

COMPTE RENDUS / BOOK REVIEWS

DELIA UNGUREANU, *From Paris to Tlön. Surrealism as World Literature*, New York and London, Bloomsbury Academic, 2018, 354 p.

A common theme shared by recent Romanian studies in humanities is the advancement of the Romanian literature as a product beyond borders, a purpose likewise embraced and promoted by the book *Romanian Literature as World Literature*. Even if such approaches to the internationalization of the local literature usually stem from a periphery complex, these systematic investigations prove that a cultural, literary phenomenon or a literature considered to be minor partakes (directly or indirectly) in the major global movements of the cultural fields. *From Paris to Tlön. Surrealism as World Literature*, edited in 2018 by Bloomsbury Publishing and signed by Delia Ungureanu, is one of these studies.

With an approach methodologically-based on the concept of network theory borrowed from social anthropology, the author investigates the manner in which surrealism became an international and influential phenomenon, while also analysing certain similarities with the movement that can be found in the literary work of a few writers who were not primarily associated with the movement's pioneers: Vladimir Nabokov, Orhan Pamuk, Jorge Luis Borges and Mircea Cărtărescu. Throughout her research, Delia Ungureanu develops a map of the surrealist movement and its heritage by reconstructing the paths taken by various artists and writers from different countries as well as the cultural milieu and their relations with the artwork of major surrealist representatives such as André Breton, Salvador Dalí, Louis Aragon or Philippe Soupault.

In her attempt to restore the literary history of the surrealist movement, Delia Ungureanu tactfully handles extra-literary instruments. By making use of methods such as visual arts, analysing and drawing connections between the biographical destiny and the artists' creative activity, the aim of this book is to retrace the routes through which the surrealism became "a mutually productive exchange among different cultural capitals around the world" (4). Consistent with the increasingly varied attempts to approach literature from a viewpoint beyond rigorous geographical and temporal delimitations, Delia Ungureanu adopts a transnational perspective regarding surrealism, whose international character was "inborn in the movement" (7).

First of all, the author picks as the starting point of her research the well-known break between André Breton and Salvador Dalí, whence the two major directions of surrealism start: "Breton's orthodox, more purely autonomous surrealism and Dalí's more hybrid, market-oriented one, opened to the mechanisms of recognition and cultural establishment" (10). In fact, the main difference of outlook originates in the way that the two artists conceived the "surrealist object": whereas Dalí was permanently attempting to commercialize and use it for self-promotion, Breton was interested in preserving it as a pure result of an artistic consciousness. Hence, surrealism, a phenomenon born in Paris, will continue to have two dimensions until André Breton, "the Pope" of the movement, becomes aware of the necessity to renew and establish it in order to keep it alive and align it with the American cultural progress. Starting with the playful experiments of the surrealists and their strategies of creation rooted in collective practices ("inventing their own Tarot game", "reading the Tarot cards", "Exquisite Corpse", "One Inside the Other"), Delia Ungureanu has already crystallised the marketing spirit of the Spanish painter Salvador Dalí by showing the similarities between him and Lewis Carroll – by way of example, the appearance of Salvador Dalí as White Rabbit in *Vogue* magazine. Beyond this purposeful tendency to commercialize art, there is "a very surrealist act of history: the White Rabbit started as a fictional character, then became a part of a game and came closer to life, only to become real with the apparition of Dalí, for again to go back to the playful reality of cartoons in the pages of *Vogue*" (19).

Besides outlining the artistic creeds of these two artists and their different natures, one of the major concepts of this book is the "surreal object", which becomes the main instrument through

which Delia Ungureanu re-establishes the connections within the surrealist global network. If Dalí recontextualizes the fictional character of Carroll for the purpose of self-promotion and art commercialization, Breton imagines the surrealist object like “a dreamy glass house” distinguished by such transparency that it has the power to transcend into a surrealist world. Besides, the two versions of surrealism, which were initially in opposition, prove two lines of thought: “one [Breton] refused to grow old in the practice of the game, as Pierre Bourdieu would say, and the other [Dalí] wanted to gain immediate consecration and transform the symbolic into social and economic capital, using both short-term and long-term strategies” (20).

