOOK REVIEW

MIRCEA MARTIN, CHRISTIAN MORARU, and
ANDREI TERIAN (eds.), *Romanian Literature as World
Literature*, New York and London, Bloomsbury Academic,
2017, 374 p.

Le travail collectif dirigé par Christian Moraru, Andrei Terian et Mircea Martin sous le titre *Romanian Literature as World Literature* formule, d'une manière militante, l'importance que prennent les cultures nationales à l'ère de la mondialisation, tout en esquissant les voies d'un devenir-universel. Ce n'est que le premier volet d'un programme plus ambitieux de *Literatures as World Literature*, soutenu comme série par les éditions Bloomsbury. Selon les éditeurs, il s'agit d'un point de vue qui rend flexibles les relations de pouvoir décrites par Pascale Casanova, permettant, à chacune des littératures du monde, la prise de la position centrale (qui, dans ce contexte, se présente comme une centralité relative, *soft*) et les transformant ainsi dans des par littératures-monde.

C'est pourquoi le but central de cet ouvrage le constitue le soulignement de l'interconnexion permanente qui se réalise entre les cultures, car c'est cette circulation même qui rend possibles les déplacements vers le centre de l'espace littéraire. Divisés en trois grandes parties, les articles décrivent l'aube, la progression et l'avenir de la modernité roumaine, pendant que la dernière contribution, celle de Mihaela Ursa, discute la formation d'un champ littéraire à partir des traductions, en faisant encore une fois référence à l'époque de naissance de la littérature roumaine.

Le tom a été perçu dans l'espace culturel roumain comme un tournant en ce qui concerne les études littéraires, car il élargit la sphère de ce qu'on comprend généralement comme objet tenant de la littérature nationale. Ne se limitant pas aux frontières du pays, les réflexions proposées ne s'arrêtent pas non plus aux influences culturelles qui s'opèrent entre deux cultures tenues par leur définition historique et géographique. On s'intéresse, par contre, aux situations plus complexes, dans lesquelles les frontières ne peuvent pas être esquissées facilement ; c'est le cas de presque tous les auteurs qui traitent le problème de l'influence perçue à travers des déterritorialisations successives ou progressives, quoi qu'elles soient liées aux écrivains de langue hongroise qui vivent en Roumanie ou à l'« exil » des écrivains tels que Herta Müller ou Andrei Codrescu. On se situe dans un *gray area* où l'on parle à la fois des limitations culturelles (comme le fait Ovidiu Morar discutant le cas de Gherasim Luca, qui se dit « étranger »), des dissimulations et des capitalisations à partir des données d'une autre culture (le positionnement de Emil Cioran, discuté par Mihai Iovănel).

L'ouvrage a été également saisi comme la pierre angulaire d'une nouvelle méthode de la critique, qui envisage une intégration mondiale des œuvres analysées. Selon Christian Moraru, on parle pour la première fois de la fin de la centralité hégémonique définie par Pascale Casanova et de son remplacement par un modèle plutôt fluide, qui favorise l'échange des positions entre les littératures et qui peut constater, dans ce sens relatif dont nous avons déjà parlé, une centralité assumée également par la littérature roumaine. Un tel changement méthodologique et même épistémologique était, paraît-il, bien nécessaire et beaucoup attendu dans les études littéraires, car la réception du volume est enthousiaste non seulement de la part des chercheurs consacrés (Alexandru Matei, Cezar Gheorghe), mais aussi de la part des jeunes doctorants (Anamaria Mihăilă, Mihnea Bălici), qui y trouve un nouveau souffle pour leurs propres recherches.

Comme le formule de manière explicite Christian Moraru, les éditeurs ont voulu offrir par ce volume une manière de se rapporter *autrement* à la littérature roumaine. Ils se sont proposés une ré-invention de la littérature nationale. Bien que dans la préface on affirme qu'il ne s'agisse pas d'une histoire littéraire proprement-dite, mais plutôt d'une collection d'études, de diaporamas transversales (perspective qui est reprise par Alexandru Matei dans son commentaire au volume), l'impression qu'on a affaire avec beaucoup plus, et que les analyses proposées arrivent à proposer également une autre histoire de notre littérature est forte. Ce qui est contenu dans le *graphein*, à savoir

l'historiographie, la cartographie et la contre-géographie, plusieurs fois mentionnées dans l'ouvrage, se compose avec une visée plurale sur l'histoire littéraire ; la *territorialisation* des études littéraires ne relève qu'un autre moyen de penser la temporalité, comme le *deep time* de Wai Chee Dimock.

La cartographie d'une littérature implique toujours des risques, c'est pourquoi les auteurs du volume ne se proposent pas *une histoire*, mais *une autre histoire*, qui implique une réévaluation des clichés véhiculés sur le modernisme littéraire roumain, sur l'époque et l'œuvre de Mihai Eminescu ou sur les correspondances entre les Beatniks et la génération '80. Dans la préface de *Où est la littérature mondiale?*, Christophe Pradeau formulait l'idée que la difficulté principale des études de la littérature mondiale est celle de réussir à fixer un vertige qui s'installe aux intersections et dans les points de correspondances. Or, à mon avis, la prise de position exprimée dans *Romanian Literature as World Literature* est de refuser de fixer ce vertige. Il est rassurant que la dislocation évidente proposée par les études World Literature ne se traduise pas dans ce cas par une abolition de l'histoire, mais par sa pluralisation, en rendant le vertige de plus en plus présent. Les visions de G. Călinescu ou de Nicolae Manolescu sont souvent blâmées, mais on souligne en même temps que ce n'est pas dans un conflit avec l'histoire littéraire traditionnelle qu'on s'installe de cette manière, mais tout simplement dans un rapport distancé, qui est le résultat d'un positionnement dans l'extrême contemporain.

Un tel travail comporte aussi des risques, surtout parce qu'il existe des différences et même des tensions entre les perspectives assumées par les auteurs. Les éditeurs ne cachent pas le fait que leur volume soit le produit d'une crise, liée à la fois au modèle de l'état-national qui de nos jours s'ouvre vers la mondialisation – et aux conditions de la circulation et de la réception des œuvres qui changent, elles aussi, une fois avec la globalisation. En favorisant une centralité culturelle relative, à travers les *soft nodes*, la perspective critique proposée par *Romanian Literature as World Literature* devient souvent « mineure », selon Xavier Garnier, c'est à dire qu'elle « s'intéresse aux transformations que la littérature fait subir aux faits culturels ».

Anca SOCACI

Babeş-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca
Faculty of Letters

MARIA SASS, ȘTEFAN BAGHIU, and VLAD
POJOGA (eds.), *The Culture of Translation in Romania /
Übersetzungskultur und Literaturübersetzen in Rumänien*,
Berlin, Peter Lang, 2018, 326 p.

In the Romanian cultural and academic context, permeated by a slow but steadily growing tendency to employ the latest research methods in the study of contemporary relevant subjects, *The Culture of Translation...* is a volume that has two essential merits: it is the result of a collective research effort, as well as a welcome attempt to highlight the importance of a topic such as translation studies by using a variety of perspectives and research methods. The volume consists of twenty-one contributions, written in English and German, the majority of them belonging to scholars grouped around two of the most important academic centres in the country, while the remaining few belong to people involved in the book dissemination circuit (translators, reviewers etc.). The three sections of the book converge to offer a panoramic account of translations in the Romanian cultural context.

