

COMPTE RENDUS / BOOK REVIEWS

CAMELIA DINU, *Cazul Daniil Harms. Supraviețuirea avangardei ruse [The Case of Daniil Kharms. The Survival of the Russian Avant-Garde]*, București, Tracus Arte, 2019, 477 p.

Owing to a host of extra-literary factors, the Russian avant-garde has a very difficult position in the Romanian literary culture. For one, even though constructivism was the main avant-garde movement in Romania in the 1920s, its autochthonous development can be traced to Central European influences rather than to its source. Therefore, even though Russian constructivism was born out of futurism and suprematism, the origins of Romanian constructivism have little to do with the movement's Russian counterpart. This phenomenon could be explained partially by the anti-Soviet stance taken by Romanian officials, and the cultural blockades instituted thereafter. Another reason concerns the relatively rich connections established between the Romanian and Hungarian, Czech and Polish avant-gardes, all of which had stronger ties to Russian literature. These connections caused a lateral transfer of influence between the Russian and the Romanian avant-gardes that are as interesting as they are unexplored by literary criticism. Even though Camelia Dinu's volume focuses on one Russian author, his indirect ties to the Romanian literary tradition merit further attention, as they are entirely relevant to the question of Russian influence on the Romanian avant-garde.

The first part of the volume traces the literary roots of Daniil Kharms following the formation of OBERIU, a literary movement that has many affinities with Russian futurism and European Dada. In order to better contextualize Kharms' artistic development within OBERIU, the author proposes a brief and concise chronology of Russian modernism, beginning with the so-called "Silver Age", through the October Revolution, and all the way up to the 1950s. In the grand scheme of things, OBERIU, founded by Kharms and Alexander Vvedensky, is a rather late emanation of Russian futurism, a movement that had its fair share of complicated relationships with both the political establishment of the 1910s and the Soviets. It is a period when powerful conflicts, both political and ideological, took place camouflaged as literature, and the Russian avant-garde as a whole was a willing participant.

Before delving into the intricacies of Kharms' poetics, Dinu first establishes the biographical profile of the author. The author traces Kharms' early life and his first forays into literary creation, his youth as a Russian poet with post-futurist extravagances, his conflicts with the Soviet power in the 1930s as an author frequently accused of "anti-Soviet sentiment" and a promoter of "mystical-idealist thought". In minute detail, Dinu deftly unearths reports by the Soviet secret services that contain Kharms' testimony on his artistic activities. In more than one reports, the author finds that Kharms' testimonies contain some of the most authentic artistic creeds. As an absurdist author, Kharms was accused of anti-Sovietism even in his children's books (these accusations represent a good occasion for Dinu to evaluate Kharms' children's literature and its subversive potential in one section of the book). Kharms' biography ends tragically during the siege of Leningrad. The trajectory of his oeuvre, however, was further complicated by Soviet censorship. It wasn't until 1974 that Kharms was introduced to the Western community through George Gibian. The recovery of Kharms' writing in the 1970s and subsequent critical accounts in the 1980s and the 1990s offer Dinu a pretext to engage into a fertile dialogue on the reception of Russian absurdist literature, especially in the West. This is particularly significant when taking into consideration the increasing interest in absurdist theatre over the same period, but also in the context of Romanian culture. As a culture with a fairly rich absurdist tradition (with representatives such as Urmuz and Eugen Ionescu), Romania is a very interesting case in which the reception of a forgotten absurdist author like Daniil Kharms can benefit from a relatively rich critical reception. This, however, was not the case, as the first translation of Kharms in Romania in 1982 was met with minimal critical reaction.

One of the stronger points of the volume concerns Kharms's role in the development of absurdism in the European culture. As a late manifestation of the Russian avant-garde, Camelia Dinu believes it is worth considering that OBERIU is the basis for the poetics of the absurd in European culture. But maybe the most important role of OBERIU resides in its ability to preserve the avant-garde tenets that later provided the basis for Russian postmodernism and neo-avant-garde. In one of the final chapters of her volume, Dinu pursues the trajectory of Kharms' ideas within Russian literary tradition and the way in which these ideas and representations paved the way for the development of Russian neo-avant-garde and postmodernism. Here is where one of the main theses of the book lies: Kharms' and OBERIU's role in *the survival* of the avant-garde in Russian literature. This survival, Dinu writes, "translated into an impulse for different creative directions that, at least in their early stages, attempted to resurrect modernism and the avant-garde rather than moving away from them". Moreover, OBERIU functioned as a missing link between the historical avant-garde and the neo-avant-garde, and Kharms should be related as much to the underground movements of the period 1960-1980 as he is to the first avant-garde.

Using copious amounts of historiographical data, while also providing much needed contextualization on Russian literary culture of the twentieth century, Camelia Dinu's volume is a welcome addition to the history of literary scholarship on Soviet literature in general and on Russian avant-garde in particular.

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COSMIN CIOTLOȘ, *Cenaclul de Luni. Viața și opera*
[*Monday Literary Circle. The Life and the Work*], București,
Pandora M, 2021, 464 p.

The language of literary criticism is dominated by a series of generic phrases used to describe the distinctiveness of the poetry hatched in Romania in the 1970s and 80s: "the intrusion of biography, ordinary emotions, minimalism, baroque magnitudes, the promise of the ludic, ironism, self-referentiality, [...] the abysmal consciousness of a crisis" (p. 9). The accuracy of these terms is indisputable, says Cosmin Ciotloș, literary critic and professor at the Faculty of Letters of the University of Bucharest, while enriching the descriptive pattern. Through astounding detective's intuition, the critic emphasizes the primordially of "a particular group sensitivity" (p. 9). This sensitivity is the kernel that reunites otherwise incongruent temperaments and distinctive writing styles, which are organic extensions of a well-defined artistic awareness. *Cenaclul de Luni: Viața și opera* [*Monday Literary Circle. The Life and the Work*], a volume published in 2021 by Pandora M Publishing House, is the mature version of the doctoral thesis of the author from 2013, an embryonic project that contained only fragments from the last chapter, "Situatii tactice" ["Tactical Situations"]. Interest in these poets, identifiable as „lunedisti”, who are still in the forefront of the Romanian poetry scene, is resurrected. The three constitutive chapters of the final version of the book are intended to be reunited, initially, under the title "Formăm testudo" ["We Form Testudo"], a phrase inspired by Romulus Bucur's poem, *Arta războiului* [*The Art of War*]. The phrase describes a battle formation, which is constituted by merging the shields and creating a powerful visual representation whose appearance resembles the shell of a tortoise. The solidarity between the members, the intertextual networks, alongside the honest and savoury commentaries fuelled by the mature critical spirit of the authors (although biologically very young individuals) create a cultural shield against the

obtuse and benighted forces of the *Săptămâna* magazine. The members of the cenacle need to successively reinvent a cultural shelter, even though this shelter is, simultaneously and permanently, threatened by its inevitable disintegration. All these aspects crystallize the engines of the exceptional durability of the members' unique sensibility and their outstanding critical and artistic formation. Moreover, the perpetuation of the critical and artistic finesse among the members of the cenacle was stimulated by the major role of the commentary, of the debate, something that has kept the poetic organism alive and relevant even today.