Secondly, Delia Ungureanu continues her research by investigating the importance and the efficacy of three institutions thanks to which surrealist artists (especially writers) succeeded in promoting their work both in France, the motherland of this movement, and beyond national territory: the salons, the bookshops and the literary magazines. The two bookshops that constitute the core of the French and foreign intellectuals’ network are surprisingly directed by two women who are not known as writers or visual artists: Adrienne Monnier (*La Maison des Amis des Livres*) and Sylvia Beach (*Shakespeare & Co.*). Even though surrealism has been eminently shaped under the impact of the French language, these bookshops are the key points in remodelling an autochthonous current into an international one due to marketing strategies and to the readiness of bringing together different generations of artists (from those already canonized, such as Paul Valéry, to the new avant-garde) from different cultures: “The most numerous communities of émigré artists and writers in interwar Paris were Germans, the Russians, and the North Americans, clustering in the symbolic center of Montparnasse” (31). The literary magazines (*Littérature*, *La Révolution surréaliste*, *Le Surréalisme au service de la révolution*, *Minotaure*, *VVV*, and *Sur*) also had a major impact on the internationalization of surrealism, being both the place where Breton published the two surrealist manifestos and an instrument of “self-legitimation” of the group. Thus, aware that they need a refreshing of the surrealist ideas to extend beyond the French barriers, André Breton writes *The Second Manifesto of Surrealism* (1929), whose content was not radically different from the first one, but “it was more of a political declaration emphasizing the surrealists’ leftist position grounded in Marx and Engels’ *Communist Manifesto*, and a reinforcement of the imperative to rediscover the irrational, the dream, and sexuality as instruments for fighting against the comfortable world of the bourgeoisie” (50). The most significant difference between the first and the second manifesto resides precisely in the political dimension enforced by the latter: Breton’s anti-bourgeois dimension contrasts with Dalí’s bourgeois and more commercial version. Furthermore, whereas Breton had proposed a cooperative approach to keeping surrealism alive and disseminating it abroad to its full extent, Dalí embraced an individualistic attitude, succeeding in conquering the commercial New York. Borrowing the main surrealist concepts from the French writer – “surrealist object”, “automatic writing”, “chance encounter”, “convulsive beauty” – the Spanish artist invents “the method of critical paranoia” and he relies on shocking and scandalising the audience through his art. The establishing of the surrealist movement was attained using two different strategies, one carried out by Dalí through his successful collaborations with the fashion industry and modern art exhibitions such as those of MoMA; the other caused by Breton’s self-exile in New York in an attempt to save his principles and own vision of the phenomenon. Simultaneously, but more resonantly so for the Spanish painter – “the star of the group” (127) –, the two artists wanted to coin surrealism as an international and polarizing movement. For Breton, it encompasses especially an anticolonial and antinationalist character, whereas for Dalí surrealism is the gateway for trading and making his art famous: “whereas Dalí’s sexual objects are oriented toward the past, Breton’s are future-oriented and visionary” (192).

Another relevant aspect of the book consists in the attentive reconstruction of the genesis of certain texts that reclaim surrealist ideas, concepts and techniques such as Lautréamont’s plagiarism. There are two cases that display a major influence mainstream surrealism had on authors who didn’t officially belong to the movement: Vladimir Nabokov with *Lolita* and Jorge Luis Borges with the short story *Pierre Menard, autor del Quijote*. As regards the first one, the idea of a nymphet named Lolita comes from Dalí’s Dulita, the main character from *Rêverie*, a story signed by the Spanish artist. As for the Latin American writer, Delia Ungureanu believes that Borges’ fictional Menard is

constructed “from different characters – Lautréamont, Valéry, and Dr. Pierre Menard – whose common denominator is the person of André Breton” (122). Beyond the real existence of the French graphologist Dr. Pierre Menard, who had analysed Lautréamont’s handwriting, the research manages to unthread the network through which Borges was connected to surrealism in its borderless, uncontained form.

The last chapter, named “The Ghosts of Surrealism in the World Novel”, brings together two writers from (semi)peripheral cultures, the Turkish Nobel Prize winner Orhan Pamuk and the Romanian writer Mircea Cărtărescu, whose novels (*The Black Book* and *The Museum of Innocence* by Pamuk, *Nostalgia* and *Solenoid* by Cărtărescu) assimilate concepts as the “surrealist object”. By using the same method of biographical research, Delia Ungureanu reconstructs the professional paths of these two novelists, relying on their books. Aragon’s *Le Cahier noir* represents the fundamennt for Pamuk’s *The Black Book*, while “transparent objects” conceptualized by Breton became “innocent objects” as in the Turkish writer’s second novel mentioned. It is interesting that a writer from the Orient like Pamuk has adopted Breton’s version of surrealism, when Nabokov, naturalized as American, appropriated Dalí’s more eccentric perspective.

In the case of Mircea Cărtărescu, “from his poetic beginnings, as Delia Ungureanu observes, [he] developed a specific literary formula, his hallmark today: dream literature that challenges the boundaries of genre, creating a new type of fiction” (288). *Nostalgia*, a five-story book, is “mapping an oneiric childhood Bucharest” (290). In *Gemini*, for example, Andrei, one of the two protagonists, was “a great reader of the surrealists’ predecessors” (291). Also, Cărtărescu’s metamorphosis of the surrealist object is based on the ambiguous Romanian term “carte de joc” meaning “both playing card and playing book” (292), which proves the relevant presence of the surrealism heritage, but, perhaps even more significantly, Cărtărescu’s own way of assimilating and fitting it within local culture.

Briefly, in spite of some less-defined conclusions, Delia Ungureanu argues throughout her book that the internationalization of the surrealist current has taken place by means of two major and different standpoints: one regarding the internal dynamics of this phenomenon and the other targeting the external and fruitful influences of surrealism on writers and creators outside of the main group.

Teona FARMATU
Babeş-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca
Faculty of Letters

ŞTEFAN BAGHIU, VLAD POJOGA, and MARIA SASS (eds.), *Ruralism and Literature in Romania*, Berlin, Peter Lang, 2019, 311 p.