The first section of the book, "General Analysis and Quantitative Studies", comprises a series of articles that share a large degree of generality, covering extensive areas concerning the theory and practice of translation on a national scale. The six articles in this section aim to convey a nuanced image of the translation phenomenon starting with the second half of the nineteenth century and continuing up to the present decade. The authors address various subjects including the task of

sketching a timeline of translation theory, the interdependence of the emergence of literary renditions on the development of local literature, changes in the status of translation as a direct result of a series of variables (cultural ideology, economy, socio-politic climate), the dynamics of translation and its position in the equation connecting peripheral literatures to central ones, or literary renditions as an index of artistic outlook. Concerning the content, it is notable for its use of numerous up-to-date concepts. Whether focusing on traductology and its “satellite” concepts – ideological translation, untranslatables, “travelling concepts” – while pointing towards authors such as Edward Said, Emily Apter, or David Bellos, or centred on the field of study outlined by World Literature (a subject largely theorized by authors such as Pascale Casanova, David Damrosch, Immanuel Wallerstein or Franco Moretti, among others, who bring to the foreground concepts such as peripheral and central literatures / cultures, emergent literatures, literary colonialism, world-systems analysis, cultural capital, the stock exchange of literary values etc.), these contributions seek to be not only complex, but also relevant. Considering the broadness and diversity of these subjects, it is only natural to expect a large array of research methods. Thus, from close reading to distant reading and from quantitative analysis to literary geography, these studies wish to provide a comprehensive account of the main topic, displaying at the same time the rigour of present-day research practices. Two important ideas regarding the opening section are worth highlighting: first, the selected topics have a high degree of relevance in the Romanian cultural context, considering that some of the articles efficiently synthesize large amounts of data or undertake working hypotheses other works barely touch upon; secondly, this is a significant step towards rethinking the study of autochthonous literature, i.e. allowing the national production to be defined in / by itself, as well as in connection with World Literature.

After the introductory section, the second part of the book, “Close-ups of Literary Translation”, gathers nine articles, eight of them dedicated to different specific cases of translation into Romanian, the last one providing an overview on translation practice in the digital era of globalization. This part starts with three enquiries related to the activity carried out by three Romanian-based authors. Following the lives and work of Wolf von Aichelburg, George Coşbuc and Lucian Blaga, these papers wish to analyse not only the renditions of the aforementioned authors in terms of ideology, methods and techniques, but also the influence exerted by their translation activity on the dynamics of national literature. The next two chapters share an interest in the effective and immediate result of literary renditions, distinguishable in the language choices. The first article looks into the distinctions discernible in the communist and the post-communist renditions of Shakespeare’s works. The focal point is the translation of the English author’s ribald multilingual puns and the questions it raises with regard to a foreignising approach. Following a similar direction, the other article investigates several instances of sexual language renditions and the relationship between the gender of the author or translator and the linguistic depiction of the sexual act. Other articles in this section undertake topics such as the attempt of national literatures to acquire exportable value by means of creating “editorial fiction”, as well as the genre’s impact in the French and Romanian context; the debate revolving around the status of translations and film adaptations of novels, bearing in mind the ideas of “fidelity” and “artistic coherence”; Scandinavian Noir as a successful representative of popular culture and the trajectory of symbolic capital accumulation by means of entry in a dominant book market. The last paper acts as a summary and theoretical reflexion, bringing forward various subject-related aspects: the pragmatic and the poststructuralist theories of translation, the position of the critical discourse in connection with the relationship established between the author and the translator, or the legitimacy of associating translatorship to invisibility and creative imprints. As was the case with the previous part, this section covers a vast area of research featuring, as a result, numerous investigation methods and techniques. Some of the most notable points examined in this part are the articulation of translation in relation to censorship and cultural rehabilitation, genetic, typological, and free literary relationships, overt and covert translations, the foreignising approach to translation, the link between language and gender, strategies for internationalizing autochthonous literature, the truth and fidelity of literary renditions and film adaptations, the methods of communication between cultural peripheries and the shifting equilibrium in the author-translator association. Overall, these papers are

more inclined towards an applied approach, trying to examine several translation phenomena identifiable in the Romanian culture.

The last section, suggestively titled “A Translator’s Perspective: Language, Discourse and Meaning”, reunites six first-hand accounts of a translator’s experience in terms of status, success, remuneration, obstacles and management of problematic situations. The first article deals with the position of the translator as a cultural mediator in a globalised world. The paper explores multiple problems, including the poor remuneration and reputation of the translator, along with his/her chances of achieving large-scale success. The following paper is a critical confession that dwells upon the intricacies of rendering Paul Celan’s poetry into Romanian, especially on those of using the correct deciphering (reading) and translation strategies. In a similar manner, the next article recounts the experience of translating Ezra Pound’s poetry, the difficulties that may arise and the ways of overcoming them. Stemming from the motivation to understand marginal literature and its journey to transnational visibility, the fourth article is dedicated to the Romanian Roma-poetess Luminița Mihai Cioabă, whose works have a twofold significance: they are a means of preserving the oral Romanian language and a direct way for the European readership to get acquainted with an obscure culture. The second to last paper analyses Radu Paraschivescu’s prose and, implicitly, contemporary Romanian literature and the manner in which it makes use of language. This section ends with an overview of Doina Ioanid’s poetic activity and the German readership’s response to the author’s original prose poems. The last part of the volume stands largely under the sign of confession, collecting the experience of professional translators and presenting a selective image of the European reception of autochthonous literary productions. In a similar manner to that of the previous sections, these articles problematise the nature of the network of relations established between national literatures, peripheral literatures’ chances of becoming active participants in the international cultural capital exchange, the connection between literature / translation and social criticism or lobbying, encapsulating present-day life experience and sensibility and preserving cultural heritage.

Given the book’s acknowledged aim to mediate a change in the general perspective on translation studies and to advocate the fact that Romanian research in translation studies should be granted more importance, *The Culture of Translation...* has achieved its goals. Due to the authors’ ambition to approach the topic from a multitude of perspectives, as well as to employ a variety of research methods, the end result is a volume with two essential roles: that of filling a void in the Romanian cultural discourse, and, at the same time, that of providing the international book market with “a window on” the Romanian cultural context. In short, although the volume does not treat its main topic exhaustively, it cannot be overlooked by future researches in this area of investigation.

Mirela ȘĂRAN

Babeș-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca
Faculty of Letters

ION POP, *Poezia românească neomodernistă* [*Romanian Neomodernist Poetry*], Cluj-Napoca, Editura Școala Ardeleană, 2018, 853 p.

A major challenge for recent literary studies in the Romanian space has been to overcome the traditional historiographic perspective embraced by the studies of Eugen Lovinescu, G. Călinescu or Nicolae Manolescu. Since last year’s volume, *Romanian Literature as World Literature* (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2018), these views have been openly questioned. The central idea of the new studies is that last century’s major projects on local literary history have common subsidiary structures and ideologies. Firstly, they include a chronological inventory of authors from a given period and the

criteria for selection are mostly axiological. It is obvious that one of the aims of local historiography was the creation and imposition of a canon. Secondly, the periphery complex caused the consolidation of the national myth of Romanian literature. Recent studies of world literature demonstrate the fragility of the concept of “national literature” and the existence of important transnational openings in the genesis and evolution of a regional literary act. These are ignored in the respective projects for political reasons specific to peripheral countries tributary to the important cultural centres. Thirdly, these local historiographies had ideologies that go beyond aesthetic or scientific purposes. They were either answering a need for synchronization with European culture (as in Eugen Lovinescu’s case), or were, on the contrary, conservative and nationalistic, proposing a unitary and organicist image of Romanian culture (G. Călinescu). In the context of the unsettling of the old methodologies, Ion Pop’s study on the Romanian Neomodernist poetry continues the meta-literary tradition of the twentieth century by applying its methods to a still controversial period in local literary history.

The aim of this volume is neither to build a broad narrative about national identity nor to accentuate an exaggerated synchronization with Euro-Atlantic culture. The study responds to recent local discussions about Romanian neo-modernism, trying to clarify how it appeared in an unfavourable political and historical context and to systematise its main aesthetic categories. The poetic neo-modernism of the 1960s and 1970s was discredited in the theorizations of the critics of the 1980s generation, especially by Ion Bogdan Lefter and Mircea Cărtărescu. This new generation has adopted Western postmodernism and criticises neo-modernism on the grounds of its “anachronism”. *Romanian Neo-modernist Poetry* proposes a counterargument to the reductionist idea that the promotion of poets from the previous decades simply copied the models of interwar “high” modernism (Lucian Blaga, Ion Barbu, Tudor Arghezi and George Bacovia), which would diminish their aesthetic value both locally and at European level. By adopting the axiological criterion in his textual analysis of the authors, Ion Pop does not attempt to impose a canon, but to re-legitimise a literary movement that has become “outdated” in the opinion of the more recent “neo-avant-garde” movements (9).

