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Table of Contents

| | |
|--|-----------|
| Editorial | 5 |
| Introduction for contributors to Swedish Journal of Romanian Studies | 6 |
| Literature | |
| <i>Monica Manolachi</i> | |
| To write or not to write: censorship in “The Woman in the Photo” by Tia Șerbănescu and “A Censor’s Notebook” by Liliana Corobca | 8 |
| <i>Dana Radler</i> | |
| Gaps, silences and witnesses: the quest for identity in Henriette Yvonne Stahl’s “My Brother, the Man” | 28 |
| <i>Maricica Munteanu</i> | |
| Marginalitatea opresivă: Spațiul-stereotip și spațiile de colecție în literatura scriitorilor moldoveni / Oppressive marginality: the place stereotype and the spaces of collection in the literature of Moldavian writers | 47 |
| <i>Liliana Danciu</i> | |
| „La Țigănci”, nuvela-parabolă a profetismului eliadesc / “La Țigănci” – The Parable of the Eliadesc Prophetism | 69 |
| <i>Simina Pîrvu</i> | |
| Adaptare și imitație în romanele „No Time Like the Present”, de Nadine Gordimer și „Vremea Minunilor”, de Cătălin Dorian Florescu / Adaptation and mimicry in the novels “No Time Like the Present”, by Nadine Gordimer and “Vremea minunilor”, by Cătălin Dorian Florescu | 87 |
| <i>Silviana Ruxandra Chira (Mureșan)</i> | |
| Lecturile personajelor din cărțile refugiu. Studiu de caz: „Jurnalul de la Păltiniș” / The readings of the characters in escape-books. Case study: “The Journal from Păltiniș” (Jurnalul de la Păltiniș) by Gabriel Liiceanu | 99 |

Film

Marina-Cristiana Rotaru

Building a lieu de memoire in Romanian Consciousness: From Sorin Ilieșiu's Documentary “Queen Marie-The Last Romantic, the First Modern Woman” to the Golden Room in Peleşor Castle **106**

Octav-Sorin Candel

Culorile Noului Val Românesc. Symbolism și semnificații psihologice / The Colors of the Romanian New Wave. Symbolism and psychological significance **132**

Cultural Studies

Petru-Adrian Danciu

Motivul Avestiței în demonologia populară românească / The motif of Avestiția in popular Romanian demonology **146**

Linguistics

Lucian Vasile Bâgiu, Paraschiva Bâgiu

The Indo-European Voice of “Barbarians” **169**

Book reviews

Magdalena Filary

Artur Rega: „Omul în lumea simbolurilor. Antropologia filozofică a lui Mircea Eliade” / Artur Rega: “Man in the World of Symbols. Philosophical Anthropology of Mircea Eliade” **179**

Felix Nicolau

Longitudinal and Cross-Sectional Cultural Developments **184**

Contributors **187**

Editorial

In the first volume of *Swedish Journal of Romanian Studies* we are happy to welcome ten articles and two book reviews on Romanian language, literature, culture and film, written either in English or Romanian, by academics from various established universities. *Literature* section is well represented by authors with affiliation to University of Bucharest, Bucharest University of Economic Studies, The “A. Philippide” Institute of Romanian Philology, Iași, West University of Timișoara and “1 Decembrie 1918” University of Alba Iulia. The articles explore alluring and sensitive issues such as censorship, identity, marginality, prophetism, adaptation or escape, casting innovative visions on the works of canonical Romanian writers (Mihail Sadoveanu, Ionel Teodorescu, Mircea Eliade, Gabriel Liiceanu) and on the creations of less explored artists (Tia Șerbănescu, Liliana Corobca, Henriette Yvonne Stahl, Cătălin Dorian Florescu). *Film* section benefits from the original insights of academics from Technical University of Civil Engineering, Bucharest and Alexandru Ioan Cuza University of Iași, centring mostly on contemporaneity, in interdisciplinary approaches: a documentary by Sorin Ilieșiu turns out a perfect ground for social semiotics and the Romanian New Wave is decoded through the psychological and social symbolism of colours. Thanks to “1 Decembrie 1918” University of Alba Iulia *Cultural studies* depict the realm of ethnology and sacred folk literature, dissecting the metamorphosis of a deity from a prehistoric totem, due to the masculine Dacian cults, into a demon with Semite elements, finally corrected by Christian syncretism by its transformation into a legend. The same university offers in the *Linguistics* section an interdisciplinary approach which combines historical linguistics, semantics, pragmatics, lexicology, lexicography, history and cultural studies in a suggestion for an alternate etymological approach to a few words used to depict the realm of the Dacians in a contemporary novel, a stylistic endeavour which may have actually voiced the little-known substratum idiom. Owing to University of Craiova and Lund University the *Book reviews* section approaches a Polish exegesis to the philosophical anthropology of Mircea Eliade and a presentation of a literary theory tome (comprising translation studies and semiotic tackling) by Romulus Bucur.