The quality and quantity of the home-grown rural literature has been the topic of long-lasting aggressive and, one might argue, groundless debates among the literary critics and ideologues for the most part of Modern Romania’s history. These polemics, which almost always bear an ideological purposefulness, are responsible for the distortion of the image of the rural world in the Romanian cultural environment, the village world finding itself caught between the image of a restored Arcadia, unproblematic and mythical, and that an existential inferno, bereft of psychological depth, subject to the laws of endless physical labour and brute force. One after another, N. Iorga, E. Lovinescu, G. Călinescu, N. Manolescu, to name only the most significant Romanian literary historians, refer to what is, in fact, the same ideologically-crafted rurality (as demonstrated by Cosmin Borza in the case of the first three aforementioned critics in “The National No Man’s Land. Imagining Rurality in the Romanian Literary Histories”, *Dacoromania litteraria*, 2019, 6, pp. 170-180 – an article which is not regrouped in the present volume, but which can be seen as complementary to the project). All of them either discriminate or zealously exalt what has constituted until rather recently (the 1980s-1990s) the largest section in the national population distribution. This image of the autochthonous rurality

extracted from the national literary histories, serving either the multiple urges to urbanize the country (on the grounds that the rural majority was to be blamed for the country's "backwardness" and its culture alike), or the periodic comebacks of the (neo)sămănătorist spirit, hinders what constitutes, in fact, one of the truly fertile and catalytic areas in the landscape of a national literature.

Having such an intimate relationship with identity and the national element, being at the centre of so many quarrels and enrolments, one would expect the "peasant question" in literature to avail itself of a serious theoretical background in Romania's academic and critical environment. Unfortunately, here is to be seen the persistence of the cliché and the high risk of its being imposed as an axiom on the critical consciousness. In fact, before the collective volume *Ruralism and Literature in Romania*, the home-grown specialized literature counts only two more studies that deal with the evolution of autochthonous rural literary production. These are *Universul rustic în literatura română [The Rustic Space in the Romanian Literature]* (1985) by Sultana Craia and *Ipostaze ale modernizării prozei rurale. Pavel Dan, Marin Preda, Sorin Titel [Aspects of Rural Prose Modernization. Pavel Dan, Marin Preda, Sorin Titel]* (2009) by Nicolae Bârna. They have the merit of dismantling several prejudices towards the compatibility of the Romanian "rural material" with a well-synchronized and qualitative literature, without the help of a significant amount of concrete data, which bear the sign of newer practices of literary research – to be found in the volume published at Peter Lang in 2019.

Right from the introduction to *Ruralism and Literature in Romania*, Ștefan Baghiu and Vlad Pojoga identify at least two main causes for the misconception regarding the presumed rural monopoly in Romanian literature's topography: the general distribution of population in Romania throughout its history, and the official Romanian (high-school) literary canon. The rest of the volume is divided into three main sections. The first and the most massive of the sections is dedicated to the novel. The second one is called "Literary Criticism and Social Action", and the last part deals with poetry.

Concerning the novel, the revelatory chapters, in the sense of successfully combating the rushed and cynical replies of E. Lovinescu regarding the rural material, belong to Cosmin Borza and Daiana Gârdan. At the end of the quantitative analysis undertaken by Cosmin Borza, the rural novel seems to occupy only 7% of the Romanian production between 1896 and 2000. Out of the total of 6,290 published novels, only 430 are rural in a period that spans more than a century. This realisation makes the researcher conclude: "during its history, Romanian literature has discriminated against its most numerous social class" (35-36). Even more so, the conclusion seems to be valid for the Romanian novel of the 19th century as well. The article "Geografia internă a romanului românesc în secolul al XIX-lea" ["The Internal Geography of the Romanian Novel in the 19th Century"] (authored by Ștefan Baghiu, Vlad Pojoga, Teodora Susarencu, Radu Vancu, Emanuel Modoc, and published in *Transilvania*, 2019, 10, pp. 29-43), which is referenced in the volume without literally being part of it, clarifies the picture for the 1844-1900 period, where the numerical supremacy of the novel stems from the urban environment: "Out of the 157 novels which form the corpus of our quantitative analysis, 46 of them take place, either partially or entirely, in the village; the remaining 112 have their action restricted to cities or urbanized areas – which means that 71% of the Romanian novel of the 19th century is, contrary to the dominant perception of the literary history, a profoundly urban novel in what concerns its internal geography" (35-36). Just as welcome are the contributions of Daiana Gârdan, who, likewise, makes use of quantitative analysis doubled by geo-criticism and genre theory. Her study deals a final blow to a rather reductive dichotomy (rural against urban) in the interwar Romanian novel by drawing attention to the *interstitial* spaces, an instrumental metaphor "whereby light is shed on a statistical reality" (75). These so-called interstitial spaces dominate the interwar novelistic production in terms of setting, by reaching a total of 40%, more than the fully rural or urban counterparts. Thus, Diana Gârdan is right to proudly believe that the "chapter's initial ambitions of reviving an otherwise stagnant conversation about the rural novel is fully achieved" (77). Such data should have a clarifying effect regarding the autochthonous rural literature.