The first chapter follows the coordinates of the genesis, evolution, and dissolution of the cenacle. Cosmin Ciotloș makes not only a radiography of the main events that determined the development of the cenacle, but he also investigates forgotten documents that provide an interesting and, moreover, captivating insight. He presents the preliminary phases that had led to the formation of the cenacle, simultaneously immortalizing the collaboration of the members of the future cenacle with the *Amfiteatru* magazine. The context created was fruitful, as it allowed the popularization of the young poets. At their first meeting, on March 3, 1977, many of the members were already recognizable due to their well-defined artistic identities emerging from their previous publications. Cosmin Ciotloș reproduces fragments that are traditionally embedded in the dynamics of the meetings, while highlighting the crucial attention that the members used to dedicate to the commentary. The commentary was even more popular than the actual readings that were hosted in the Edgar Quinet building. The interpretive approaches, although endowed with critical spirit, are said to have been vivid performances, an aspect that maintained the popularity of the group. Equally, the members of the cenacle contributed to the progressive mythologization of the group. They kept blurring the temporal coordinates, having as a template the example of Junimea and Iacob Negruzzi's enigmatic description: "the origin of the group has been lost in the mists of time" (p. 56). Concerning the name of the group, the author exposes Matei Vișniec's comic confession: while he assumes the paternity of the name (Cenaclul de Luni [The Monday Literary Circle]), he admits that the meetings used to take place on Thursdays. The cenacle abolition, in the fall of 1983, caused by the politically and morally dysfunctional background, stimulated symptomatic unrest. In a letter addressed to Viorel Marineasa, Mircea Cărtărescu protests that "there is something bad, harmful, despicable in today's cultural life" (p. 62) and that "literary life has become hell" (p. 62), attributing catastrophic tones to the disintegration of the cenacle. Not only did the members adopt an apocalyptic outlook, but they also refused the dissolution to become definitive. The Rapid sports club phase, an alternative, camouflaged existence eventually suppressed at the order of the State Security, constitutes the following reincarnation of the cenacle. The connection with the sports club, and especially with the Rapid fanbase, is interesting and is, evidently, revealed by Cosmin Ciotloș's detective approach. Both the cenacle and the fanbase of the sports group were animated by remarkable dissident attitudes that became a bonding agent against the common disrupter of harmony and liberty of cultural expression, Eugen Barbu. The final regenerative phase is constituted by the Cenaclul din Tei [Tei Literary Circle], where poetry was not so well represented, due to prejudices circulating at the time. These prejudices devalued commentary on poetry, considered dull and not interesting enough.

The second chapter is dedicated to the catalyst for the collapse of the cenacle, the inhibitor of the innovative spirit, the obtuse voice that condemns the so-called "poetry in jeans", the accomplice of the State Security and the executioner of aesthetic autonomy. All these phrases reproduce the approach of the magazine subordinated to Eugen Barbu, *Săptămâna*, with an attitude that was refractory to novelty and a circulation that left no room for competition. This suppressor of creativity used to have boundless influence in Romania's cultural space. Cosmin Ciotloș records, by means of thorough documentation, the antagonism between the camps, while correcting a series of preconceptions. For example, he clarifies the confusion regarding the column of literary chronicle held, by rotation, by Corneliu Vadim Tudor, C. Sorescu, and M.N. Rusu, denying the fact that their focus was exclusively the 1980s generation. Eugen Barbu's figure is, of course, central, regardless of the avatars that his attacks incarnate: "Barbu is not even the ironic prose writer of yesteryear. He is now only a mechanized robot programmed to destroy and smear" (p. 140).

Not only is the last chapter the most voluminous, but it is also the most enlightening. Even though, apparently, each chapter is dedicated to the work of a single writer, what is crucial is the network that encompasses the lyric individualities, melting them into a unifying rhythm. Cosmin Ciotloș brings to light one of the recurring habits at the core of the cenacle: if a text written by any of the authors is more compatible with the aesthetics of another, the paternity of the text is surrendered. Traian T. Coșovei is represented by his “immense voluptuousness of empathetic writing” (p. 156), while his text, *1, 2, 3 sau... [1, 2, 3, or...]* nourishes symmetries with Florin Iaru’s *High Fidelity* or with Matei Vișniec’s *La noapte va ninge [Tonight It Will Snow]*. For Coșovei, says Ciotloș, the act of writing becomes “an instrument of oblivion” (p. 175), while “the human condition is preserved only in its embryonic phase, not having the time to develop” (p. 175). About Mariana Marin, the author states that she represents “a moral, non-concessive voice” (p. 177) and that she became the emblematic figure of “the tragic version of our dissidence” (p. 177). Alongside the ethical qualities, her stylistics is also admired because it consistently transmutes the truth into parable. What is interesting in Romulus Bucur’s poetry is the revival of intimate literature: “Before others in his generation, Bucur collects mundane facts and passing echoes without interest in formal qualities, and he gives a voice to the otherwise muted sequences of life” (p. 206). Florin Iaru prefers independent poems while staying faithful to the belief that “poetry can be experimental, as long as the result remains impregnated into the emotional memory of the reader” (p. 210). In his case, intertextuality becomes a form of communication, although his assemblage of sources is still undeciphered. Ion Stratan stands out through *The Globe*, a collection that rewrites some Shakespearean texts that surprisingly favour a less popular method of reading – the diagonal reading. In Alexandru Mușina’s poetry, Cosmin Ciotloș identifies the adaptability of some of his verses, gracefully dislocated from their original context and integrated into distinctive works. A subchapter is dedicated to the *Echinoc* member Ion Mureșan, whose poetry is analysed simultaneously with some of Marta Petreu’s works. This process reveals the existence of a perpetual dialogue between two opposite literary voices. Bogdan Ghiu is considered “the most heretical member of the cenacle, whilst being their most creative reader” (p. 285), while Ion Monoran’s “compensatory sensitivity” (p. 290) is exposed. Viorel Padina was the one to influence Mircea Nedelciu and Cristian Popescu, due to his discovery of “a new Romanian style of expression” (p. 306). Daniel Pișcu keeps his “emotional and mental coherence” (p. 319) balanced, while Ileana Zubașcu is deprived of the title of forerunner of the cenacle. By far the most uplifting part is reserved for Mircea Cărtărescu and his *Levantul*, which resurrects multiple influences from Romania’s literary context. Cosmin Ciotloș identifies the existence of three bibliographical layers which bring to life a unique and inimitable piece of writing remarkable through its cultural density and exhaustiveness: “several centuries of Romanian literature survive forever, even if no longer frequented” (p. 378).

What gives cultural priority to the cenacle, in addition to the talent encapsulated in samples of exemplary lyricism, is the moral alliance against an ideological model that brutalizes artistic autonomy, the wide dialogic network among the writers as well as the remarkable specificity of the cenacle commentary: “Romanian poetry has never had a more intense parliamentary undertone and has never been more tolerant of the idea of debate than in the nineties” (p. 241).

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MARIN IONIȚĂ, *Kiseleff 10. Fabrica de scriitori* [*Kiseleff 10. The Writer Factory*], revised and extended edition, București, Corint, 2018, 376 p.

Having already been published in three editions, Marin Ioniță's book, *Kiseleff 10. Fabrica de scriitori* [*Kiseleff 10. The Writer Factory*] has two major merits: on the one hand, it is among the few first-hand accounts about "Mihai Eminescu" Literature and Literary Criticism School, the most important institution for training a new generation of literary agents during the 1950s run according to the principles of ideology imported from the USSR. On the other hand, the inside perspective of the author, himself among the school's students, provides material that comprises not only a radiography of this politicized school of writing, but also accounts for all aspects of the life of young writers in this period, starting with intimate anecdotes and continuing with their odyssey of becoming important figures on the temporal literary scene. Classifiable more into the genre of memoir rather than in that of rigorous survey, *Kiseleff 10...* could be read in this key: firstly, as an exhaustive journal of the social, professional and literary trajectory of many writers who attended "Mihai Eminescu" Literature and Literary Criticism School, starting from Nicolae Labiș to Gheorghe Tomozei or Florin Mugur; secondly, as a precious testimonial not only of the politicization of literary discourse, but also of the gross ideologization of the process of forming young authors, and finally of the bureaucratization and institutionalization of the writers and the route to publication.

The literary phenomenon of the 1950s has not been remembered, not even as a compromised or unsubstantial phase, in post-war literary history, mainly because, beginning with the changing ideological frame of the 1960s, politics and literary practices from the previous decade were defused by strong criticism and opposition, and the stage of the sovietisation of literature gradually tended to remain an unknown and shameful experience for the domestic literary route. Therefore, although "Mihai Eminescu" School... gave many writers who have continued to operate in the literary field throughout the post-war period, no actual archival documents originating from the institution remain, as the author of *Kiseleff 10...* mentions at the beginning of the book.