Swedish Journal of Romanian Studies is published in collaboration with “1 Decembrie 1918” University of Alba Iulia, Romania and welcomes contributions from scholars all over the world.

Introduction for contributors to Swedish Journal of Romanian Studies

Focus and Scope

Swedish Journal of Romanian Studies (Centre for Languages and Literature, Lund University) publishes studies about Romanian language, literature and film, as well as reviews of works within these fields. It welcomes articles that focus on case studies, as well as methodological and/or theoretical issues.

Swedish Journal of Romanian Studies is a new forum for scholars of Romanian language, literature and film that sets and requires international high quality standards. The journal accepts papers written in Romanian or English, as well as in French and Italian.

Peer Review Process

SJRS has a two stage reviewing process. In the first stage, the articles and studies submitted for publication need to pass the scrutiny of the members of the editorial committee. The studies accepted in this stage are then undergoing a double blind review procedure. The editorial committee removes all information concerning the author and invites external scholars (whose comments are paramount for the decision of accepting for publication or not) to act as anonymous reviewers of the material. Neither the identity of the author, nor that of the reviewer is disclosed. The comments and recommendations of the anonymous reviewers are transmitted to the authors.

Open Access Policy

This journal provides immediate open access to its content on the principle that making research freely available to the public supports a greater global exchange of knowledge.

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LONGITUDINAL AND CROSS-SECTIONAL CULTURAL DEVELOPMENTS⁶⁴

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Abstract. *Romulus Bucur is a renowned writer and literary critic. He is also faculty member at Transylvania University of Braşov, institution well-known for its courses of creative writing and translation studies. “Glosses” is a nimbly written theoretical book wherein many topics are analyzed. One of the most important is the work of Alexandru Muşina, editor, writer, professor, and mentor of the Group of Braşov (a fertile contingent of writers still holding sway in Romanian literature).*

The second part of the volume is dedicated to the Romanian translations from the classical and contemporary Chinese culture. Mention must be made about the semiotic approach to all literary works glossed about.

Key-words: glosses, Chinese culture, School of Braşov, semiotics, postmodernism.

Using methods specific to hermeneutics and semiotics, Romulus Bucur analyzed ideas, books, and translations. The referred milieu was the contemporary Romanian culture. The focus points were the School of Braşov and the Romanian translations from classical and contemporary Chinese authors.

When a subtle author like Romulus Bucur publishes a volume with the title *Glosses* (*Glose*, Tracus Arte Press, Bucharest, 2017), I find it perfectly normal that its introduction should be titled “Glosses at Glosses”. This book is a collection of articles, chronicles, and glossing reviews, that is, focusing on les *facultés maîtresses* which might adjoin the (self)-ironical glossarist or *expositores* (cf. Konrad Hirsau) or even to *magistri* (cf. Cassiodorus).

Following in the steps of Roland Barthes, we are told that the volume is a fabric of inter-texts, that is, a text woven from others’ texts. The impression is of an overwhelming work in progress, as Lucien Goldmann would have put it (in French). This hint is a fillip to those obsessed with hunting plagiarism, even after we crossed the poststructuralism— what to say about postmodernism? – instead of chasing the lack of ideas and hypotheses.

⁶⁴ Bucur, Romulus (2017). *Glose / Glosses*. Bucureşti: Tracus Arte.

Romulus Bucur disparages exactly the intellectual aridity of many academic writings.

The rigorous organization in chapters and subchapters (building up a sort of “kata”) is enlivened by the multiple considerations referring to semiotics or to the personal canons.