Another aspect that Ion Pop adopts from previous local historiographies is the organicist perspective on Romanian literature. Yet he does so from an anti-communist rather than nationalist point of view. Culturally, the onset of communism led to a “dramatic ‘proletkultist’ and ‘realist-socialist’ syncope” (19) which brutally interrupted the “natural” progress of liberal Romania to (post)modernity. This argument is also used by the detractors of neo-modernism and is the basis of a ceaseless narrative of Romanian (or generally East-European) culture: the “delay” complex. However, many recent international studies have begun to problematise the importance of censorship (whether in a totalitarian regime or not) to the realisation of the literary act. Moreover, the literary is always built in relation to the rules of state control, the latter drawing the limits and possibilities of subversion, avoidance or expression for the first. In a similar vein, but without a proper theoretical and institutional approach, what Ion Pop underscores is the complex dialectic between neo-modernist poetry and censorship as it is reflected in the actual poetry works, especially in the context of the “loosening” of the Soviet cultural program after the 1960s. The explanation for the start of the neo-modernist program is related to the forced imposition of the “artistic” decrees of socialist realism. It is known that the demands of socialist realism forced the adoption of a classical formal structure which had to be accessible to the general public, the usage of institutionally accepted topics, the total straightforwardness of the discourse and the image of the “exponential subject”, that is, of the visionary poet, the “spokesman for the Party” (20). When state-imposed control became less coercive, the “natural” tendency was to avoid the poetic repertoire of socialist realism and the only viable method was the return to interwar modernism. The avoidance of censorship led to the emergence of strictly aesthetic programs. Even the appropriation of the avant-garde surrealist program by the “Oneirist” generation is depoliticised by “camouflaging the subversive aspects of this project” (23). Thus, neo-modernism is determined by these major modernist vectors: the importance given to the signifier over the signified, meta-poetry, intertextuality, hermeticism, bovarism, reflexive lyricism and the desocialisation of discourse. Hence, Ion Pop also detects numerous revivals of the major

directions of inter-war modernism: “‘Updated’ Traditionalism”, “Classical Variations”, “Variants of (H)ermeticism” or “Expressionist Reshapes” are some of the chapters in this study.

However, these theories are not entirely new. Critics such as Nicolae Manolescu, Eugen Simion or Eugen Negrici also discussed similar issues in the past. The main objective of *Romanian Neomodernist Poetry* is not to explain the internal dynamics of neo-modernist promotion within the post-Stalinist literary system. Its major methodology is what international studies call “close reading”. Starting with the *Argument*, the critic asserts that “the next glosses belong to the category of ‘slow readings’, following as a rule the approximation of an imaginary universe” that is “structured by its own internal logic” (10). Thus, Ion Pop proposes a thorough analysis of the oeuvres of all the actors correlated to the Romanian neo-modernist movement. He is mainly interested in issues related to style, the personal imaginary, ethos and autochthonous or international influences. This is problematic because it does not properly conceptualise the main characteristics of this literary period. It seems that every author writing outside the socialist realist norms and active between the late 1950s (with the emergence of the “*Steaua* group”) and the late 1970s (the movement around the *Echinox* magazine) is portrayed as a neo-modernist. However, the attention given to the artistic individualism of each poet deconstructs the thesis of the so-called “neo-modernist provincialism”, demonstrating that these authors did not simply rely on a sterile emulation of inter-war modernism, but that they also hugely influenced the local literary system.

Mihnea BĂLICI
Babeş-Bolyai University
Faculty of Letters

LIGIA TUDURACHI, *Grup sburător. Trăitul și scrisul împreună în cenaclul lui E. Lovinescu* [“*Grup sburător*”. *Living and Writing Together in E. Lovinescu’s Literary Circle*], Timișoara, Editura Universității de Vest, 2019, 451 p.

Although much has been written on the literature produced by E. Lovinescu’s literary circle, allowing some of its members to become canonical authors and milestones of autochthonous cultural history, the circumstances of this phenomenon of concerted creativity have usually been regarded as anecdotal. Literature itself came into focus, rendering the adjacent social relationships, the group’s routine or the genesis of every text insignificant in the eyes of many historians or critics and perpetuating the idea that the mundane background of literary production is to be studied separately from the actual body of texts. However, as contextualisation gains increasing importance in literary studies both globally and locally, the socio-historical factors of a major movement like Romanian modernism need to be addressed, and Ligia Tudurachi’s recent investigation, *Grup sburător*, thus appears instrumental in understanding Eugen Lovinescu’s legacy by drawing the first lines between seemingly accidental biographical details and aesthetic choices or imaginary structures.

Symptomatically, Tudurachi begins her exposition by presenting not Lovinescu’s project (a specific moment in time and space), but rather the psychology and sociology of artistic groups in the 19th and 20th centuries. Basing her hypothesis on their noticeably neutral names (related to days of the week or to street names), she discusses the tension between belonging to a movement and defining one’s creative self in opposition with the existing crowd, using these dynamics of collectivity and individuality to prove the double role played by cultural societies in literary history – as forces of coagulation at times, but also as self-made institutions that prompted dissent and diversity. The same pattern applies to *Sburătorul*, whose name is initially linked to Lovinescu’s preferred myths (the young artist, tormented by his ideals; the scientific progress of modern times, used simultaneously for

emancipation and destruction) and to his detractors' ironic metaphors (Călinescu's Pegasus, for instance, an embodiment of Romanian contemporary literature collapsing under its own weight). Its symbolism grows more intricate, however, when considering that a remarkable number of writers have attempted to further interpret it, adding supplementary layers of significance to their circle's name – not because this was in any way necessary for establishing its identity in the existent historical context, but more likely in order to personally comprehend the complicated relationship between living and creating within Lovinescu's group, between an intellectual community and an emotionally bound one and, ultimately, between interaction and self-design.

Since these are the main problematic areas that *Grup sburător* tackles, it follows naturally that Ligia Tudurachi would counter such relational ambiguities through minute analysis and critical rigour. This is most visible in her description of *life* within the literary circle, as she surveys and comments on a considerable volume of both fictional and diaristic texts belonging to group members. From showing that the density of negative emotions associated with one's first public readings derives from a certain cult of vulnerability and sensitivity developed amongst interwar writers, to highlighting the isolated nature of their gatherings and their paradoxically anti-modernist disinterest in the street's daily spectacle, the author manages to look behind any age-old clichés about Lovinescu's dominance and draws instead a map of influences, of authority acquisition and collective psychology.

The circle's setting, for example, namely Lovinescu's bourgeois apartments, is considered eloquent in terms of the texts' reception in the literary world: on the one hand, Tudurachi extracts several accounts of the almost mystical, mysterious atmosphere that engulfed the public, created through lighting as much as through a romanticised perspective on the creator's function; it was this theatricality of the writer's reading performance that engendered, in Lovinescu's view, the arbitrary evaluations that the correspondent texts often received; on the other hand, inhabiting the same space became an element of power, as the intentionally neutral geography of the critic's study allowed any newcomer to appropriate the territory (a tendency prevalent in the same novices' novels and short stories, where many intimate, individualised places are symbolically transferred from owner to visitor). Indeed, Tudurachi's research shows that the power dynamics between the leader and the followers, as well as that within actor-public interactions were well understood by *Sburătorul* writers. Thus, in the later prose of Cella Delavrancea, Octav Șuluțiu or Hortensia Papadat-Bengescu, the critic identifies many social situations in which an artist or an ordinary speaker in an ordinary conversation assumes a vulnerable, tragic posture, similar to that of Greek theatre victim characters. Moreover, Tudurachi argues that *this* perception of societal exposure – obvious to Lovinescu himself during the circle's gatherings – also prompted a change in the meetings' tone, from critical to empathetic and enthusiastic, finally resulting in an unlikely type of solidarity.