Set up in the 1950 and located at the eponymous 10 Kiseleff Road, right next to the USSR Embassy, the purpose of this school of literature, like that of the Superior School of Social Science "A.A. Zhdanov", has been to form the new progressive generation of intellectuals and writers who would create their work in perfect agreement with the Social Realist aesthetic and, moreover, who would form an "avant-garde" group irrigated by Soviet Marxist-Leninist values and replacing the previous literary models based on the bourgeois and imperial culture. Thus, more than mere competence, the most important criterion for admission to "Mihai Eminescu" School was a *healthy* social origin, understood as provenance from among the proletariat, the sole social class considered eligible to disseminate the socialist doctrine. However, cynical nuances about the operating school admission criteria are not left out either. So, the concealment of personal dossiers was a common practice, and biographies were routinely forged to ensure the successful admission – Marin Ioniță's accounts on this matter are exemplary: "But it happened that both of us, my colleague Lucia and I, had some unusual biographies. On our teacher's advice, we omitted the most inconvenient parts. Thus, Lucia's father was only a pensioner, her mother was a housewife, without wealth and no other income, so she forgot about the estate, her governess, the piano teacher, the servants and so on" (p. 36). With the same cynical nuance, Marin Ioniță points out the eclectic properties regarding the social and educational profile of the school members: "I woke up in a very motley world, from students like me to graduates from several faculties, or a writer with three bachelor degrees from Cluj, the author of an exemplary novel for the new direction that was imposed on Romanian literature; many other students, but also many party activists, trade unionists, members of women's organizations, officers, foremen, workers, journalists, in short, all social and professional categories, save for priests and theologians" (p. 18).

The political apparatus had strongly embedded itself in all activities of the institution, and the level control over students' life reached a peak: "if the rosters drawn up at the School of Literature

had been kept, they would have made an archive of many cubic meters [...]. Also by roster we went to the bathroom for a week, by roster we washed our clothes, by roster we bought blades and shaving foam, toothpaste, soda, socks. Lists of people asking to go to the polyclinic or the dentist, lists of recommended books for additional reading or as obligatory bibliography” (p. 92). However, Bacchic escapades are not left out either, as in the words of the author, the love affairs between students and other intimate events are what truly constitutes the gravitational centre of the book, along with some characterizations and explanations of personal aspects of colleagues’ life, such as for example the description of Gheorghe Tomozei’s unhappy romantic pursuits as well as his repulsive personality, the personal life ended in failure of Florin Mugur, one of the great and dedicated men of letters of the period, or the anomic behaviour of Nicolae Labiș, the most eccentric personality from “Mihai Eminescu” School, and so on.

Among the many names that the book evokes, by far the most frequently mentioned and having the most pages dedicated to is that of Nicolae Labiș, who died in a tragic accident only 21 years old. His privileged status in the book is due not so much to the sympathy and close relationship he had with the author (while they were room-mates at the boarding school), but especially because Labiș was one of the best and most charismatic poets of their generation of “young wolves” (p. 82) and, similarly, one of the school’s most appreciated and admired students. So, at the beginning, his literary performance allowed Nicolae Labiș to succeed in obtaining both the respect of political commissars in charge of the school, and to frequent the company of systematically unseemly authors, such as the banned author Tudor Arghezi. Moreover, through his well-established position in the literary field, Labiș honours the inertia of his congeners: he reveals to them the lectures of the effervescent professor G. Călinescu and puts them in contact with the literary life running parallel to the ideologization at “Mihai Eminescu” School of Literature, also by informing them of the literary models destined for clandestine emulation.

However, the school’s incongruent features also announced its imminent end, as after only five years since setup, “Mihai Eminescu” School of Literature and Literary Criticism on 10 Kiseleff Road closed its doors, proving to have been a rather unsuccessful project on the political agenda, as the author himself mentions: “its great failure of forming cadres was the bankruptcy of the school of literature [...]. The party’s children, raised according to its principles and armed with the ideology of the working class, were meant to sing the triumphant march of the work of making a new world, but from the hatched eggs placed in this incubator different chicks came out” (p. 214). The school hadn’t succeeded to form the greatest author or the triumphant works of Communism, but it was rather an institution that satisfied the professional nomenclature of the system via its production of literary goods, as in the case of Marin Ioniță. Finally, regarding the book, it must be admitted that the most serious weakness of the work may be the lack of exhaustive historical contextualization, though it must also be said that Marin Ioniță’s volume lays no claim to being a rigorous study eligible as a working tool. Even so, it remains among the select few books dedicated to “Mihai Eminescu” School of Literature and Literature Criticism, and to the literary agents who have left the classes of this institution, even if the analysis is based on a subjective perspective and anecdotes, lacking a critical apparatus and a rigorous approach.

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ȘTEFANIA MIHALACHE, *Copilăria. Reconstituiri literare după 1989* [*Childhood. Literary Reconstructions after 1989*], Pitești, Paralela 45, 2019, 372 p.

Originally a doctoral thesis, the work of Ștefania Mihalache manages to highlight, in an integrative manner, the “strengths” of childhood literature. Its innovative character is ensured by the method it uses, a method based on a considerable number of recent studies essential in a society like the current one, so concerned about the dual relationship inclusion-differentiation, in which truth and reality are perceived as labyrinthine in the extreme. In this representation, childhood gains autonomy and becomes an essential factor in the construction of the personal universe, the writings that approach it thematically managing to overcome the minor status that had previously been imposed on them.

Therefore, the way in which the notions by which childhood and the construction of a child’s identity were defined until the 1970s, by associating the child’s actions to race, gender, social class, thereby to heredity and environment, are complemented by two new tools: a child’s voice (p. 63) and ability to act (p. 64). In order to describe a child based on these factors, the study proposes four metaphors that envisage the essence, the body, the mechanism and the context, and that combine in different proportions the heredity, the environment, the voice and the action that dictate the child’s evolution. Based on these metaphors, the author identifies two groups of childhood writings: a first category that revolves around children that are inclined to interpretation (“the action of interpreting the world”, p. 72), and children that are fully dedicated to action through direct participation (“action as participation in the world”, p. 72). These two landmarks are inevitably mixed with key elements of the childhood universe such as language, literature, music, family, society, street, neighbourhood, nature, etc.

The complexity of the study called *Copilăria. Reconstituiri literare după 1989* [*Childhood. Literary Reconstructions after 1989*] is also ensured by the assimilation of these writings to a very sinuous social and political context, which starts in 1989 and extends until the end of 2020. Childhood and the way the narrator child are related and develop around these elements, the way in which an essential part of what represents the identity of the individual is shaped at this stage of life, change their valences and acquire a special significance in the period after the fall of the communist regime, a temporal space dominated by profound individual, social and political changes which profoundly mark not only man’s relationship with himself or with his fellow men, but also that of the writer with his work and with the mechanisms and institutions that contribute to its emergence and circulation. After 1989, as presented in detail in the first part of the paper, there is a crisis of literature in Romania, against the backdrop of major political changes. The population, awakened from the shock of communism, needs a period of respite, of recovery. Therefore, at a literary level (and not only), a tendency can be noticed towards stagnation and reorientation to social problems; if there are literary debates, the discussions among writers focus mostly on issues that do not go beyond politics.

Following the subsequent stage, the rediscovery of literature and arts reveals, however, another way of producing: eager to transpose into fiction aspects of the immediate reality, eager to free themselves from the traumas of the totalitarian political regime, but also to render the truth of this period, the writers adopt a very introspective, very personal and, to the same extent, a very “angry” (p. 11) writing manner.

Recalling as a form of recovery is related, from a Freudian perspective and given current experiences, to the present rather than to the past. Its therapeutic purpose is the healing of the “restricted self” (p. 41), as Brîndușa Palade calls the concept of the self in a totalitarian society. If recollection aims at the possibility of reviving the past, actuality aims at correcting the grid through which it is viewed. The individual who lived and grew up in communism is the bearer of a type of “childish” behaviour; this is an “aged child” (p. 43). In this sense, the return to childhood is a social-therapeutic responsibility (p. 44). Given that images that illustrate the childhood stage are filtered

through a traumatized self, they are not always cohesive, but rather show a fragmentation depending on the social context and on the context of memories.