However, it is far from my intention to suggest that this is the only merit of the volume, or that this particular opus revolves only around "rural literature". As stated in the "Introduction", the goal of this work is to "propose a series of world literature and transnational frames for the debate of what

seems to be the *most autochthonous topic*, namely *rural life and ruralism within a national literature*" (13). That is why the research project covers an area much larger than what can be labelled as Romanian rural literature. A good example for this is Maria Sass' interesting study on "The Image of the Transylvanian Village...", where the traditional Romanian village of Liviu Rebreanu's *Ion* is compared to Paul Schuster's Saxon village from the novel *Fünf Liter Zuika*, in order to highlight two rather similar authorial attitudes, especially with regard to the refusal of bestowing the novels with elements of the populist spirit of the age. Both works complement the multi-dimensional image of the Transylvanian village (Romanian, Saxon) built with much narratological knowledge by the two novelists (66). Not as "ideologically innocent" is the case of the Romanian-German/German-Romanian ethnic group and its literature analysed by Ovio Olaru in his study which makes use of Benedict Anderson's concept of "diaspora nationalism". In Olaru's study, placed in the second section of the collective volume, it is clear that in the German literature from Romania, rural life is never portrayed as a mere setting, but is strongly ideologized and subdued to successive political imperatives (261). Thus, authors such as Eginald Schlattner, Herta Müller, Hans Bergel or Richard Wagner fall under the attention given to Western anti-communist narratives, sparking an effect similar to other isolated counter-canonical phenomena within the international literary market in the course of history, such as Latin American Magical Realism, African and Caribbean Literature, the Icelandic sagas and so on.

Moving on to the shortest section of *Ruralism and Literature in Romania*, dedicated to poetry, the three studies displayed by Emanuel Modoc, Radu Drăgulescu and Mihnea Bâlici, so different from each other, manage to reflect a somehow harmonious existence between multiple methodologies and perspectives. This is, indeed, a strong point of the volume in general, visible in all its main chapters, actually. A balanced attitude (although not lacking a certain polemic nuance) seems to mark the study "Negotiating the Rural and the Rustic in the Romanian Avant-Garde", where Emanuel Modoc is demonstrating, somewhat contrary to the programmes of the militant artist of the extreme modernism, that the rural component is not to be neglected or simplified, focusing on several representative works by Tristan Tzara, B. Fundoianu and Geo Bogza. As the young researcher is trying to prove, "not only are the initial stages of Romanian historical avant-garde marked by rural imagery and imagination [...], but its entire development throughout the 1920s and 1930s is determined by a consistent process of negotiating the rural, the rustic and the natural within its subsequent theoretical and artistic programmes" (272). The study is remarkable due the author's visible mastery of the Romanian (and European) Avant-Garde subject, yet if I were to find a "flaw", I would point out that Modoc's almost categorical dismissal of interpreting Fundoianu as an expressionist poet, a problem that he chose not to dwell on, may have been worth defending. For in my perspective there are enough arguments to point towards a clear compatibility between his poetry and expressionism, without necessarily asking the poet of Herța for an expressionist creed. However, that is hardly a flaw and more of an invitation to further interesting debate, because, after all, advancing conversations which have reached a point of stagnation is indeed one purpose of the volume and of the newer research tools in general.

Closing the volume, Mihnea Bâlici's "New Ruralism: From Village to Globe" brings the discussion on ruralism to the extreme contemporaneity by focusing on the works of contemporary poets such as Matei Hutopila, Anatol Grosu, Ștefan Ivas, Ion Buzu, Victor Țvetov and Marius Aldea. These poets belong to what the Romanian contemporary critics coin New Ruralism, and Mihnea Bâlici decides to offer Andrei Dobos a distinct place within this emerging niche. The young researcher identifies several important traits that characterise New Ruralism, of which the mobilization of the rural environment to emphasize the shortcomings of the project of modernization and globalization after Romania's official entry into the international system (303) is a key one in understanding this facet of the relation between the village and literature. The urban areas do not represent a space of refuge and safety either, and, as Bâlici aptly notes "the fact that neither the village nor the city offer viable lifestyles is the reason why, in all the projects of New Ruralism, there is a distrust of the beneficial effects of current globalization" (306).

These are only a handful of the numerous profoundly innovative and undisputedly professional studies to be found in *Ruralism and Literature in Romania*. The volume is a much needed one in the Romanian cultural environment, not only because it brings justice to a lately underrated (if not ignored) topic, but because it sets an example of virtuosity in handling multiple methodologies, most of which are right up-to-date. The various research tools mastered in the volume vary from distant reading, geo-criticism, quantitative studies, genre theory, critique of ideology, non-anthropocentric reading, to socio-criticism, skopos theory in translation, transnationalism, and the list may go on.

Thus, *Ruralism and Literature in Romania* represents a model of professionalism in Romanian literary research, while also successfully introducing a topic so identity-related, and therefore so complex, to an international public.

Ionucu POP
Babeş-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca
Faculty of Letters

MIHAI IGNAT, *O istorie antroponimică a romanului românesc [An Anthroponymic History of the Romanian Novel]*, Braşov, Editura Universităţii Transilvania din Braşov, 2019, vol. I, 332 p. + vol. II, 309 p.

The concern for the symbolic potential of the names of literary characters has been a long one for Mihai Ignat. Originally a doctoral thesis, his monographic study *Onomastics in the Romanian Novel* appeared in 2009, followed by the first volume of *An Anthroponymic History of the Romanian Novel* in 2016, and the second one in 2019, belonging to the same “simile-history”, as the author calls it. It is not necessary to further tackle the meaning of “history” in terms of the methodology and the panoramic principle that the scope of a “legitimizing meta-narrative”, in the words of Angelo Mitchievici¹, brings about. In fact, Ignat’s *Anthroponymic History of the Romanian Novel* underlines the “collector spirit” that Mitchievici proposed for the “new” literary histories signed by Mihai Zamfir (2011/ 2017), Petre Anghel (2014), Monica Lovinescu (2014), Răzvan Voncu (2014), Mircea Anghescu (2019) or Antonio Patrăş (2019).