In fact, the everyday life of *Sburătorul* participants is likened to the *idiorhythmic* lives of Athos monks (using one of Roland Barthes's analyses and his terminology), more exactly to the constant negotiation between a collective and rigid routine and, at the same time, one of unquestionable personal freedom and taste. The circle is deemed to have functioned, by and large, as a stable cultural mechanism, whose unwritten rules and hierarchies were subject to very few changes over the years, but the writers' closeness to or distance from this institution remained the product of individual choice, ranging from dependence to mere curiosity. Were Ligia Tudurachi's reconstruction to be summarised, it is this paradox of radical individuality inside a literary family that would represent her main focus: the absence of a single artistic creed, Lovinescu's habit of verbalising a writer's specificity instead of their flaws, as well as the emphasis placed on diversity by master and members alike all served as incentives for originality rather than conformity and can retrospectively explain the unlikely social structure of the group.

Even Lovinescu's legendary role on the epoch's cultural stage is deconstructed by shedding light on the open circuit of opinion functioning amongst the critic, the artists and the wider public (that would often phone Lovinescu, expressing their doubts and discontent), especially as this type of interactivity could echo, albeit involuntarily, the avant-garde's desire to bring authors and critics off their pedestals and into the challenging agora of non-institutional reception. However, a comparative

inspection of *Sburătorul* and *Junimea*, the equally influential cultural society of the 19th century, proves both the latter's democratic and carnivalesque setting (with texts being read by certain appointed members and thus deprived of any dramatic aura of intimate representation) and the former's insistence on individualism, doubled by the tragic centrality of the author-actor. The *modern* or *innovative* direction of Lovinescu's circle therefore comes into question, as modernism is revealed to have been spearheaded by a group of writers engrossed in their personal mythologies or at least in a solemn and somewhat anachronistic collective narrative.

Ligia Tudurachi's inquiries revolve programmatically around unexplored aspects of creation inside the literary circle, in an effort to comprehend even the apparently arbitrary decisions of the artists involved. Why did Lovinescu impose – for instance – so many pseudonyms on his novices: to answer the preexistent need for being re-baptised into literature or to secure, as Althusser's and Judith Butler's theories suggest, authority and power? How did the critic link anonymity (be it that of the Jews, defined collectively by their fanatical devotion to art, or that of women, perceived solely through their so-called femininity or lack thereof) to the emergence of genius and, more importantly, is this distribution of talent to minorities the stamp of a democratic sort of conscience? Finally, Tudurachi also discusses unconventional forms of collective writing, from the fiction inspired by the circle's setting or characters and secondary texts (prefaces, interviews etc. – all implying an emotional investment), to the more subtle process of mutual influence (a shared vocabulary, common aesthetic tendencies).

All along, Tudurachi's analysis is not only as engrossing as a historically informed narrative, but also as dense in evidence as the most stoic scientific report, providing a much-needed overview of one of the most intricate periods of Romanian literary culture and building this landscape on different fronts synchronically – collective psychology and issues of personal and group identity, a sociological understanding of literary communities, a comparison between Lovinescu's project for an empathetic and constructive kind of criticism and his cold, isolated persona, as well as political and ideological insights. Clarifying the circle's evolution and employing various techniques in the process (close-reading, the study of influences, cross-disciplinary excursions, a succinct quantitative demonstration regarding the openness of the literary network towards new additions), Tudurachi retraces transfers from the writers' experiences at *Sburătorul* to their subsequent subjective perception of the world (of space, objects, history, affect) as seen in their writings – the geography of the characters' homes, the theatricality of their dialogues, the intellectual's status and emotional struggles. Thus, the gap between context and artistic product is finally bridged.

Maria CHIOREAN

Babeş-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca
Faculty of Letters

PAUL CERNAT, *Vase comunicante: (Inter)fețe ale avangardei românești interbelice* [*Communicating Vessels. (Inter)Faces of the Romanian Inter-War Avant-Garde*], Iași, Polirom, 2018, 312 p.

In his latest book, Paul Cernat proposes a few re-readings of several Romanian avant-garde writers stressing the similarities between the different radical literary and cultural movements of the interwar period. As opposed to his previous volume on the subject (*Avangarda românească și complexul periferiei. Primul „val”* [*The Romanian Avant-garde and the Periphery Complex. The First “Wave”*], 2007) the present book is not a synthesis study, but rather an investigation into the

variety of the 20th century's avant-gardes, meant to expose the movement's heterogeneous character and complex network of interferences.

The book is conceived as a collection of essays centred on the concept of "communicating vessels" which is used as a metaphor to describe the links between literary and political directions, usually perceived as opposites. Seven distinct studies divide the structure of the volume into chapters. In the first one, Paul Cernat goes beyond the borders of the historical avant-gardes trying to identify a certain proto-avant-garde atmosphere within the emerging modernism of the late 19th century literature. The author stumbles upon this period initially because the first occurrence of the term *avant-garde* (with a cultural meaning) is to be found in the Romanian literary press at this time. In a polemic essay published in 1870, the national poet Mihai Eminescu uses the term to attack Titu Maiorescu's group Junimea, which he qualifies as nihilist avant-garde. Even though the occurrence of the term at that time can be interesting, it does not represent the main point of the argument. Trying to avoid certain anachronistic readings, but acknowledging the poet's intuition, Paul Cernat asserts that the fusion between the founding and polemical spirit of Titu Maiorescu and his group "warrants the assimilation of Junimea with a *sui-generis cultural avant-garde*" (25). As it is well known, Junimea will soon become the cultural establishment, assimilating Mihai Eminescu as well, on the basis of the conservative and Germanophile affinities between the poet and the group. Hence, the new anti-establishment "avant-gardes" will oppose the ideology of Junimea. The two main anti-Junimea directions are the aesthetic-Francophile one (represented by the symbolist poet Alexandru Macedonski, Eminescu's rival) and the socialist one (represented by the Romanian-Jewish literary critic Constantin Dobrogeanu-Gherea). Paul Cernat reasons that the fusion between these two directions will constitute, in Romania, the foundation of the actual literary and artistic avant-garde of the 20th century, firstly represented by Ion Vinea and Tristan Tzara.

Entitled "Dada export-import", the second chapter of the volume addresses the transnational implications of the Dada movement. The subject was previously approached by the author in his previous volume of 2007 from a slightly different perspective, that of stressing the point of the "inferiority complex" in Romanian culture. Here the reciprocal nature of cultural influences is emphasized: firstly, the involvement of Romanian writers and artists in the development of the movement at Cabaret Voltaire and secondly, the influences of the post-dada Dutch movement *De Stijl* on the articulation of the constructivist Romanian avant-garde of the 1920s. The Dada movement is analysed within the framework developed by Romanian writer Caius Dobrescu, according to which the main avant-garde movements can be associated with three cultural, anthropological-based patterns: *War*, *Revolution* and *Carnival*. In this taxonomy, Italian futurism corresponds to the model of *War*, surrealism, Russian futurism and German constructivism are associated with the concept of *Revolution*, while Zürichian Dadaism corresponds to the model of *Carnival*. Continuing this reading, Paul Cernat presents the Dadaist movement as defined by the *Carnival* atmosphere in a Bahtinian sense, but also in the sense of the absolute neutrality represented by the joker type *ethos* of individualism and relativity that ultimately led to the group's ephemeral existence. Therefore, a closer look is taken at the "subsequent metamorphoses" of Dada, i.e. at the mutual influences between the post-dada groups and the newly formed avant-garde movement in Romania.