Fiction, in this context, is not only a solution to filling in the blanks, but also a solution for rediscovering the truth. In order to highlight the idea that truth is found in fiction, the author refers to the Freudian distinction between the latent and the manifest content of memory. Because key memories are hidden behind the least important, the most irrelevant ones, literature aims precisely at identifying the screened truth behind fiction. It has, in this sense, a cathartic role.

In Romanian literature, interest in the childhood theme, as mentioned by Mihalache in chapter four, has old foundations; originating at the end of the 19th century, it extends to the present day; it generally revolves around topics such as the village life and the child's access to education, running in parallel with a negligible number of representations of urban situations. With a few notable exceptions, such as the case of Max Blecher's novel, pre-1989 literature is built around the essentialist metaphor which assumes that child characters are gifted with *a priori* traits, one of which generally prevails, being dictated by the environment or the village community; this confers universality on the childhood world, overshadowing, however, the abilities of the child character and his development in relation to himself and the surrounding world. The essentialist metaphor is complemented by the mechanistic one, by the importance of the way in which the adult operates on the formative universe of the child.

The novels after 1989 are analysed by focusing on two categories of texts which envisage the way in which a child's formative actions focus on interpretation and / or participation. Broadly speaking, they approach a contextualist metaphor; most of them create images of children endowed with strong capacities to deconstruct and build their identity and reality, children who analyse in depth the world around them, whether it is about books, the writing process, language (Mircea Cărtărescu, Simona Popescu, Gheorghe Crăciun, Ștefan Baștovoi, T.O. Bobe, Ovidiu Popa), music (Ovidiu Verdeș, Radu Pavel Gheo), family relations (Ana Maria Sandu, Corina Sabău, Șerban Anghene) or politics, the totalitarian regime (Cezar Paul-Bădescu, Dragoș Voicu, Călin Ciobotari) and children who participate fully either in the surrounding society (Florina Ilis, Radu Aldulescu) or in the miraculous (Filip Florian and Matei Florian, Bogdan Popescu).

After 2010, childhood as a Romanian theme is generally aimed at remembrance. The context of these writings is, however, no longer the communist period, but that of the transition, which leaves room, of course, for equally complex realities. This period, like the totalitarian one, participates in the formation and deformation of the personality or the self, but the child character no longer has a direct role in the action, watching reality from a witness position.

Whether the literary works she considers are chosen from the pre- or post-1989 context, Ștefania Mihalache succeeds in her interdisciplinary project of mapping and offering a completely innovative view of the Romanian novel that takes up the topic of childhood.

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LAURA PAVEL, *Personaje ale teoriei, ființe ale ficțiunii* [*Characters of Theory, Beings of Fiction*], Iași, Institutul European, 2021, 338 p.

Recent comparative studies are gradually departing from close reading, while distant tools are growing in popularity at a fast pace in the domain of literary and cultural studies. In Romania, a new *querelle* is emerging, since the past decade, between the "traditional" criticism's representative figures and the scholars of the new digital and quantitative approaches. This is the general

background in which professor and researcher Laura Pavel publishes her latest volume that has a unique perspective that aims to alleviate these heated debates. The author is trying to make sense of these new orientations, both (very) close and (very) distant, and latest debates in the literary and intermedial fields of studies by carefully examining gains and losses of the numerous methodologies and approaches to literary and artistic objects and productions, while maintaining a balanced stance on each of them. Her analyses start from a democratic position – an attempt to investigate her chosen topics from a clean, unprejudiced standpoint.

In the very introduction to her volume, the author makes clear the fact that her book is a marriage of theoretical thinking and subjective style as the “collection of essays” (as the author herself calls it) proposes a complex network of *metacritic* and *infracritic* inquiries that target literary and visual works such as novels, paintings, or digital installations. Investigating the ekphrastic phenomenon is one of Laura Pavel’s main goals in the more consistent chapters of this book. The author is rather interested in what a literary or artistic object *can tell us* and how literary and visual culture interact with one another than in the rigorous ways of dissecting these cultural artefacts. By doing so, Laura Pavel proposes a one of a kind research approach that represents a much-needed alternative to the dominant paradigms of interpreting authors and their works. The present volume aims to let “the voice of the texts” be heard. The close reading here is not your usual analytical “intrusive” investigation, but a fine and gentle analysis that strives to merely observe the meanings that let themselves be observed.

As the title announces, the volume revolves around a number of important figures both for the fields of studies that the author targets and for her personal academic interests, as Laura Pavel notes in the introductory segments of her book. Her aim is to work in the zone of post-theory, of *new aestheticism*, an ongoing debate that tries to depart from critical theory and go back to the aesthetic roots of literary and artistic theory, where ideological, ethical, or ecological aspects to be found in the works of art or literature are secondary interests.

The first chapter of the book is dedicated to Bruno Latour, an “oscillatory, explorative presence, like a fragile appearance with an equally responsible look” (p. 30). The author is examining as much as she is using this “character” – not only is she retracing Latour’s contributions with a thorough exploration of some of his texts, but she extrapolates Latour’s vision and tries to employ it in the context of the new “ontological turn” she is interested in placing her further investigations.

The second chapter is dedicated to Marielle Macé, whose working concept of “stylistics of existence” in the field of social sciences Laura Pavel is transplanting into the field of literary and cultural criticism. Pavel calls this repurposed method “a supple mechanism of interpretation” (p. 54) and further engages in analysing Romanian author Mateiu Caragiale’s works (memoirs and fiction alike).

One of the chapters that stands out the most is the third one, dedicated to the literary bohemia of the 1960s and 1970s in Communist Romania. Making use of French literary sociologists’ propositions such as Jérôme Meizoz’s observations on literary posture, Laura Pavel treats the bohemia as “the private life of fiction” (p. 77), as a “co-fictionalization phenomenon” (p. 77), meaning that the works of the writers she targets gain as much from the social lives of their authors as the authors themselves, as individuals and as public figures. Even if she tries to avoid the ideological implication of the literary production she follows, the author observes how the bohemian life was a form of escapism for these writers (such as Nicolae Breban or Dumitru Țepeneag, quite remarkable figures for the Romanian literary culture).

Equally important, the next and forth chapter of the present book continues exploiting Meizoz’s notions and observations. The author is interested in a “privileged social posture” (p. 100) of a number of canonical Romanian writers who dealt with the communist censorship. Her investigation is as elastic as it is careful not to delve too deep into the ideological implication of the conversation she initiates. Her main thesis revolves around the idea that the posture of a (canonical) author is, undoubtedly, in a dependent relation with the success and position on the literary market of his or her books (novels, especially). Furthermore, Laura Pavel investigates the notions of *roman total* and the *fascination for totality* of their authors, one that surpasses fiction and becomes life: “Surrendered to his

own god like power fantasy in the matters of fiction, *l'écrivain total* aims to author a literature that is no longer subordinated to, but parallel with the ideological discourse of political power [...] the socialist “total novelist” cultivates a sort of compensatory bovarism” (p. 110). The “total novel”, therefore, creates a “total novelist”. Among these novelists, Laura Pavel is especially interested in Marin Preda, Nicolae Breban, and Constantin Ţoiu.

The second part of the book is dedicated to intermedial objects. Building on post-humanist and post-theoretical vocabulary and working concepts and integrating a new aestheticism perspective in her analyses, the author interprets visual objects like paintings and digital installations. These chapters are not at all in a discordant note with the first part of the volume; on the contrary, they serve the author's main thesis concerning the intricate relationship between different artistic environments.

The present volume is a much-needed contribution in a growingly polemic field of national literary studies. Laura Pavel tries to bring together multiple figures, methods, and parts of any artistic discourse or object. By choosing a theoretical framework while still acknowledging the benefits of the others, the author creates a platform that brings together different perspectives, as a reminder that all our efforts, regardless of their particular nature, are pieces of the same puzzle.

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MIRUNA RUNCAN, *Teatru în diorame. Discursul criticii teatrale în comunism. II. Amăgitoare primăvară 1965–1977* [*Théâtre en dioramas. Le discours de la critique dramatique pendant le communisme. II. Le printemps illusoire 1965–1977*], Bucureşti, Tracus Arte, 2020, 578 p.