Mihai Ignat’s *History* starts from “the idea that the proper names of the characters provide a particular access path into the universe of a literary work, being a sufficiently interesting, rich and profitable object of study from an exegetical angle” (vol. I, 5). It can be stated that the demonstrations in the volumes support the author’s approach, being quite convincing in this respect. The arrangement of the novels analysed from the perspective of anthroponomy in Ignat’s *History* follows the chronological order. Thus, the first volume deals with books published between 1705 and 1945, while the second volume covers the period 1946-2000.

The selection, from Dimitrie Cantemir’s *Hieroglyphic History* (1705/1965) to *The Story of the Great Brigand* (2000) by Petru Cimpoeşu, was motivated primarily by the representativeness of the characters’ onomastics, in the attempt to highlight the “meanings, the aesthetic (expressive) value, the functions (narrative, descriptive, characterological, etc.) of literary anthroponomy. Another goal was that of determining the way characters are named or relate to their names or those of other characters, discovering the fictional or extra-fictional universe of using proper names, description and interpretation among the proper names of the literary imaginary, the stylistic, sonorous, semantic or even etymological characteristics...” (vol. I, 5). Consequently, the hermeneutic success of the

¹ Angelo Mitchievici, “Viaţa criticii şi istoriei literare” [“The life of literary criticism and history”], *România literară*, 2020, 14, <https://romaniyaliterara.com/2020/04/viata-criticii-si-istoriei-literare/>. Accessed September 5, 2020.

incursions into the meanings of literary anthroponyms is determined by the relevance and richness of the onomastic elements within the fictional discourse. We therefore find both analyses, presented in the form of listings of the names of the characters introduced through retelling, to be innovative, engaging and fascinating interpretations.

Another selection criterion that Mihai Ignat claims, especially suitable for the second volume, is that of the “unfortunate ideological contamination” that motivates the absence of certain novels. Even in the case of certain novels with thesis tendencies, Ignat ironically sanctions any slips without, however, ignoring the strengths of the novels: “Lisandra’s little girl is called, eccentrically, ‘Fiameta’ (which does not quite fit in with the communist mentality of the character). In fact, we learn from the daughter herself that her name is ‘Dolores-Anda’, but her mother calls her ‘Fiameta’. We must also note the over-cosmopolitan onomastic taste of someone called Lisandra Olt who fights on the barricades of communism for a living [...]. This novel is part of a series of those which, ‘infected’ by the ideology of its writing, without bearing a special aesthetic value, find compensation at least in terms of onomastic expressiveness” (vol. II, 45-46).

Almost without exception, the analyses begin in an axiological key. The introductions to the atmosphere of the novels provide both macro level hierarchies, illustrating a general positioning in the field of Romanian literature, and particular ones, within the entire work of the author. Through case studies, Ignat also aims, on the one hand, to recover some novels fallen into “unjust obscurity”, such as Ioana Postelnicu’s *Bogdana* (1939) or Iulia Soare’s *The Calaff Family* (1956), and, on the other hand, to reveal some overestimations: “far from being a ‘quick prose’, Mircea Ciobanu’s *Witnesses* is neither the work of an ‘exceptional prose writer of the inner life’ or an ‘eminent stylist’, but a rather gray, monochord and carefully supervised (from a narrative standpoint) book about a book, encompassing an obvious parabolic dimension” (vol. II, 52).

In fact, “the integrated interpretation”, or “contradicting or supplementing previous exegetical interventions” (vol I, 5-6) is the basic method employed by Ignat. Arguing with other critics by appealing to the meanings involved in the anthroponymic layer is common: “A novel overqualified in point of aesthetic-hermeneutic value and, implicitly, in terms of proper names, insofar as it is speculated that ‘Ion [John]’, ‘Marcu [Mark]’ and ‘Luca [Luke]’ would have evangelical connotations. [...] Ion Bogdan Lefter’s comment in this respect becomes friable not only because it is a single argument or moment / event [...], but also because that ‘apostolic’ connotation is related to the assumption made by Luca’s character that the taxi driver would look at him as a prophet or enlightened person” (vol II, 234).

It is clear, however, that the onomastic register, as revealed by case studies, is not strictly determined by the aesthetic successes of the novels. This does not mean that a structural unity between the aesthetic, ethical and anthroponymic dimension is not possible, as is the case of the Romanian novel signed by Matei Călinescu (*Viața și opinile lui Zacharias Lichter* [*The Life and Opinions of Zacharias Lichter*]) which “remains original even by onomastics or at least by the name of its eccentric (and difficult to follow) main character, an example of standing against the communist regime which the book avoids through an original formula of *sui-generis*, parable-portrait biography” (vol. II, 69). An impressive analysis through the totalizing perspective proposed by the author – treating the plans of the novel through the prism of coherence and structural unity – is to be found in the study dedicated to the names in the novel *Moromejii* [*The Morometes*]: “... the impression in reading is that the names, bearing a joyful sonority, are very suitable: Nilă is a bit heavy-minded, Birică is honest and stubborn, against a background of common sense, Țugurlan is tough, fierce, Bâldea is ugly. The role of the text seems to be to round the first impression, the phonetic one, by adding semantic elements, i.e. through portrait features which provide the names with ‘roots’ in the imaginary of the work [...] *Moromejii* is a realistic and monographic novel, aiming at accounting for the world as a whole by including not just a few, but all the features and problems of the interwar Romanian village. Thus, the existence of respectable doses in each category of proper names is not purely coincidental (even if unconsciously materialized), because a copy of the world must necessarily contain all its components, including the nominal aspect” (vol. II, 24-31).

