

**ROMANIAN WOMEN WRITERS' VOICES IN EXILE: INSIGHTS  
FROM *UN DICȚIONAR AL EXILULUI FEMININ ROMÂNESC.  
AUTOARE EMBLEMATICE, VOLUME REPREZENTATIVE* [A  
DICTIONARY OF ROMANIAN WOMEN WRITERS' LITERARY  
EXILE: EMBLEMATIC AUTHORS, REPRESENTATIVE WORKS]  
COORDINATED BY EMANUELA ILIE<sup>1</sup>**

**Diana Alexandra AVRAM (ȘANDRU)**

*1 Decembrie 1918 University of Alba Iulia, Romania*

**e-mail:** [diana-alexandra.avram@uab.ro](mailto:diana-alexandra.avram@uab.ro)

**Abstract**

*Coordinated by Emanuela Ilie (Associate Professor, PhD, at the Faculty of Letters, Alexandru Ioan Cuza University of Iași, literary critic, and member of the Writers' Union of Romania), *Un "Dicționar al Exilului Feminin Românesc: Autoare Emblematice, Volume Reprezentative"* [A dictionary of Romanian women writers' literary exile: Emblematic authors, representative works] was published by Eikon Publishing House (Bucharest, 2024, 567 pages). The volume offers a comprehensive and focused perspective on Romanian women writers in exile, a subject often marginalised in traditional literary scholarship. While reference works such as Florin Manolescu's "The Encyclopaedia of Romanian Literary Exile" have significantly shaped the field, this dictionary stands out for its distinct emphasis on female authorship, positioning itself as a valuable and necessary complement to existing specialist literature. Designed as an indispensable bibliographic resource, the volume comprises twenty-three studies in literary history and criticism, each presented as a monographic analysis. These entries not only reconstruct the biographies of the selected authors but also offer in-depth examinations of their literary output, with a strong focus on the impact of exile on their creative trajectories. Each entry concludes with a comprehensive list of bibliographical references, reinforcing the scholarly utility of the volume.*

**Keywords:** exile; women writers of the Romanian exile; female authorship.

A bibliographic resource of undeniable relevance, *Un Dicționar al Exilului Feminin Românesc: Autoare Emblematice, Volume Reprezentative* [A dictionary of Romanian women writers' literary exile: Emblematic Authors, Representative Works] was recently published by Eikon Publishing House (Bucharest, 2024, 567 pages). Coordinated by Emanuela Ilie (Associate Professor, PhD, at the Faculty of Letters, Alexandru Ioan Cuza University of Iași, literary critic, and member of the Romanian Writers' Union), the dictionary offers a cohesive and necessary perspective on cases of representative women writers from the Romanian exile. Although reference works such as Florin Manolescu's *The Encyclopaedia of Romanian Literary Exile* have already mapped the field, this volume distinguishes itself through its

---

<sup>1</sup> Article History: Received: 07.01.2025. Accepted: 01.04.2025. Published: 15.05.2025. No funding was received either for the research presented in the article or for the creation of the article.

exclusive focus on female authorship, positioning itself as a valuable complement to the existing specialised literature.

In the Foreword, Emanuela Ilie notes that the purpose of the dictionary is not to impose a rigid classification or definitive taxonomy of Romanian exile literature. Rather, it is conceived as a dynamic scholarly tool—one that showcases the thematic, stylistic, and generational diversity of Romanian women's writing in exile, from the late nineteenth century until the fall of the communist regime. Moreover, she highlights the absence of any prior synthesis devoted exclusively to female exiled writers. As such, the dictionary seeks to address that gap by offering a *reparatory gesture*: repositioning these authors within Romanian literary scholarship and acknowledging their significant cultural contributions.