It is useful to remind that Romulus Bucur perfectly integrated into the School of Braşov, tutored by Alexandru Muşina. In a chapter titled *Amicus Plato* (which is thought-fostering), the gloss-man notices that Muşina either had not progressed from the theoretical stance postulated in *The Poetry of Everyday Life (Poetica cotidianului, 1981)*, or was obsessed with a certain thematic.

Already anti-postmodern, Muşina was in favor of *idea* in literature and, to avoid endemic seriousness, he assumed the condition (so postmodern) of a trickster. The choice is obvious especially in his correspondence, where the professor made use of “intellectual bricolage, constructions founded on free associations, on analogies, on extrapolations” (Bucur: 56). To the *liborgs* (the words-twisters, apud Muşina), he was a populist, to N. Manolescu he was a “Socrates of Braşov and a Pascal of Olăneşti” (69).

Following a neo-Marxist line of thought, the chronicler records various ideologies that are the fundament of Cultural Studies. While reviewing books by Sorin Antohi, Ciprian Şiulea, Sanda Golopenţia and many others, Bucur seems laid back and without obvious *parti pris*. Remarkably knowledgeable of Romanian cultural trends of the last thirty years, he nurtures neither illusions, nor despairs. The interest in semiotics opens him additionally to theoretical books, but also to those come from other fields. Identically, the keys of his laptop, although more sensitive to consecrated names, show no hesitance in producing reviews to the books of those less haunted by success.

A significant part of the *Glosses* is dedicated to translations into Romanian from the Chinese culture. One example is *huaben* prose, part of popular literature from which Toni Radian translated. The subtlety of the commentator’s prowess in the field becomes evident when he shows that the term “weiq” is wrongly translated as “checkers”, when it in fact targets the Go game, under the Japanese denomination, as it is described in *Meijin*, Yasumari Kawabata’s novel.

But not only literature! There are reviews of the books written by the famous sinologists Mira and Constantin Lupeanu: *Viaţa intimă la chinezi (Private Life at Chinese People)*, *Qilinul de jad (The Jade Qilin, 1992)* and *Rogojina de rugă a cărnii (The Prayer Mat of the Flesh, 1996)*. These are studies of mentality that acknowledge the high degree of appreciation for the well-educated courtesans in the ancient China.

The politology specific to this area is approached while analyzing Jean Levi’s *Funcţionarii divini. Politică, despotism şi mistică în China antică*,

(*The Divine Clerks. Politics, Despotism and Mysticism in Ancient China*, Amarcord Press, 1985). A characteristic of the Chinese governing system would be hypocrisy, that is, camouflaging the repressing force with the help of a motivational discourse. Dao principles were astutely adapted to shape a police-state wherein control was to be interiorized. Every subject became his/her militia officer. There are many other interesting observations which explain the traits specific even to the postindustrial China, even if the tactics have changed. For instance, centuries ago, there were encouraged those activities which did not generate economic independence and ingenuity (agriculture and war), while crafts and trades were reckoned to be damaging to the dictatorial system. Jean Levi describes this fundamental paradox of the Chinese culture as “the derisory fulfilment of the Taoist ideal” (97). Shang Yang’s destructive doctrine is condensed in this fragment: “To miserable citizens, a powerful nation; to dignified citizens, a miserable nation” (97). The essence of the art of governing is to debase peoples.

The closure of the book consists in a refined pirouette delivered by a *homo semioticus* able to unfold an *ad infinitum* semiosis. Romulus Bucur’s long-term project is connected to semiotic fiction. Fiction chooses semiotics as character. There is also an interesting message which can be taken as an arrow shot towards the far-fetched experiments. The reference is to Tzvetan Todorov who inferred from *One Thousand and One Nights* that “the blank page is poisonous. The book which does not tell a story simply kills. The absence of story invokes death”.

A must read is also the gloss to *Despre lăutărism (On Fiddling)*, an essay by Constantin Noica, and the one to the activity of kibitzing. One can agree or not with the author’s glosses, but one cannot deny their intelligence, lack of meanness and, more often than not, their playfulness. Useless to mention their interdisciplinary erudition – rather unspecific to academic professionals.

Romulus Bucur twice replicated in his book the prose writer Pu Songling’s famous precept: “Only those deprived of success are spared by madness” (123). A real jimmy!