The diachronic arrangement proposed by Mihai Ignat has the advantage of clearly capturing the evolution of the Romanian genre and, at the same time, of the three “traditions” or predominant onomastic regimes: “explicit denomination, with semantics”, “discreet, unostentatious denomination” and “sound-type onomastics with special acoustics”. From the process of “autochthonizing” Western models through Romanian onomastics in the pioneering novels of our literature, to the use of initials, cryptonyms, hypocorism, enclitic articulations of names, feminine use of masculine names, acronyms, nicknames or sophistry, Ignat observes the tendency of anthroponyms to adapt to the illustrated genre. As a consequence, the subsumption of various assumptions on other dimensions of the epic is outlined in the argumentative approach: “We can easily homologate S. Damian’s glosses on farce and satire as implicit comments on the carnival of onomastics in Călinescu’s last novels” (vol. II, 19). In the commentary dedicated to the novel *Lunga călătorie a prizonierului [The Long Journey of the Prisoner]* (1971) signed by Sorin Titel, Mihai Ignat reinterprets well-known hermeneutical perspectives on the parabolic character, Kafkaesque lineages, depersonalization and identity-emptying or allegorical implications, premises launched by Petru Mihai Gorcea, Eugen Simion, Cornel Ungureanu and Valeriu Cristea to support the coherence and motivations of the onomastic void.

In addition to assigning anthroponyms to a certain literary genre, Mihai Ignat also discusses the stylistic particularization of the names of the characters from the perspective of the imprint of originality and the specificity of novelists. While “Rebrenization” would involve a harsh acoustics, “the hardness of the component vowels of many of the names, their greyness and their load of ‘lead’” (vol. I, 50) echoing the anti-polished style adopted by the author, the euphony of Hortensia Papadat Bengescu’s character onomastics accompanies the text’s phraseological musicality. An interesting analogical analysis is also offered by Mihai Ignat when he distinguishes between the onomastic layers employed by Marin Preda and Liviu Rebreanu.

As the case studies are very numerous, a systematization of the functions of the names that Mihai Ignat identifies would require a lot of space. I shall only mention a few of the attributes I find relevant. Thus, onomastics can convey feelings such as malice, affection and snobbery, various habits, picturesqueness, authenticity, aesthetic expressiveness, emphasis on the parabolic dimension, allegorical intentions, marking the rupture with the world, or, on the contrary, the integration into it, the achievement of stylistic originality, the comic or tragic effect, symbolic meanings, the parodic allusion, landmarks of the hermeneutic horizon, a particular rhythm or sonority, a form of manifestation of the obsession with identity, etc.

Certainly, for the present fictional space under analysis, *An Anthroponymic History of the Romanian Novel* convincingly illustrates the possible meanings and materializations of the Latin dictum with which Mihai Ignat opens his volume, namely *nomen est omen*. Moreover, even after reading the possible connotations of proper names or nicknames, it is impossible for the reader not to be aroused, at least for a fraction of a second, by curiosity about his/her own name.

Senida POENARIU
Transilvania University of Brașov
Faculty of Letters

ȘTEFAN FIRICĂ, *Autenticitatea, sensuri și nonsensuri (Teorii românești interbelice în contexte europene)* [Authenticity, Sense and Nonsense (Romanian Interwar Theories in European Contexts)], București, Editura Tracus Arte, 2019, 412 p.

None of the waves of criticism that discuss the concepts, evolution, and typology of the Romanian novel has triggered a more heated debate than the phases of evolution of the genre in the

interwar context, which would be characterized by the journey from objectivity to subjectivity and authenticity, in a rapid process that burns the stages.

The volume of Ștefan Firică therefore deals with a long-discussed topic – the theories about the authenticity of Romanian interwar novels, but it defines itself first and foremost as a critique of criticism, adopting a chronological approach to identify the hermeneutics, literary historians and writers' reactions to the authenticist generation, a record of how it was received and perceived. Furthermore, the author paints a much larger picture than that. He starts from these Romanian literary and hermeneutic landmarks, continues with the exploration of the rallying of the autochthonous theories to the European ones, and ends the second half of the volume by redefining authenticity through its very wide cultural contextualization.

Once the critical establishment is ruled by Lovinescu's theories (synchronism, the maturation of literature through the evolution from subjectivity to objectivity in a prose-irreversible process with axiomatic value, aestheticism and a predominantly stylistic type of criticism), the author emphasizes the fact that the authentic Romanian mainstream overturns this literary bet: from the heterodiegetic novel, the transition is made, following the European models of Proust, Gide or Papini, to *panlyricism* and the homodiegetic novel. The self-legitimation of the authenticists, by opposition with the literary establishment, is achieved according to the desideratum of creating anti-literature, characterized by anti-aesthetics and anti-refinement of style. Once the interwar standings are clarified, Ștefan Firică presents the major waves of reception of authenticity by Lovinescu, Călinescu and Crohmălniceanu who, in different critical idioms, maintain the same reluctance towards subjective prose. Nicolae Manolescu changes this exegetical vision in *Arca lui Noe. Eseu despre romanul românesc [Noah's Ark. Essay on the Romanian Novel]* (I–III, 1980–1983). By means of the distinction between the three types of novel and using the relations emphasised by Manolescu between author-narrator and character in accordance with the (post)structuralist theories proliferated in the French space (1960–1970), the author discusses, quoting Alex Goldiș, the debates of the sixties between "liberalists" and "dogmatists" about the erasure of the author from the text. In *Întoarcerea autorului [The Return of the Author]* (1981), a visionary Eugen Simion discusses the relationship between the author and his/her work and the biographical grid of interpretation, in Dobrovskyan fashion, against Barthes and the "intransitiveness of writing", opening the debate on terms such as "autofiction", the idea of "anti-art for art's sake", the life-art relationship and the two types of Ionic novel – the artistic novel and the novel of „living".