The twenty-three women writers featured in the volume come from different generations and experienced diverse forms of exile. Their adopted cultural spaces reflect a wide geographical range: France, especially Paris (Elena Văcărescu, Anna de Noailles, Martha Bibescu, Sorana Gurian, Mariana Șora – temporarily, Sanda Stolojan, Monica Lovinescu, Aurora Cornu, Sanda Nițescu), as well as other European countries, including Sweden (Gabriela Melinescu), Germany (Mariana Șora, Herta Müller), Switzerland (Aglaja Veteranyi), and the United Kingdom (Adriana Georgescu). Beyond Europe, the dictionary documents writers who emigrated to Argentina (Alina Diaconu), Canada (Florica Bațu-Ichim), and, most prominently, the United States (Princess Ileana of Romania, Annie Samuelli, Eugenia Adams-Mureșanu, Vera Călin, Nina Cassian, Sanda Golopenția, Alex. Amalia Călin, Domnica Rădulescu). A recurring genre among these authors is memoir, often used to articulate personal and collective trauma. These traumas include illness (Sorana Gurian, Florica Bațu-Ichim), imprisonment (Annie Samuelli, Adriana Georgescu), and particularly political persecution and exile (Monica Lovinescu, Sanda Stolojan, Herta Müller).

Structured as monographic studies, the dictionary entries—many of which are impressively extensive, reaching up to one hundred pages—offer engaging biographical reconstructions and in-depth critical analyses, all supported by substantial bibliographic reference lists.

Although contributors were free to design the structure of their studies, all share a commitment to *close reading*. Some focus more heavily on contextual documentation of exile, while others offer detailed textual interpretations. While the volume does not adopt a single theoretical framework, many entries are implicitly informed by feminist criticism, memory studies, trauma theory, and exile studies. These combined approaches reveal how female exile writing is marked by tensions between displacement and continuity, loss and memory, and the struggle to redefine selfhood across cultures.

In addition, the volume's coordinator emphasises that the dictionary is not intended as an exhaustive list of emblematic female authors of the Romanian exile. Rather, it represents an initial stage in a broader process of research and recovery of forgotten or marginalised voices. Alongside documenting writers whose works are already recognised or partially canonised, Ilie highlights the dictionary's openness to future expansion—mentioning figures such as Roxana Eminescu, Oana Orlea, Monica Săvulescu-Voudouri, and Mira Simian-Baciu as candidates for further critical investigation. The contributors, based in academic centres in Romania and abroad (Iași, Bucharest, Craiova, Alba Iulia, Bratislava), reflect the collaborative and transnational nature of this undertaking.

*Un Dicționar al Exilului Feminin Românesc* thus stands not only as a bibliographic project, but as a forward-looking scholarly platform, calling for continued research, broader inclusion, and the sustained reappraisal of Romanian women's literary contributions in exile.

This critical framework takes shape through the individual case studies that follow, each contributing a distinct perspective on exile, identity, and literary memory. Among them, we begin by turning to the essays by Smărăndița-Elena Costin.

Smărăndița-Elena Costin penned three interrelated articles—on the triad Martha Bibescu, Anna de Noailles, and Elena Văcărescu—written in a clear thematic and analytical symbiosis. These studies focus on a *pre-exile* period, which chronologically precedes the post-World War II political exile, highlighting a distinct stage in Romanian cultural displacement.

Princess Martha Bibescu emerges as a key cultural figure during her French exile, an experience described as painful due to the circumstances in which it was imposed, though not before taking all necessary measures to have the palace of her soul added to the list of historical monuments<sup>2</sup> (Costin in Ilie et al., 2024, p. 39). In contrast to the burden of exile, Bibescu's literary merit was acknowledged by the French Academy, affirming her prestige in the host culture.