Après un premier volume qui dresse une image compréhensive de la rupture idéologique dans la vie théâtrale roumaine d'après l'instauration du communisme (*Le dégel fluctuant 1956–1964*, Tracus Arte, 2019), Miruna Runcan, enseignante à la Faculté de Théâtre et Film de l'Université Babeş-Bolyai de Cluj-Napoca, continue son effort de rendre visible le trajet historique d'une réalité discursive à part : la critique dramatique, dont le fonctionnement s'articule entre l'attention professionnelle à la production artistique et le service public d'informer le spectateur. À cette difficile articulation vient s'ajouter, pour l'intervalle chronologique choisi dans le volume de 2020, le biais de la contrainte idéologique – fluctuante elle aussi, mais inscrite dans des paramètres complètement différents du petit dégel d'avant 1965, et cela puisque l'on est devant une libération idéologique à deux temps : dans ses premières années, cette désidéologisation vient remplir le champ théâtral d'un désir presque frénétique de renouvellement – des formes du spectacle, du discours, de la production dramatique – qui se retranchera, après la fracture des Thèses de juillet 1971, dans un effort de conserver ses conquêtes de pratique, menacées par le retour du contrôle du Parti.

Ce mouvement en deux temps, avec toutes ses inconsistances, se retrouve, à quelques différences près, dans d'autres champs artistiques de la Roumanie communiste : on l'a vu, par exemple, dans (le peu d') histoires institutionnelles dédiées aux associations professionnelles des artistes roumains (l'étude monographique de Octavian Lazăr Cosma sur l'Union des Compositeurs et des Musicologues, 1995, et celle de Valentina Sandu-Dediu sur la musique roumaine d'entre 1944 et 2000, paru en 2005 ; l'étude de Lucia Dragomir sur l'Union des Écrivains, 2007 ; le projet de recherche sur la filiale de Bucarest de l'Union des Artistes Visuels d'entre 1950 et 2000, dirigé par Caterina Preda, 2015–2017). Afin de rendre manifeste ce même trajet de fracturation et de

négociations prolongées et irrésolues, Miruna Runcan choisit une lecture assez différente par rapport à l'histoire institutionnelle : à travers la continuation de la radiographie thématique du mensuel *Teatrul* [*Le Théâtre*] – publication (fondée en 1956) dédiée aux phénomènes de la vie théâtrale contemporaine, roumaine et universelle –, l'auteure rend visible une reconstitution des réalités du champ théâtral pendant cette douzaine d'années très mouvementées. De ce que l'on peut voir dans cette reconstitution minutieuse, c'est une période riche en repositionnements esthétiques, en débats sur la pratique de la mise en scène et sur le rôle actif de la critique dramatique, en présentations de nouvelles formules théâtrales étrangères, surtout occidentales.

Mais l'image de ce paysage de « normalité » culturelle, conséquente aux changements idéologiques d'après 1965, resterait partielle et biaisée elle-même si l'on ne prend pas en compte la présence, variable mais continue, de la contrainte politique. Tout au long de son ouvrage, Miruna Runcan articule les manifestations spécifiques de l'autonomie relative du champ théâtral – formes concentrées dans le projet artistique de l'esthétisme socialiste (selon la formule de Mircea Martin), projet consensuel au niveau du discours critique – aux mécanismes de contrôle exercé sur la production culturelle par les instances idéologiques. Loin de transformer ses « dioramas » en petites scènes mécaniques construites sur le principe simpliste d'action (politique) et réaction (culturelle), l'auteure fait un découpage nuancé de cette articulation, en choisissant attentivement ses regroupements et variant ses teintes selon les degrés de reconfiguration du contrôle politique dans les décades, structurellement différenciées, de la période prise en compte. L'intervalle 1965–1971 (prolongé, dans certains segments du champ théâtral, jusqu'en 1974) est naturellement plus ouvert et bénéfique, à travers cette ouverture, au processus de synchronisation et d'esthétisation ; tandis que la dure reprise de l'idéologisation après les Thèses de juillet 1971 produit un virage de plus en plus accru vers les formes du spectacle de propagande, en privilégiant les modèles d'épopée nationale et les productions de théâtre amateur. Dans l'étude de Miruna Runcan, ces vérités factuelles (et qui ne sont que des variations spécifiques d'un trajet temporel présent également dans d'autres champs artistiques, y compris celui de la littérature) assurent la toile de fond objectivante (par un appel constant aux documents officiels de l'époque – lois et décrets, résolutions des congrès du parti communiste, collections de documents d'archive etc.), mais également explicative. Plus que le scrupule d'exactitude scientifique, c'est une volonté de rendre la démonstration compréhensible qui fait que, par exemple, le chapitre dédié à l'enseignement théâtral (pp. 197-262) soit muni d'une très attentive reconstitution historique des modifications subies par les domaines humanistes et vocationnelles de l'enseignement supérieur roumain.

Et c'est toujours la même volonté de rendre plus visibles les réfractions de l'idéologie dans le champ théâtral qui nourrit les cinq études de cas du volume (chacune introduite par le surtitre *interlude*), où la lecture de reconstitution choisit des séquences doublement et simultanément significatives – pour l'histoire réflexive du champ théâtral roumain, et également pour une histoire des rapports entre la contrainte idéologique et la production artistique. C'est le cas de l'interlude dédié au « Scandale du *Revizor* » (p. 130-158), spectacle légendaire de L. Pintilie, resté dans la mémoire collective avec l'imbattable auréole d'avoir été interdit après seulement trois représentations, en septembre 1972. En conjuguant des sources de presse, des documents d'archive politique et des témoignages d'après 1990, Miruna Runcan met de l'ordre dans cette tourmente (où Ceaușescu lui-même a son mot à dire) et récupère parmi les multiples contrecoups du « scandale » la germination d'une mesure dont les terribles effets seront ressentis tout au long de la dernière décennie communiste : celle de l'autofinancement des institutions culturelles. C'est ici, dans cette attention à la mise en contexte et aux modèles explicatifs pluriels que l'enjeu fondamental de ce volume semble se préciser : il y a toujours cet « autre versant » de la contrainte, insidieux ou bel et bien envahissant, qui doit être mis en compte, sans le transformer tout de même en justification passe-partout, et qui rend plus compréhensive une période où coexistent la négociation réciproquement arrangeante, d'une part, et l'effort de garder la production artistique à l'abri de la montée des pressions idéologiques, de l'autre. Pour Miruna Runcan, cette coexistence constitue l'axe de son modèle de restitution compréhensive : « après 1964, un pacte s'institue entre les artistes, les critiques et leur public spécialisé : éviter, dans la mesure du possible, les discours de propagande, en faveur des structures

esthétiques plus marquantes, de type moderniste, à l'intérieur desquelles on peut glisser de temps en temps des traces d'une critique envers le système, traces qui seront perçues par les deux camps comme autant de signes de dissidence » (p. 29). Dans cet effort de perpétuelle (et, tout au long des décennies, épuisante) esquivance, l'étude inclut également le rôle d'une catégorie d'agents dont l'historiographie (même récente) dédiée aux phénomènes artistiques se méfie encore – et dont l'auteure reconstruit pertinemment les nuances : celle des responsables culturels, cadres du parti aux niveaux intermédiaires de décision, « accommodés à la vie culturelle réelle et à ses valeurs [...] qui fonctionnent comme filet de sauvetage » (p. 158). À leurs côtés, se mobilisant dans presque les mêmes circonstances de nécessité, le groupe de critiques qui ont traversé – dans des positions dominantes – « les années du jdanovisme pur et dur, comme [Valentin] Silvestru ou [Andrei] Strihan [...] parfaitement adaptés à l'ouverture d'entre 1962 et 1971 et qui se réjouissent, à la fois, des privilèges d'antan, mais également des avantages d'une atmosphère culturelle beaucoup plus respirable, devenus maintenant [...] défenseurs de la direction esthétique de l'œuvre théâtrale » (p. 307).