We embark on a trip around the perspectives of various literary figures: Șerban Cioculescu, Vladimir Streinu, Pompiliu Constantinescu, Mircea Zaciu, Dinu Pillat, Lucian Raicu and Adrian Marino (who gives new meanings to the term "authenticity" in his *Dicționar de idei literare [Dictionary of Literary Ideas]*). There are also Gheorghe Crăciun (who contextualizes the term according to the postmodernist trend), Liviu Papadima, Ion Bogdan Lefter, critics of the 1980s for whom (the above-mentioned Eugen Simion included) there is a change in sensibilities in what regards the reception of a text. It is not spontaneity, anti-refinement and genuineness, but rather the Corinthian, the artifice, the sophistication of a novel's architecture and the intricately directed voices of the protagonists that are sought after. The addendum to the reception file also lists the ages of modernism, stated by Liviu Petrescu, the vision of Mircea Zamfir, the volumes of Radu G. Țeposu, Gheorghe Glodeanu, Simona Popescu, Paul Cernat and Oana Soare, the conclusion being that the period 1980–2006 (and the hermeneutics researchers who follow them) no longer follows in the interwar desideratum of subjectivist novelists, and tends to equate authenticity with a disguised form of rhetoric, a convention.

The second part of Firică's volume represents a vast excursion in the contextualization and characteristics of "authenticity" at a culturally international level, from Adorno's theory stipulating the instrumentalization of authenticism in Nazi ideology, to Trilling, who descends into a history of it (surprising one, in the first instance, by the dichotomy of sincerity/ conformity, to an objective morality- authenticity/ nonconformism and self-transcendence, taken over and developed by Golomb), to Alessandro Ferrera, Guinon and Varga and even to the coloring of "authenticism" in *self-helping* writings. Kierkegaard, Sartre, Camus from the existentialist ranks, then Nietzsche and

Heidegger, are quoted by cultural theorists (and, implicitly, by Firică) as influential models for the literary-cultural path of authenticism. The author also captures the forms of ideological militancy that vary from a Europe in which authenticism seems to have mostly right-wing coloration, to the American hippie generation, in which “authentic” becomes left-wing. The overlap with psychology and pop culture allows the author to quote and analyse the documentary *Status Anxiety*, made after Alain de Botton’s bestseller, as well as the movie *Todo sobre mi madre*, which embodies Ferrera’s “exemplary universalism” in the transsexual protagonist. Also, in the same chapter are mentioned the means used by psychotherapy based on authenticism (Karl Jaspers) and the pedagogically seductive abilities of the philosophers of authenticity – Heidegger, Ortega y Gasset, Nae Ionescu, who Firică comments on by recalling the discursive “authenticity”.

I believe that the great merit of Ștefan Firică's volume lies in the contextualization of authenticity at a European level (the atmosphere of the Great War and totalitarian ideologies *in statu nascendi*, as well as of the elitist factor, very prevalent in the Romanian interwar environment) and its “territorialization”: the *sincerity* and Gide, the Russian emigration (which underlies the idea of cosmopolitanism, also promoted by Ortega y Gasset) with Shestov and Berdiaev, the Romantic heritage in German culture, Heidegger and German fascism, the Spanish authenticity of Unamuno and Ortega y Gasset and, finally, the Italian Papinnism. Although great ideas achieve international circulation and show a form of cultural synchronism, authenticism also exhibits a form of ethnic-vernacular coloration, as demonstrated by this territorialization.

The issue of intellectual responsibility is an ardent one in relation to the writers and theorists of authenticism (referring to the ideological problems echoing in the case of Romanian legionarism of the criterionist generation), and the balanced position that the author adopts in this case is essential. He details the relationship between literature, culture and ideology in Romania in the third part of the volume, which consists of portraits of Nae Ionescu, Mircea Vulcănescu, Mircea Eliade, Mihail Sebastian, Eugen Ionescu, Emil Cioran, of a terminological glossary of interwar authenticity jargon and of an epilogue which demonstrates its relationship with posterity.

In conclusion, we can say that the volume built on the foundation of Ștefan Firică's doctoral thesis manages to treat, almost exhaustively, the subject of the theories and colours of authenticism, offering a very rich panorama of its meanings and keeping in balance the book's elaborate construction, in which the chapters form communicating vessels.

Ioana TOLOARGĂ
Babeș-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca
Faculty of Letters

COSMIN CIOTLOŞ, *Elementar, dragul meu Rache. Detalii mateine sub lupă* [Elementary, My dear Rache. Mateiu's Details Seen through Lenses], Bucureşti, Humanitas, 2017, 137 p.