Subordinate to the thesis of "communicating vessels", the thesis of "amphibious radicalism" articulated in the third chapter represents one of the main arguments in the book. In the opening of the chapter Paul Cernat asserts that "The «progressive» modernity of the avant-garde in interwar Romania and the «reactionary» modernity of the young existentialist generation are no longer seen merely as ideological *polar opposites* today, but as facets of the same phenomenon: the radical critique, in an authentic key, of the rationalist-bourgeois establishment under the circumstances of a major crisis of the liberal European modernity" (75). In order to emphasise the similarities between the avant-garde movement (represented by writers such as Ion Vinea, Ilarie Voronca etc.) and the young generation of existentialists or generation 1927 (represented by Emil Cioran, Mircea Eliade and others), a complex theoretical approach is used. In line with studies about modernism and the different forms of "anti-modernism" elaborated by writers such as Jeffrey Herf, Roger Griffin and Antoine Compagnon, and with studies by Romanian writers that approached the issue (Sorin

Alexandrescu, Sorin Antohi and Zigu Ornea), Paul Cernat re-discusses the ideological and literary directions in interwar Romania. Besides the anti-establishment and anti-bourgeois outlook common to the avant-garde and the 1927 generation, writers of both movements are animated, according to the author, by a „messianic consciousness of *renovatio mundi*” (88). This attitude is contextualized as a particularity of the Romanian case and the writers’ desire to overcome the marginal status of their culture and literature.

The theoretical framework of the book is outlined by the first three chapters. In the second half, various writers (members of the avant-garde movements or closely linked to them) are re-discussed in relation to the thesis of communicating vessels/ of “amphibious radicalism”. An entire chapter is dedicated to Ilarie Voronca and Geo Bogza. The two writers are considered to be the Romanian avant-garde poets that have preserved to the highest degree the spirit of Eminescu’s poetry, due to their relation with the literary tradition, their poetic formulas and their intertextuality. Also, various connections are drawn between the authors and contemporary literature, such as Voronca’s influence on the urban postmodern poetry (especially that of Mircea Cărtărescu) and Bogza’s influence on the 21st century Romanian poetry. The “modernist-traditionalist equation” plays a key role into the analysis of Voronca, whose poetry is described as “impossible to be reduced to one avant-garde movement”, as it cannot be perceived as just avant-garde (143). According to Paul Cernat, the three main directions of interwar Romanian poetry (neo-traditional, mainstream moderate modernism and avant-garde) evolved from the “post-romantic matrix of symbolism”. In his synthetic poetic formula, Ilarie Voronca seems to combine elements from all the different paradigms, while also remaining closer to the symbolist expression. As opposed to Tristan Tzara, whose poetry in Romanian is a polemical parody of symbolism, Ilarie Voronca is more indebted to the formula, with a dose of metaphysics similar to that found in Benjamin Fundoianu. The part about Geo Bogza, done by an expert on an ongoing monographic project and the most extended analysis of the volume, presents the entire evolution of the writer’s career, from the radical youth poetry centred on social critique to the reportage-prose (a genre he devised himself). Biographical aspects such as the writer’s charges of pornography, his forcible re-writings under the communist regime and the subsequent revisions of his texts are also brought into discussion.

An investigation of the local surrealism of the 1930s and 1940s that includes an analysis of Gherasim Luca, Paul Păun, Virgil Teodorescu, Aurel Baranga and Gellu Naum is also present in the volume. Paul Cernat follows the diminishing phase of the revolted dimension as surrealist poetry tends to switch to more aesthetic versions, including sometimes even forms of mannerism. Twenty minor avant-garde writers and two figures partially linked to the avant-garde movement (Max Blecher and Eugen Ionescu) are discussed in the last two chapters of the book in order to emphasize once again the network of interferences among different literary and political fields.

Due to their transnational character, the artistic and literary avant-gardes of the 20th century occupy an important place in the field of world literature studies. Being also one of the literary movements that consecrated and “exported” many Romanian authors (most of them later turned into French writers) the autochthonous avant-garde tends to be most often analysed in comparison with other national avant-gardes, rather than in relation to the local literature. Thus, Paul Cernat proposes a necessary perspective in the field of Romanian literary studies by investigating the interferences between the avant-garde and other interwar literary directions, as well as the influences of literary tradition upon the avant-garde, while also pointing out several connections to contemporary literature. However, the thesis of amphibious radicalism can easily fall into the trap of a post-communist cultural discourse that often neutralises important ideological distinctions pertaining to a specific historical context under anti-totalitarian clichés. Especially since the interwar period in Romania was marked by severe law-enforced anti-Semitism (that is still under-researched), considering the 1927 generation (with deep-rooted affinities with the anti-Semitic legionary movement) and the avant-garde (whose representative writers manifested strong social critique, antiwar attitudes and affinities to socialism and communism) as aspects of the same phenomenon as results of a crisis of modernity can be a risky thesis. As the author himself points out, the relations between the avant-garde and other cultural movements of the interwar period should be subject to further analysis. Nonetheless, Paul

Cernat seems to have found a balance, managing to point out the key ethical and ideological differences among these, while also arguing towards an interesting viewpoint on Romanian cultural modernity.

Dragoș BUCUR

Babeș-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca
Faculty of Letters

OANA SOARE, *Ceilalți moderni, antimodernii. Cazul românesc* [*The Other Moderns, the Anti-Moderns. The Romanian Case*], București, Editura Muzeul Literaturii Române, 2017, 638 p.

The debates that modernity often brought to the foreground resulted from the complex structure of this phenomenon. The opposing relation between the modern man's creed and the traditionalist's one consists in an easily applicable method, when the purpose of this comparative approach leads to a reciprocal focus on the antithetical characteristics of the two concepts. However, the opposition between modernity and tradition does not seem to be enough to shape the profile of the former and one of the arguments that support this statement has already been mentioned and discussed extensively by Antoine Compagnon. In *Les Antimoderns. De Joseph de Maistre à Roland Barthes* [*The Anti-Moderns. From Joseph de Maistre to Roland Barthes*], he proposes an analysis of modernity and the moderns from a different point of view, as the French critic insists upon the fact that his anti-moderns are nothing but some "moderns on the loose". In other words, not only have they understood the entire operating mechanisms, but they have also had the ability to separate themselves from the doctrine of modernism and to generate new ideas without feeling the constraints that those who supported the great projects of modernity were subject to.

The key role of this innovative perspective is also captured by Mircea Martin who, in the preface to the Romanian translation of Compagnon's study, mentions the advantages of including a new point of view in the inflexible system of opposition between tradition and modernity. Indeed, it can be inferred that since the phenomenon of modernity arouses interest especially because of this complex structure, a potential fitting into strict rules (namely that anything that exceeds the sphere of influence of modernism is subordinated to a traditionalist kind of conduct) would be unsatisfactory. Moreover, the way the French critic analyses his anti-moderns' profiles represents, as indicated by Mircea Martin, a reference for Romanian literary and cultural studies. The equation certainly changes when Compagnon's theory is applied to a peripheral culture, such as the Romanian one, for at least two related reasons that can be rendered in the form of a cause-and-effect relation. Firstly, the phenomenon of modernity is associated, in a culture that falls into this category, to the concepts of "imitation" and "import". This also justifies the hostile attitude towards accepting borrowed trends. Secondly, one of the obvious reactions is assigning a leading role to tradition and "local colour". The project that Mircea Martin considers appropriate for Romanian studies has, therefore, a lot to offer, especially due to his attempt to identify the attitude regarding modernity of the anti-moderns in Romanian culture, on the one hand, and regarding tradition, on the other hand. After all, the aim of applying such a theory to an Eastern European culture is to point out the dynamics of the relations among the three parties (the moderns, the anti-moderns and the traditionalists) and the ways in which the anti-moderns managed to lucidly detach themselves from the modern dogma while simultaneously avoiding the trap of exalting Romanian local forms.

Oana Soare is the one who took it on herself to implement this project on Romanian soil and who, using Compagnon's theory, analysed in *Ceilalți moderni, antimodernii. Cazul românesc* (*The*

Other Moderns, the Anti-Moderns. The Romanian Case) the peculiarities of Eastern European anti-modern discourses. The most important of these peculiarities is, from my point of view, the one the author mentions, namely the fact that “on Romanian soil, the dichotomy modernity/anti-modernity cannot be understood without the so-called theory of ‘forms without substance’” (89). Basically, Soare places the origins of Romanian anti-modernity in the second half of the 19th century. More precisely, the critic takes into account the applicability of Antoine Compagnon’s theory starting with “Junimea”. Regarding the first phase, it is interesting to observe the influence of the German model that Soare justly considers to be responsible for the entry of the anti-modernity doctrine in the Romanian culture – at the expense of the French influences responsible, later on, for the entry of the ideas of modernity. After all, starting with “Junimea” and Titu Maiorescu, the theory of “forms without substance” would occur under various forms in the Romanian anti-moderns’ discourses. Their attitude and interpretations reveal essential moot points, outlining anti-modernity in peripheral cultures.