La dernière partie du volume, *Analyse rhétorique et archéologie critique*, déplace l'accent de la reconstitution socio-historique vers la mise en lumière d'un modèle pluristratifié (en six dimensions, v. p. 513) de l'écriture critique ; à travers une analyse limpide et gratifiante, qui porte sur quelques chroniques publiées au début des années 70, Miruna Runcan y réussit l'exercice d'un *master class* complet sur le sujet « comment bien écrire une chronique de spectacle ». La griffe du vrai prof se fait visible partout, du choix des morceaux à analyser jusqu'au diagnostic ferme et tranchant dans l'admiration comme dans le rejet (le dernier interlude du volume porte d'ailleurs le titre *Une chronique exemplaire* – celle de Ileana Popovici pour *Elisabeth I* de Paul Foster, mise en scène par L. Ciulei en 1974, au théâtre Bulandra). Dans une logique didactique sans faille, l'analyse s'achève par le retour vers le présent de l'enseignement : « les critiques de théâtre, combien ils en restent, devraient donc prendre garde : au fil du temps, le tissu mou de leurs jugements de valeur tend à se momifier, tandis que le squelette solide des descriptions pleines de détails reste une source toujours renouvelable » (p. 564).

La séquence finale n'est pas du tout la seule apparition de la puissante voix de l'auteure – l'intégralité du volume est traversée par ses insertions réflexives, sous la forme de plusieurs témoignages directs (en tant que spectatrice – p. 547, ou secrétaire littéraire de théâtre – p. 99) ou, très souvent, sur la tonalité amère d'une chercheuse passionnée qui constate la pérennité des difficultés et des failles dans son domaine. Parmi maints exemples : l'absence d'une tradition de recherche collective (« après 1975 [l'apparition du volume *Le théâtre roumain contemporain*] les traités collectifs sombrent dans le néant. Un néant qui perdure encore aujourd'hui », p. 231) ou d'un intérêt pour les études sociologiques des publics – le chapitre sur les contributions de Pavel Câmpeanu, seul intéressé à l'époque par ce sujet, porte justement le titre *Sociologie et théâtre, un début trop raccourci* (pp. 451-506). L'amertume semble se changer parfois en révolte sèche : le commentaire sur la réponse de V. Mândra à une enquête de *Contemporanul* (*Sur la nécessité de l'activité de recherche*, 1968, où le professeur de littérature dresse l'inventaire de tous ses rêves scientifiques – études monographiques, travaux théoriques des metteurs en scène, anthologies de la critique dramatique roumaine du XX^e etc., etc.) s'achève net : « Logiques et alertes, ses propositions nous donnent à penser même aujourd'hui. Mais elles nous gênent, également » (p. 423). Ce serait peut-être abusé, mais on ne s'empêche de saisir un certain rapport entre cette tonalité d'amertume et d'embarras et l'initiative de ce projet de recherche invraisemblablement large, tout à fait individuelle, sans précédent et sans peur, de Miruna Runcan.

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IULIAN BOCAI, *Filologii (Instituționalizarea studiului literar în Europa)* [*Philologies (L'institutionnalisation des études littéraires en Europe)*], București, Tracus Arte, 2020, 379 p.

Ces dernières années, dans le champ des études littéraires en Roumanie, où la tendance est d'adopter les méthodes les plus récentes et de les appliquer à des sujets contemporains, l'étude réalisée par Iulian Bocai est individualisée par le thème choisi : à partir de l'histoire des grandes universités européennes, il essaie de reconstruire la manière dont la philologie et les études littéraires ont été *institutionnalisées* au fil du temps. Le volume se concentre sur la période 1780–1900 (même si, en explorant les origines du phénomène, il traite également des siècles précédents) et suit la manière dont l'étude littéraire est *définie* et *légitimée* dans les grandes universités de France, d'Angleterre, d'Allemagne et de Roumanie. Ainsi, à travers une approche comparatiste, l'auteur tente de voir comment les changements de paradigme au niveau *global, central*, en ce qui concerne le statut de la philologie, se reflètent dans l'espace *local* et s'adaptent aux besoins et réalités contextuelles.

Pour Bocai, « la philologie moderne est un ensemble de pratiques qui préserve le passé et instruit le présent » (p. 10) et, par conséquent, son étude cherche à refaire une histoire intellectuelle afin de découvrir comment ces pratiques sont apparues, comment elles définissent « la validité pour l'étude littéraire » du « jugement scientifique », quand et de quelle manière les études littéraires entrent en tant que discipline dans les universités. Tentant de répondre à ces questions, l'auteur porte son attention sur les programmes universitaires, analyse les pratiques universitaires, l'évolution démographique des étudiants pour les périodes visées, les effets et les échos de certains changements de centres d'influence, mais aussi les politiques sous-jacentes à certains changements institutionnels.

Comme l'auteur le constate, une histoire des universités est aussi une histoire des relations entre *l'université* et *l'État*. C'est pourquoi il n'est pas rare que les universités occidentales soient un espace instrumenté politiquement et économiquement, même si elles se veulent des centres d'activités intellectuelles. Le volume interroge précisément ce que signifie cette activité intellectuelle : à l'époque prémoderne, le rôle de l'université était plutôt de *préserver* certaines connaissances que de *produire* réellement des connaissances, c'est-à-dire de représenter un centre de *recherche* et *d'innovation*. C'est le rôle de conservation qui explique la résistance des universités à l'idée du nouveau. Jusqu'au début du XIX^e siècle, en Angleterre, en France et en Allemagne, « littérature » signifiait littérature classique et il n'y avait pas de distinction claire entre les différentes disciplines du champ littéraire. Le siècle des Lumières apporte quelques réformes, l'État s'implique plus activement dans l'organisation de l'enseignement, les facultés de théologie commencent à perdre du pouvoir, car l'Église n'est pas un agent social si influent dans ce domaine. Néanmoins, les universités restent bloquées dans une inertie curriculaire classique. D'une part, le grand défi est la distinction disciplinaire entre *sciences* et *humanités*. D'autre part, cette séparation est difficile à réaliser car en Europe domine encore l'idéal d'un enseignement complet et universel qui donne à l'étudiant une appréhension totale du monde.

A la fin du XVIII^e siècle et surtout au XIX^e siècle, il y a eu de véritables changements dans l'étude de la littérature. Tout d'abord, le romantisme présente un intérêt tout particulier pour le contexte national et l'histoire. Ainsi, si jusqu'en 1800 la philologie était étroitement liée à la linguistique, il y a maintenant un intérêt marqué pour l'histoire. Bien que le concept de littérature soit encore très laxiste, faisant référence à tous les produits culturels écrits qui ont eu une certaine influence (même dans un domaine comme la science), il approfondit certaines questions théoriques et pédagogiques. De plus, il existe « un vocabulaire littéraire complet que les nouvelles disciplines utiliseront pleinement, mais avec certains termes – 'comme histoire', 'critique', 'littérature' – qui subiront des changements de sens et de méthode » (p. 135) et un intérêt pour les littératures nationales.

Revenant à l'espace roumain, Iulian Bocai constate que les dynamiques sont complètement différentes : tout d'abord, l'instabilité politique et sociale dans les deux principautés roumaines rend la vie culturelle tout aussi instable. Deuxièmement, l'auteur s'oppose à l'idée qu'il y aurait eu un humanisme, au vrai sens du terme, bien que les langues anciennes soient connues et les classiques lus, sans qu'une communauté intellectuelle se réunisse dans les académies. Cependant, un certain lien avec l'Occident est maintenu, ce qui rend possibles quelques influences. Il existe peu d'informations sur les écoles roumaines des XVI^e et XVII^e siècles. On connaît l'activité de « l'académie » de Kiev, fondée par le Roumain Petru Movilă et qui était un collège de cinq ans, organisé sur un modèle humaniste. Un autre « centre » important est l'Académie royale *Sfântul Sava*, qui, comme d'autres écoles, est l'espace où une forme d'enseignement secondaire est pratiquée, bien qu'elles soient appelées « académies ». Les choses commencent à changer une fois avec l'influence des phanariotes : un cycle d'études plus complexe apparaît après 1700, et la langue d'enseignement devient le grec ancien. En Transylvanie, les choses évoluent différemment du fait de Școala Ardeleană [L'École de Transylvanie], le plus important mouvement d'émancipation socio-politique du XVIII^e siècle, construit sur le modèle des Lumières. Les représentants de ce mouvement invoquent l'importance de l'histoire, afin de légitimer l'origine latine des Roumains et l'existence d'une culture roumaine. Ainsi, dans l'espace roumain, il n'y aura pas d'admiration « programmatique » pour les anciens, comme en Occident. L'invocation de l'Antiquité est instrumentalisée par l'école de Transylvanie à d'autres fins, beaucoup plus politiques et sociales. Les représentants de cette école font des efforts considérables pour légitimer l'idée et faire prendre conscience que les Roumains sont les successeurs de l'Empire Romain. En ce sens, ils écrivent des grammaires et des dictionnaires pour normer la langue roumaine et ils essaient d'expliquer l'histoire des Roumains en montrant les connexions avec d'autres espaces culturels. Cette communauté intellectuelle bien formée et éduquée en Occident s'est engagée à *vulgariser* ces idées culturelles politiques : leur mérite est considérable dans le développement des écoles.