In the historiographical discourse about Mateiu I. Caragiale and his work, reference is always made to biographical aspects, the writer being always linked to the name of his father, I. L. Caragiale. In *Elementary, My Dear Rache*, Cosmin Ciotloş exposes a series of new reading tips, aspects that come as a continuation of the literary criticism already existing on the subject and which, according to the critic, have not been highlighted before. At the same time, the study has no monographic intentions, and the (almost inevitable) references to the name of I. L. Caragiale have the intention of identifying the links between Mateiu's texts and those of other authors, and the relationships between them. The critic will highlight only the novelty elements that he has identified, only the cracks at the level of the internal and external logic (of elaboration) of the texts, all aspects he will support through complex arguments, with a stable, safe and logical construction.

The approach followed by Cosmin Ciotloş is a meticulous one, representing, according to his words, a “lucid analysis”, supported by numerous close-reading sequences, by rigorous detective demonstrations, sometimes even mathematical (“let’s do a simple calculation”). Often, the writer will highlight the fact that the text was “coldly read”, in a detached manner, almost taken out of context, precisely in order to be able to gaze at its full potential and to analyse its meaning through the links it allows.

The critic’s attention follows, first of all, the internal logic of the texts. The narrative thread is schematically reconstructed and the moments of clumsiness in the behaviour of characters whose decisions involve the development of actions are highlighted. Such a case concerns, for example, Rache: “this luxury detective is fundamentally wrong”, notes Ciotloş, following an explanation of the reported mistake in relation to the epic thread already illustrated.

In order to be able to observe such cracks in the narrative logic, Ciotloş must have allowed himself to be carried closer and closer to the character, even to put himself in the character’s shoes, in order to be able to follow precisely, on a narrative level, inside the epic text, the connection between character and context, decisions, lines, etc. It is an attempt, successful from my point of view, from the critic to overcome the contours and the barriers between the literary text and life itself.

Secondly, through the very detailed analysis that Cosmin Ciotloş pursues, not only does he aim at the internal logic of the text, but he also gives the impression that he follows the actual writing act, the choices Mateiu I. Caragiale makes regarding the elaboration of the texts, the way the contexts are presented, the characters and the decisions they make. In addition to the careful analysis of the characters and the action, the critic also insists on the way in which the narrative plans criss-cross and whether or not these intersections show cracks. Ciotloş is constantly looking for evidence (“apart from these remarks, which must be taken as mere adjuvants, the last passage has probative value”) and justifications for all the actions and decisions of the characters, just to support their analysis. What is more, new approaches start catching the eye of the readers. Such approaches are hardly, if at all, discussed by the critics.

The revelation of the incongruities in the characters’ actions or in the act of writing itself is added to the presentation of the whole literary system which places at its centre Mateiu I. Caragiale and his own writings. Works are mentioned that are present in the texts connected to the above-mentioned author, or to the influences of everyday life. By stating these connections, the critic shows his deep understanding and knowledge of the works and critical texts which address Caragiale’s work in his own time and, more than once, his life is corroborated by the close observation of everyday life at the turn of the century. Ciotloş is looking for similarities between the characters in these works and the characters with whom they might be identified. Hence, the critic is able to discuss almost all the critics (if not all) who managed to talk about Caragiale’s work, the terms in which the relationship between I. L. Caragiale and Mateiu I. Caragiale should be looked at, whether one could point out a sort of influence of the first over the latter, or any attempt of the son to surpass his father or to continue his father’s work. When referring to the father’s work, Ciotloş believes that “the analysis of the possible relationships of the novel [*Craii de Curtea-Veche*] shows exactly the contrary: Mateiu is not running from the contagion, he is looking after it, he triggers the contagion”. Therefore, the writer would have been fully aware of the pressure exerted by the context in which he found himself and he would have chosen to fight with the weapons placed at his disposal.

The critic works not only with Mateiu Caragiale’s writing, prose or poetry, but he also addresses the author’s correspondence. In a whole chapter the stress falls on the unusual theft of the poem called *Noapte valahă* [Wallachian night]. Mateiu brings clarification to the so-called mystery. Cosmin Ciotloş does not seem to trust the author’s declaration and offers an assumption which is more appealing from the point of view of the author. Based on the letter sent by Mateiu Caragiale, he starts a case and begins to solve it like a detective. Thus, he places that scene in real life as if he were himself publishing at that time. This observation made by Ciotloş points to a writing pattern that Mateiu Caragiale does not apply only to fiction, but also to life, meant to demolish the borders between reality and literature, so that the line between them can no longer be distinguished. From this point of view, the tackling of the issue by the critic, his judgement of the logic behind the actions, the

decisions and the conclusions to which the characters come to, is even more justified, coming precisely from *the inside* of the fictional world.

Through his laid-back style, Ciotoș directly signals all the nuances of the undiscussed aspects he has identified about the chosen topic and, in addition, his own version of interpretations or assumptions. The critic's wish to make the reader understand his reasoning is backed by logical demonstrations that make his exposition trustworthy.

Elementary, My Dear Rache. Mateiu's Details Seen through Lenses is a critical text characterized by the unity given by its constant, rigorously built, logical approach. Although the intention was not monographic, the critic switches from fiction to reality, albeit in a justified manner, from inside Mateiu's writing position, while the author himself often crosses over, or alternates playfully, between these two domains.

Adina LUCA
Babeș-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca
Faculty of Letters