I will summarise these discourses, but not before pointing out a few issues concerning the structure of Oana Soare’s study. The introduction is dedicated, firstly, to conceptual clarifications and to restating some of the features brought up by the French critic when characterising anti-moderns. Thus, in analysing the concepts of “modernity and anti-modernity from Antoine Compagnon’s point of view”, Soare starts by discussing three well-known studies signed by the author – *La Troisième République des Lettres (The Third Republic of Letters)*, *Les cinq paradoxes de la modernité (The Five Paradoxes of Modernity)* and *Les Antimodernes. De Joseph de Maistre à Roland Barthes (The Anti-Moderns. From Joseph de Maistre to Roland Barthes)* – which she considers to be essential in revealing the French author’s perspective on modernity and anti-modernity. By stating and handling the “six figures” individually (*counter-revolution, anti-enlightenment, pessimism, original sin, the sublime and denigration*), the aesthetics and ambivalence of the anti-moderns, but also a few of the case studies developed in Compagnon’s volume, Soare finishes by clarifying the theoretical dimension, a task that she fulfils to perfection, adding, in this way, substance to her study.

The aspects that truly deserve special attention are the way the Romanian author clarifies the concept of “ambivalence” and the differences between moderns and anti-moderns, on the one hand, and between anti-moderns and counter-moderns, on the other hand. This ambivalence represents, actually, one of the reasons why the critics were reluctant to consider anti-moderns as moderns and, moreover, it is proof that despite their positioning themselves against the ideas “the other moderns” believe in, they are part of the same team. This is why it is more difficult to establish what makes anti-moderns different from moderns than to establish the differences between anti-moderns and counter-moderns, because, at a first sight, the reasoning behind the anti-modern doctrine could be summarised in the following statement: they do not oppose the moderns, a category they actually belong to, but still, they are against the modern creed. Despite the fact that the representatives of the two doctrines are still divided by those “six figures” and especially by the different way of addressing the problem of progress, Soare brings to the fore two of the misunderstandings rooted in Compagnon’s theory. I will discuss the first one, according to which the definition of anti-moderns actually deconstructs that of the moderns. The question the Romanian critic also considers is: “Who are then those who are simply moderns?”. This is one of the reasons why the author mentions from the very beginning that her interest was to emphasise the anti-modern’s profile as a “special class”, something that reveals a distancing from the French author’s point of view, who states that anti-modernity is just another perspective on modernity. Truly, I think that such a solution is necessary given that in an Eastern European culture even the idea of modernity is perceived with certain restraints.

The introductory chapter ends with the analysis of the general framework concerning the actual application of the theory on Romanian soil. Taking this opportunity, Soare attempts to disprove the voices that question the possibility of analysing the Romanian culture from this perspective. Of course, there are many other features (besides the one I have already mentioned) that Soare takes into account. One of them is the tendency to exaggerate both the modern profile and the counter-modern one found in Romanian discourses (in both situations the exclusive character is evoked). Moreover,

the way the import of modern Western forms is perceived justifies the existence of a large number of counter-moderns, which exceeds the number of anti-moderns. In other words, it is all about the same rigid division between modernity and tradition, to which Soare attributes two pseudo-paradoxes: that of “avant-garde in a cultural field that the moderns considered purely reactionary” and that of “mystical nationalism and even Legionarism in a culture that seemed to be nothing but modern” (78). However, despite this precise delimitation, Soare’s analysis reveals that there are cases in which the theory of anti-modernity, superimposed on a minor cultural area, reveals the tortuous evolution of a number of outstanding representatives of the Romanian cultural environment.

The second chapter of the study is dedicated to the controversy between modernity and anti-modernity. Its protagonists are Titu Maiorescu, G. Ibrăileanu and E. Lovinescu. In fact, the theory of the former was to be revisited and even completely questioned (if we consider Lovinescu’s point of view). When it comes to Maiorescu, things seem to be simple. By presenting him as an “anti-modern à la roumaine”, the leader of the first anti-modern group on Romanian territory, Soare brings up the dilemma between Maiorescu the anti-modern and Maiorescu the conservative and, to support the former, she points out the Germanophile attitude opposed to the Francophile trend of the time. Moreover, the author notices a tendency she would emphasize in Iorga’s case too, that of “self-censoring”. To put it another way, regarding Romanian anti-moderns, it is universally admitted that they are unlikely to fit into a culture oriented towards a modernity whose forms are dictated from the outside. In Ibrăileanu’s case, everything is equally uncertain. He represents, in Oana Soare’s study, a special case, impossible to be assigned to the anti-moderns, counter-moderns or moderns. Even if modern in relation to Maiorescu and reactionary in relation to Lovinescu, Ibrăileanu remains outside the anti-moderns’ group. Lovinescu’s case also attests to a peculiarity of the leaders of the main projects on Romanian territory. The Bovarism that Lovinescu is accused of and his revolutionary ideas are assigned another function when Soare states that Lovinescu’s doctrine was necessary to save literature from the rigidity of the doctrine of “sămănătorism” (Samanatorism). We return to the same attempt to balance these forces, the persisting image being that of an attempt at the adjustment of the degree of modernity, anti-modernity and counter-modernity, depending on the context.

The most suitable example that Soare mentions is Iorga, whose profile makes up – alongside seven other such portraits – the third chapter of the study. Actually, this is about two cases that Soare considered to be defining for applying Compagnon’s theory on Romanian territory: the already mentioned case of Iorga and Camil Petrescu’s, to which she adds six more profiles: those of Caragiale, Blaga, Fondane, Eliade, Cioran and Steinhardt.

Coming back to Iorga, the critic confesses that she was truly amazed when she found out that his discourse is complex enough to result into a 3D portrait too, meaning that we can talk about Iorga the modern, the anti-modern and, of course, Iorga the counter-modern. His tortuous evolution clearly corresponds to the pattern of Romanian anti-moderns. It is interesting to notice that, in this case, the shift from one side to another is the result of self-sacrifice. This is how the assumption that the anti-modern in a minor culture is permanently influenced by external factors can be tested. So, siding with the traditionalists was requested by the need for national identity. Camil Petrescu’s case – whom we can call the progressive anti-modern if we take into account that progressivism stood between Petrescu and anti-modernity – is also very challenging and the way he strenuously opposed Lovinescu’s theory as an anti-modern is worthy of the attention it has been given in this study.

The already mentioned six names, whose anti-modernity at ideological level contrasts with the modernity of their writings, deserve being part of Oana Soare’s study, because – just like she will state herself – their discourses can be analysed (“with almost no exception”) from the perspective of the “six figures” mentioned by Compagnon. Among the aspects discussed in the case of the first three are: the solutions Caragiale implements in order to fight against moderns by using their own weapons (“revolution and the universal suffrage”), Blaga’s profile, who ends up, as a result of the ambivalence inherent in his expressionism, as an “anti-modern modern”, and the similarities between Fondane and Compagnon himself. There are also the two different ways of being an anti-modern illustrated by Eliade, who rebels against an “anti-spiritual” Europe, and by Cioran (the anti-modern who pays tribute to the year 1848 while still remaining faithful to his doctrine). The analysis of Steinhardt’s

case offers the chance to discover one of the most unexpected interpretations of Maiorescu's theory. The "form without substance" seen as a chance of salvation from the harmful modern content proves the originality of this author's point of view.