Dans les grands centres universitaires occidentaux, la littérature commence à s'identifier à la *fiction* au XIX^e siècle. Il y a des changements majeurs dans l'étude de la littérature, mais une autre mutation se produit au niveau pédagogique : le savoir commence à être largement instrumentalisé par l'État et commence à être pensé comme le « résultat d'un processus de production » (p. 202). Une conséquence négative de la professionnalisation des disciplines que Iulian Bocai observe est la distance qui se crée entre le « chercheur universitaire » et le « chercheur public ». Les études littéraires universitaires semblent rester dans une sorte d'isolement, ce qui conduira, au XX^e siècle, à une crise. Après l'analyse de l'évolution de la discipline dans les grands centres universitaires, l'auteur revient sur le contexte roumain, où le XIX^e siècle apporte aussi « l'obsession » de l'éducation. Le contexte des changements est différent, car, en l'absence d'une tradition universitaire très longue, la modernisation se produit, comme Iulian Bocai l'affirme, extrêmement rapidement. Cependant, les difficultés économiques, sociales et politiques conduisent à l'impossibilité de créer immédiatement une communauté intellectuelle capable de produire une culture philologique ou scientifique. Bien qu'il y ait de l'optimisme et de l'idéalisme des « débuts », en réalité, les premières universités roumaines, à Iassy et à Bucarest, fondées en 1860 et respectivement en 1864, manquent d'étudiants et de professeurs spécialisés. Un rôle symptomatique est joué par *Junimea*, un mouvement culturel et littéraire qui s'est également formé à la même période, dirigé par Titu Maiorescu et d'autres jeunes intellectuels Roumains formés à l'étranger. Cependant, bien que les junimistes fassent des efforts considérables, ils restent plutôt « des critiques publics et des célébrités politiques » (p. 264). Le véritable corps académique est formé à peine avec la prochaine génération de professionnels. Comparant l'évolution de l'université roumaine à l'université occidentale, Iulian Bocai observe trois types de « conflits épistémiques » : les nouvelles disciplines ne doivent pas gagner leur autonomie face à la théologie, car dans l'espace roumain l'Église ne joue pas un rôle fondamental dans la formation des universités; il n'y a pas de conflit entre « l'ancienne philologie » et la « nouvelle philologie », l'idéal de la connaissance universelle, encyclopédique, si promue dans l'espace allemand, n'est pas aussi prononcé dans l'espace roumain ; les études littéraires ne mènent pas une lutte aussi forte pour la spécialisation et la légitimité face à la science.

Par conséquent, l'étude de Iulian Bocai tente de restituer le chemin insidieux des études littéraires à travers l'histoire culturelle de l'Europe, jusqu'à présent. Son travail n'est pas seulement une histoire de la discipline ou de l'institutionnalisation de cette discipline : c'est en même temps une revue de l'histoire des idées et des mentalités, symptomatique de l'évolution culturelle de l'Europe. Il prouve que, s'il existe des lacunes considérables, l'évolution des disciplines littéraires roumaines suit la même évolution qu'en Occident. Son étude reste aussi une histoire d'influences et d'interconnexions entre les espaces académiques et les centres culturels.

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ANA SĂNDULESCU, ed., *Prietenii și Literatura. Club 8, OuTopos și invitații lor* [*Friends and Literature. Club 8, OuTopos and Their Guests*], București, Casa de pariuri literare, 2019, 320 p.

The volume coordinated by Ana Săndulescu is part biography, part interview book, part history of literature. Tracking the path of literary groups of the 1990s in Iași, Club 8 and OuTopos, Ana Săndulescu gets to cartography the history of a generation that left an important imprint on contemporary Romanian literature. *Prietenii și Literatura. Club 8, OuTopos și invitații lor* [*Friends and Literature. Club 8, OuTopos and Their Guests*] does not propose a strictly academic approach, even if the questions are meticulously composed and the documentation is seriously carried out. As the title says, this book proposes a bridge between people and literature, between people of the same generation, and between old generations and new ones.

The connections between Ana Săndulescu and the two literary groups from Iași are due to the curiosity of a young mind, but also lie in Ana Săndulescu's literary beginnings (the literary group *Junimea*, coordinated by Mirel Cană, and Literary Salon *Zero+*, coordinated by the poet Paul Gorban). The first steps towards this project were taken in 2017, during Ana's FILIT residence (a few interviews with representative writers of that generation). On October 15, 2018, the first interview was published in the online publication *Prăvălia Culturală*. Starting from there, the project committed itself to more content and curious views than previewed and the project took shape resulting in the book published in 2019.

Prietenii și Literatura. Club 8, OuTopos și invitații lor is an album of 24 voices (or, let's say, 25 because Ana Săndulescu's voice is an important part of the dialogue). One could say "mirrors" and not an "album" but keeping in mind that the majority were recorded (and there are also two photo sections: *Galerie foto Club 8* and *Galerie foto OuTopos*), the word "album" seems to be the perfect one to describe how this literary community of the early 2000s was founded, the path it follows and its collapse, alongside the lives of the people involved. There is no dirty laundry washed in public, there are no recollections of rivalries, but there is nostalgia, there is still the spirit that brought all those people together, the dream of a better system, of better Romanian literature and a better place for it. There is no hierarchy revolving around these two groups, nor is one seen as more important than the other. The message remains the importance of living literary groups, of hearing and being heard (in order to promote valuable Romanian literature, and to have someone guide young and not so young writers into writing their best texts).

Constantin Acoșmei, Radu Andriescu, Michael Astner, Gabriel H. Decuble, Dan Lungu, Liviu Mățăoanu, Antonio Patraș, Dan Sociu, Cerasela Stoșescu-Nistor, Ada Tanașă, Chris Tănăsescu, Otilia Vieru-Baraboi (Club 8) and Șerban Axinte, Savatie Baștovoii, Bogdan Crețu, Cătălin Crețu, Livia

Iacob, Florin Lăzărescu, Lucian Parfene, Florin Dan Prodan, Adrian G. Romila, Lucian Dan Teodorovici, Codrin Dinu Vasile, Briscan Zara (OuTopos) are the ones that answered Ana Săndulescu's call for this project. At a time of struggle for Romanian literature, they were the ones who fought to give it meaning and true value. Their battle was not against the system. Instead, they were hungry for more and better literature, so they did it themselves (inside literary circles, magazines, publishing houses, books). In a place/ a society where they did not belong, they built their spot. This could be seen as the former communist dissidents' strength transferred into the exuberance of a new beginning.

After more than 20 years, Ana Săndulescu puts together pieces of memories that in the end form a whole picture. Ana Săndulescu aims for a true spirit of that time by trying – alongside the people involved in the making of the book – to reveal the stories as they happened. By preserving the structure of a memoir, the book showcases the writers that founded the two groups, but also guests – writers discovered and promoted by the members of the groups –, photos and pieces of literary texts, internal struggles, but also social and economic ones, unexpected friendships.