Oana Soare's study – *Ceilați moderni, antimodernii. Căzul românesc* – ends by conclusions, followed by a presentation – in the annex – of three studies written by Matei Călinescu, Sorin Alexandrescu and Eugen Simion, who bring into focus the concept of the anti-modern explained through Cioran's case. The impression the volume leaves at the end is that of completeness, also owing to this sum of critical discourses with the profile of the anti-modern at the centre, but also due to the discussion about the existence of the anti-moderns in the second half of the 20th century. Even if there are exceptions – Steinhardt being one of them – the way the attitude towards tradition and especially towards modernity undergoes substantial changes during the Communist domination deserves to be treated separately. This discussion could take place from the same perspective of the differences between Western and Eastern cultural spaces, because Oana Soare's demonstration, mainly relying on re-readings of "forms without substance" theory and of special features this theory imposes on the concepts of modernity, anti-modernity and counter-modernity, can be easily read as a successful (re)trial to render the state of the relation between Western and Eastern Europe.

David MORARIU
Lucian Blaga University, Sibiu
Faculty of Letters and Arts

TEODORA DUMITRU, *Modernitatea politică și literară în gândirea lui E. Lovinescu* [*Eugen Lovinescu's Literary and Political Modernity*], București, Editura Muzeului Literaturii Române, 2016, 277 p.

Favourably received and often invoked by recent discussions regarding Romanian literary research, the studies published by Teodora Dumitru in 2016 (*Rețeaua modernităților: Paul de Man – Matei Călinescu – Antoine Compagnon* [*The Web of Modernities: Paul de Man – Matei Călinescu – Antoine Compagnon*] and *Modernitatea politică și literară în gândirea lui E. Lovinescu* [*Eugen Lovinescu's Literary and Political Modernity*]) debunk two popular prejudices. The first one – and probably the most influential – is the idea that "import" theoretical landmarks, the influent "canonical" voices of both the present and the past are irrefutable/ unquestionable and therefore perfectly applicable to interferences of Romanian literary studies. The second one claims that a consecrated (or, again, canonical) writer or literary critic is "elucidated" once and for all and that no other contextual revisions are needed. Thus, the analysis of Lovinescu's political and literary modernity represents the proof not only of a professional and detail-oriented lecture, but also of one that is circumspect about reviewing clichés or rigid systematisation.

In the debut of her study, the author notices the distorted (and also partial) lectures of Lovinescu's ideas due to a privileged literary perspective and, moreover, to the multiple censorial corrections and cut-outs made before 1989, considering his liberal orientations. Situated at the crossroad between (literary) aesthetics, politics and science, the kind of Modernism claimed by the *Sburătorul* critic at the beginning of the twentieth century is subordinated to a view that exceeds the strictly literary analysis his works were subject to. Teodora Dumitru's already declared and assumed intention is that of rebuilding the main "causes" of Lovinescu's way of thinking (in his books *Istoria civilizației române moderne* [*History of Modern Romanian Civilization*] and *Istoria literaturii române contemporane* [*History of Contemporary Romanian Literature*]) in the context of his relations to the European current of thought of the time.

By investigating the scientific character of the discourse and of the sociological laws Lovinescu proposed (namely, the law of interdependence and that of imitation), the author exposes the clichés inherent in the different approaches to the ideas promoted in the two works she studies. One of these is, for example, “the spirit of the century” (*saeculum*) – an unstable concept and a polemic instrument in Lovinescu’s discourse: “This is the essential perspective on ‘the spirit of the century’, the belief that it is possible to list the properties – ‘the essential features’ – that compose it and their opposites (among the causes of the falsifiability illusion), which Lovinescu relied on every time he would assert that his thesis is formulated in ‘the spirit of the century’, while those of his opponents were contrary to it. Regarding the Romanian case, in Lovinescu’s view ‘the spirit of the century’ asked for industrialization and urbanization in the areas of economic and social order, and also for the adoption of liberal French revolutionary ideas in the ideological field” (25). Furthermore, what lies at the basis of synchronism is imitation (following the path of the scientific consecration of sociology by Gabriel Tarde) followed by the process of differentiation, an argumentative scheme of Hegelian origins. At this precise point, Dumitru places Lovinescu between Tarde’s and Hegel’s forms of idealism – this representing one of the central aspects of her demonstration.

By critically filtering the political consequences of imitation (reflected in concepts such as the theory of simulation-stimulation or in those of mutation and revolution), the author underlines indecisions and “blind” points in Lovinescu’s ideas, despite all the scientific demands in his arguments where he pleads for the creation of the national state on liberal positions.

The critic’s perspective on literature is subsumed to his political and sociological views. Even though he remained in the canon of Romanian literary criticism as the second exponent of aesthetic autonomy after Titu Maiorescu, his views on art, science, politics and economy are not autonomous, another cliché clearly deconstructed by Teodora Dumitru: “Already separated from the ethical and the ethnic, in E. Lovinescu’s work art and its study were not separated from ideology or science. [...] None of the Romanian historians or literary critics of the first half of the twentieth century did not demonstrate that more seriously than Lovinescu, i.e. his demand for scientific rigor and the degree of influence on the literary act and the status of a writer of the economic and socio-political pattern of a society and of a state” (132).

The double meaning of literature (as a form of civilization and as cultural background) also points out one of the few “conceptual dysfunctions” found in both the *History of Civilization...* and in the *History of Literature...*: “literature is variably placed at the avant-garde of culture – as an important *form* of civilization, together with the phone, the radio, the Constitution, the modern code of law etc., due to the stages in the evolution of young nations – or of those in the rearguard of civilization – as a *background* factor susceptible to slow, inertial, reactionary or conservatory evolution, more inclined to imitation of the past than the present” (145). Consequently, Lovinescu’s overview of literature is not a visionary one: either in the process or *post factum*, literature reveals the course of history, being able to become a critique of the present – which represents the opposite, but associative idea to Matei Călinescu’s theory of the two modernities. If for Lovinescu art needs to reveal the social, the political, the economic etc., in Matei Călinescu’s view the artist is a *frondeur* who places him/herself against social serialization.

In the series of comparative approaches, another association is to be found, that between E. Lovinescu and Antoine Compagnon. According to Teodora Dumitru’s evaluation grid, the Lovinescu’s work represents a statement for the invalidation of the concept of anti-modernity (Compagnon). According to the distinctions proposed by the French theoretician, applicable to the Romanian critic’s views, Lovinescu is classifiable as a member of both “parties”: he is modern through his progressivism, bovarism, anti-romanticism, intellectualized emotion, synchronism, and anti-modern through his settling inside a bourgeois stasis, his misogyny, his anti-intellectualist symbolism, his conviction that literature is a “reactionary force” etc.

The last part of the study revisits the sources of Romanian literary Modernism, relating it to the European tradition of the episteme. By invoking Michel Murrat’s “alarming” conclusion (namely, on the one hand, that France creates the premises for what we call Modernism today, although it does not attend the theoretical debates which have launched the concept, and on the other hand, that

Modernism is a retrospective label of the phenomenon, absent from the French meta-literary discourse in the first part of the twentieth century), the author is completely justified in interrogating the manner E. Lovinescu succeeds in using and defending Modernism before the French literary historians themselves do. The hypothesis she launches regarding this matter – thus opening debates based on it – are in direct relation to the usage of the term “modernism” in E. Lovinescu’s discourse: as a result of the attention given to the local publishing medium or as that of his “Romanian” approach, in Dumitru’s specific words the term “had already been felt by Lovinescu as Romanian (i.e. ‘differentiated’), something that freed him from the necessity of mirroring its legitimate external sources and problematising its composite genealogy” (271).

To conclude, the study remains a concrete example of an upgraded version of the views pertaining to a literary critic’s work and of the openness of cultural debates on the Romanian interwar period against the background of European thought. Lovinescu’s concern about literature – perceived in strong connection to political ideas –, the legitimization of art on scientific concepts, the sociological theories of synchrony, etc. are all integrated by Teodora Dumitru in the slipstream of political and literary modernity, which is at the same time (de)constructed through a carefully articulated approach to the “vulnerable” aspects of Lovinescu’s reception.

Ioana PAVEL

Babeş-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca
Faculty of Letters

DORIS MIRONESCU, *Un secol al memoriei. Literatură și conștiință comunitară în epoca romantică [A Century of Memory. Literature and Collective Conscience in the Romantic Age]*, Iași, Editura Universității „Alexandru Ioan Cuza”, 2016, 316 p.

Aiming to reinterpret the perspective on the 19th century Romanian literature (which is usually perceived either from the positivist, document-centred perspective or in the aesthetic way that separates the object from context), Doris Mironescu’s book touches upon a searing issue of literary studies nowadays: the impact of literature on society. Therefore, literature is understood as a space of memory that constructs cultural identities and institutions, establishes past references for nationhood and engages in a complex relationship with the public by symbolising the community in images, emblematic spaces, narrative topics or figures of belonging. The author employs the concept of “cultural memory” developed by Aleida and Jan Assmann, properly pointing out that it is a “connective structure”. This means that cultural memory is not knowledge about the past, but an endless process that selects those aspects of the past (figures, emblems, myths, places, objects etc.) that are relevant to the present. Also, it is an artificial process operated by specialists, in which case the writers become important carriers of cultural memory, shaping identities and stimulating the public to participate in the collective representations they provide. The Romanian modern age is marked by a series of concepts such as those of national community, tradition, canon, national specificity, yet the purpose of the study is not to revive a set of themes, but to analyse their connection with literature, to understand the writers’ motivations, the problematisation of memory or how literature becomes a space of power in society. Even though literature is seen as an ideological device (with a specific ideology that is different from the official one), Mironescu is not hasty in disregarding the aesthetic dimension of the literary works, operating from the start with a distinction between “worthy” and mass production literature. The option for the close reading practice, tangentially debating Franco Moretti’s quantitative method, is explained as interdependency between

aesthetic value and the complexity of ideology: the writers' choice of a certain vocabulary, of particular figures of speech or figures of thought, of specific narrative techniques and intertextual allusions are all part of what the author calls a "seduction technique" that invites the readers to participate in a sagacious way to the memory of the nation, but also brings into discussion the increasing self-awareness of literature as it employs subtler aesthetic instruments leading to such questions as "its own nature, identity and public function". The book is structured in three parts or "directions" of research: *The Rhetoric of Belonging* debates the concepts of nationalism and national community in 19th century literature, *Canonical Constructions* analyses the problem of the literary canon, while *Nostalgia, Irony, and Post-canonical Rewriting* explains the occurrence of 19th century literature in the contemporary novel.

The first part is an examination of 19th century literature using the "cultural memory" concept as discussed above, according to which literature is seen as a medium (always problematising and challenging) of society's major topics and obsessions, a medium where the relation with the past is constantly being negotiated. Focussing on Alecu Russo's work entitled *Studie moldovană [Moldavian Study]*, the author portrays the 19th century writer ("the bonjourist" as the 1848 generation represents itself) as a "cultural mediator" who seeks to establish connections between different cultural spaces, between Occidentalism and autochthonism, the past and the present, intellectuals and peasants, in order to shape a feeling of continuity. This special position at the confluence of feudalism and modernity determines a critical attitude towards memory as the 19th century writer becomes aware of the gap between the past and the present, the process of remembering being an artificial form of continuity (illustrated by Mironescu with reference to Alecu Russo's metaphor of the past as a dead person only recalled positively). Another case study explores the writers' travels inside the country, metaphorically dubbed a "bonjourist anabasis", emphasizing the individual experience recorded as the bonjourist often represents himself as a stranger in his own country. The contact with the homeland is again described as a rupture, revealing the double statute of the modern Romanian writer, torn between his European education and the desire for integration in the national landscape, a rupture that is analysed at the stylistic level too, being traceable in the juxtaposition of archaisms and modern vocabulary, in the use of irony and literary forms borrowed from European tradition and not specific to the local one.

Further on, Mironescu focuses on the next generation of writers, the Junimea group, reflecting on the transposition of some major themes in the new context. The Junimea period comes with a new agenda stating that literature is an autonomous domain, but this aesthetic detour is not equivalent, as the researcher shows, with a divorce from the previous ideology. Such themes as national specificity, collective identity, memory, national community are still searing issues, but the old rhetoric proves to be ineffective, hence the need for a more complex and aesthetically sophisticated discourse. The author proposes to investigate a set of topics such as the public function of literature, the legitimation of poetry and the renegotiation of national identity. For example, he analyses Ion Creangă's strategies to redirect the reading reactions of an elitist audience such as the Junimea literary circle by seducing and at the same time breaking the pact with the readers in order to delineate the village as the national space *par excellence*, unintelligible to the urban audience. The romantic topos of the ruin is discussed in its evolution from Grigore Alexandrescu's poem *Umbra lui Mircea. La Cozia [Mircea's Shadow. At Cozia]*, where poetry is invested with a political dimension and finds its legitimacy in the national mission, continuing with Alexandru Macedonski's poem *Hinov* that claims the right of poetry to reinvent language due to its autonomy, to Eminescu's modern vision of literature as possessing internal legitimacy. Mihai Eminescu is portrayed as a modern writer who is sensitive to the rupture with the past (always assimilated to a mythical age), as analysed with respect to *Memento mori* where the ruin is interpreted in line with Walter Benjamin's definition, as "epistemological incertitude" and "temporal crisis", or *Călin (file din poveste) [Călin (Pages of a Fairy-Tale)]*, a poem concerned with the estrangement of fairy-tale from myth and the challenge of modern poetry to relocate this mythical kernel. Caragiale's late writings, phrased in modern techniques (self-reference, transposition, the "spatialising quality of the language", the chameleonic relation between text and reader), are analysed as an attempt to reshape the blueprint of national community by stressing the Balkanistic aspect of

Romanian cultural identity. Finally, the perspective moves to Al. O. Teodoreanu, an interwar writer, in order to inspect cultural memory at work: the theme of national identity, persistent in the 19th century, is reinterpreted by the novelist against the triumphalist image of nation, showing sensitivity to “domestic” histories and intimate gestures such as amorous scandals, sensational events, gastronomic and oenological pleasures.

The second part of the book examines the problem of the canon, redefined as a “form of stimulating the collective conscience”. Mironescu proposes an investigation of the rhetorical strategies employed by Titu Maiorescu in his public speech in order to construct his authority. The essay as adaptation of philosophical concepts, rationalism and the argument of “truth”, the pragmatic aspect and polemics as a technique of seduction all respond to the cultural needs of the time, circumscribing a successful and efficient canon that directs the paths of Romanian culture. Another chapter analyses G. Ibrăileanu’s use of the idea of “classic” in Romanian literature, polarised between the social and the aesthetic definitions, an indecision that reflects the difficulties of establishing a national tradition and literary canon that might become the foundation of future Romanian culture.

The third part is a post-canonical reading of the 19th century that examines a set of Romanian novels written after 2000 and the way they assimilate the images, emblems and gestures of the past in order to respond to present problems. I. L. Caragiale and Radu Cosașu are read by employing Jean-Luc Nancy’s concept of “inoperative community” and Kuisima Korhonen’s idea of “textual community”, as both Romanian writers use irony as a form of deconstructing the myths of national community and the communist utopia respectively, and of establishing connections with a community of readers. The paradoxical revival of the historical theme in the novel of the noughties, an age of post-canonical memory, is not a simple retrospective look, but, as the researcher posits, one implying a meta-literary dimension, reflecting the artificiality of national representations and the discontinuity between past and present. The last chapter of the book examines the avatars of the romantic topos of the ruin in the patriotic representations of the 1848 generation, from its integration into the familiar landscape in Creangă’s work, to the industrial ruin in the post-communist age.

Looking into 19th century’s literature, Doris Mironescu’s book debates some major literary topics nowadays: the public function of literature, its legitimacy in society and its efficiency in representing figures of community and identity are questions that structure the Romanian cultural space, a space that is still struggling to assimilate its communist past, to gain a place in the “republic of letters” or to define the function of literature in the digital age. As a result, the past century is no longer understood as a constant, stable place, fixed once and for all in the canon and the national heritage, but a challenging age for the contemporaries, one that reverberates in the present.

Maricica MUNTEANU

Romanian Academy Iași Branch

The “A. Philippide” Institute of Romanian Philology