The book has two parts: *Club 8* and *OuTopos*, which are also the names of the literary groups. Both parts record names (of founders, friends, guests, of *the ones that stayed and the ones that left*), biography boxes, stories (happy ones or less happy than we thought), events (personal, social, literary), common stories and friends or fewer common traits, poems, notes or pieces of journals from back in the day. The structure is the same for both parts (the presentation of the writer, the majority of the questions, poems or fragments of journal or prose). The two groups tend to be opposed: Club 8 (1996–2005) an elitist, pragmatic, closed club, of higher purposes, whose members were well-known in the Romanian literary field; and OuTopos (1995–2000) an open club, less pragmatic, whose majority of members were mostly unknown, students, young enthusiasts animated by revolutionary spirit. However, their desire for better Romanian literature trumped the differences, resulting in a strong ground for future generations. Their goal was accomplished: important books, articles, magazines, public readings and anthologies were published and publicised at the time. They managed to promote valuable writers and establish a quality stage for literature.

All in all, they seem to consider themselves lucky to be able to encounter such friends and to start movements that can still influence young minds today. A common feeling is that the young generation can write its history at any time, given the massive digital opportunities today. Why is it still interesting to learn about these groups? Because of their young enthusiastic spirit, their need for something else, their reversal of the system, their taste for an accomplished dream, their more or less nomadic life, their rebellion, their courage to change what is not right – the same spirit in every generation, never getting old, lying there until it's time to re-emerge.

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EMANUEL MODOC, *Internaționala Periferiilor. Rețeaua avangardelor din Europa Centrală și de Est [The International of Peripheries. Avant-Garde Networks of East-Central Europe]*, București, Muzeul Literaturii Române, 2020, 277 p.

This study is based on Emanuel Modoc's PhD thesis and it starts from the premise that any literary phenomenon from the first two decades of the 20th century (which also corresponded with modernism and its propagation throughout Europe) is conditioned by an internal network of transfer

and on a bilateral transformation, which ultimately determines and helps develop the particularities in a given literary system. The author wants to make way for a new perspective on the already established relations between two or more national literatures and to accentuate that in the case of the avant-garde in the Central and Eastern Europe, the traditional scope center-periphery/East-West can be broadened.

What follows is a sort of ripple effect, which is centered around the most recent World Literature studies. "World Literature" is a term broadly used to designate a global conceptualization of canonical literature in relation to the world's different spectrum of literary and cultural traditions. World literature does not encapsulate the conglomeration of all the literary works in the world, but rather only the very best works from the world's different literatures, especially those which have not been thoroughly studied beyond their native scope. It incorporates not only the "major" literature belonging to Western Europe, but also the "minor" ones which have been overlooked, or superficially studied, as they pertain to Europe and North America.

The idea of *Weltliteratur* came as a result from adjoining the Enlightenment cosmopolitanism with Romantic cultural nationalism and, since around the 1800s, it has established a growing system of transnational circulation of texts, beyond their linguistic barrier. Romania, on the other hand, is still considered to be a "peripheral" culture, along with several others which are explored by the author. Modoc generally follows a transnational perspective and, in particular, the model framed by the network.

Historically, what triggered the formation of new geopolitical establishments was the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and thus, the dominant newly-formed nations (fashioned through the conceptualized phenomenon known as *nation building*) came across and recognized other nations and their literary potential, which was fueled by the existent multicultural and multiethnic intrinsic aspect assimilated in the process of forming these nations. The entire continent was caught between an artistic crossfire as some wanted to cling onto the traditional literature which was meant to consolidate the national identity, while others wanted to overrule those artistic movements which were solidified by tradition. However, the avant-garde movement across Central and Eastern Europe managed to find a space in-between, a third path: "a cosmopolitan identity in conduct, and respectively constructive, edifying and finally, affirmative, in *praxis*".

The study is comprised of two parts: the first part centers on the three directing concepts of this study: space, community and network. When tackling space, the author focuses more on the validity of a choice when it comes to the geo-cultural segmentations of some parts as opposed to others. On the other hand, community refers to the coarse nucleus of the avant-garde formations and the way in which they were structured, as well as their principles and the justifications for their unification. Last, but not least, the mobility of these communities, which can be easily tracked through the main mechanism that governs their progression, comprises the network. The second part puts to the test the theories selected for investigation and a chapter in this part is dedicated to Edward Said's theory regarding his "travelling concepts" in order to pursue the dissemination of the West-European avant-garde art movements from the periphery and the effects that they would cause on the local avant-garde particularities. The final part of the inquiry focuses on a short metacritical panoramic view through which the evolution of the avant-garde is perceived in the Romanian critical and historiographic discourse.

This review will shortly focus on the first two chapters as those are the ones that best present the endeavor at hand. The first chapter, entitled "Space, community, network", is subdivided into smaller parts, addressing mainly the three categories listed in the title of this chapter. When it comes to space, Modoc proposes the superiority of space over time, as it is "a prime organizing factor in the analytical frame", but this supposition comes with consequences. One such consequence would be that "a transnational history treats the cultural/literary event according to certain inherent geopolitical criteria of a region" as it focuses more on the common aspects of two or more literatures, but most of all on the regional intersection over hegemonic influences. The author approaches the literary transnational history project edited by Marcel-Cornis Pope and John Neubauer for it proposes a useful geo-literary

segmentation and Modoc wants to suggest a few solutions regarding the project's methodological shortages.

The following part of this chapter deals with communities and Modoc introduces two new concepts: Benedict Anderson's *imagined communities* and Dionýz Ďurišin's *interliterary communities*. The former was firstly used as a "conceptual model for discussing nations in general and nationalism in particular", it was then employed when discussing generally *intraliterary* communities. The latter was used by Ďurišin as a "networking model between two cultures" and the basic principles with which he operated were geographical proximity, affinities, historical events and cultural or political experiences that are shared between two or more cultures. The two aforementioned concepts provide basic models for identity in order to study the multiple literary phenomena which have evolved in a "distinct relation of co-evolution". The network, to which another part of the chapter was dedicated, represents the "general mechanism through which the Central and East European avant-garde has developed its entire interface of transnational negotiation from a (double) peripheral position and within a counter-public sphere". This has led to a "system theory", which is presented by Modoc as "the ability to visualize patterns (both diachronic and synchronic) along a corpus which can give way to new perspectives".

The second chapter, entitled "*Intranational, international and transnational*", focuses on case studies analyzed thoroughly by the author and which expose, in the initial stage of the investigation, the local-global system, "the intracultural dynamics between the Central and Eastern European avant-garde movement". Further on in this chapter, Modoc presents the four artistic movements which represent the avant-garde: futurism ("the formation of consciousness"), dadaism ("the destruction of consciousness"), constructivism ("the social law of consciousness") and surrealism ("the doctrine of consciousness").

Futurism pursued a central-peripheric type of model in the attempt to disseminate its artistic program. The *Futuristic Manifesto* was published in 1909 and this year marked the emergence of the manifesto as a self-conscious and founding literary genre as it was adopted as a textual model by all the national avant-garde movements, while dadaism opted for "a type of decentralized, non-rational and antirational internationalism, founded on a capitalist logic of the networks". Constructivism originated in Moscow in 1921 and unlike futurism, dadaism or surrealism (as all three were theorized "from the source") the journey of constructivism in Europe depended on what the European artists saw in this artistic movement; we can say that the Central European filter modulated the entire absorption of constructivism. Thus, beyond its Russian origins, constructivism is a European art movement *par excellence* so it was rapidly adopted by all the avant-garde movements. Last, but not least, the surrealist internationalism "was founded on the idea of the socialist revolution, which may explain the delayed permeation in the Central and Eastern European space".

Internaționala periferiilor proposes, as it had been briefly outlined, the identification and description of certain mechanisms which generated the existence of networks, invariably interliterary. The results obtained in this investigation were confronted with a series of theoretical models, historically organized, which started from an inductive reasoning of explained phenomena and a series of interpretative clichés; because of this a hegemonic relation propagated between a centre (or a culture source) and a periphery (or a target source). *World Literature* studies were of essential importance, as they enable this endeavorment which had the purpose of investigating the relations between the avant-garde movements of the countries belonging to Central and Eastern Europe. The multifaceted approach gives way to a comprehensive overview of this challenge and development, which proves to be important for future research and reflection.

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