Costin anchors her analysis in the argument that:

Martha Bibescu's vast oeuvre, unfolding across numerous and intricately layered literary registers, reflects, on the one hand, her encyclopaedic culture and her desire to grasp and master the entire ontological scenario as expressed through various literary forms; on the other hand, it crystallises her inherent predisposition towards the monumental. Seen through the authentic filigree of her existence, the world captured by the author is transformed into an exemplary link in the universal food chain. Her gift for portraying the essential traits of the people of her time—regardless of status, class, or socio-economic scale—can be analysed in any of her writings.<sup>3</sup> (Costin in Ilie et al., 2024, pp. 41–42)

Well-acquainted with French milieu, as shown in her biographical reconstruction, Bibescu transforms her exile into a tool for capturing symbolic capital. [...] a homecoming<sup>4</sup> (Costin in Ilie et al., 2024, p. 51).

The case of Countess Anna Brâncoveanu de Noailles—an acclaimed poet, novelist, and author of (auto)biographical prose—is examined with equal depth and sensitivity. Noailles, who flourished within the same French literary milieu, is contextualised within the aesthetic and social codes of her time, as the refined behavioural code, inclined toward aestheticism and forms of interstitial sociability, is an emanation of the spirit of the *fin de siècle*<sup>5</sup> (Costin in Ilie et al., 2024, p. 402). Smărăndița-Elena Costin offers nuanced insights into Noailles' participation in literary salons and her network of influential friendships.

The article devoted to Elena Văcărescu, described as “one of the most important women in Romanian culture”—not only for her literary contributions, but also for her diplomatic role and close ties to the royal family, particularly as one of Queen Elisabeth's confidantes—offers a multidimensional portrayal of her exile, shaped by literary, personal, and political factors. Elena Văcărescu, a “veritable cultural agent,” produced an extensive and genre-defying body of work: poetry, novels, plays, (auto)biography (memoirs, recollections, correspondence), and oratorical texts, including lectures delivered in the highest forums of the institutions of her

---

<sup>2</sup> All translations of quotations from Romanian to English are by the author: „dureros prin împrejurările în care este impus, însă nu înainte de a lua toate măsurile necesare pentru ca palatul sufletului său să fie trecut pe lista monumentelor istorice”

<sup>3</sup> Original text: „Opera vastă a Marthei Bibescu, întinsă pe multe și întortocheate registre literare, reflectă, pe de o parte, cultura enciclopedică, dorința de a acapara și cunoaște întreg scenariul ontologic, cuprins în varii formule literare, iar, pe de altă parte, cristalizează predispoziția spre monumental a scriitoarei. Observată în filigranul autentic al existenței sale, lumea surprinsă de autoare este convertită într-o verigă exemplară a lanțului trofic universal. Darul său de a portretiza esențiala oamenilor epocii căreia îi aparține, indiferent de statut, clasă sau anvergură socio-economică, poate fi analizat în oricare dintre scrierile sale.”

<sup>4</sup> Original text: „într-un instrument de acaparare a capitalului simbolic. [...] o *reîntoarcere acasă*”

<sup>5</sup> Original text: deoarece codul comportamental rafinat, înclinat spre estetism și formele de sociabilitate interstițială, este o emanație a spiritului sfârșitului de veac”

time<sup>6</sup> (Costin in Ilie et al., 2024, p. 513). Moreover, through detailed textual analysis, Costin demonstrates that, for Văcărescu, “exile represented a locus of assimilation of one culture and remembrance of another”<sup>7</sup> (Costin in Ilie et al., 2024, p. 531).

Maria-Corina Dimitriu continues the exploration of this early stage of exile in her article dedicated to Princess Ileana of Romania (also known as Mother Alexandra), whose life story has increasingly attracted critical attention, particularly in her lesser-known role as a writer. Her memoirs are presented as texts of genuine documentary value. The article argues that the identity stakes in Princess Ileana’s volumes are thus doubled by significant political and social stakes<sup>8</sup> (Dimitriu in Ilie et al., 2024, p. 169).

Born at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, these four women writers experienced major historical transformations, from the pre-war and interwar years through the post-war and even post-communist periods (in the case of Princess Ileana), alongside repeated political regime changes. Their status as witnesses to history is reflected both in their memoirs and in their cultural, diplomatic, and social engagements.

A subsequent generational group includes women writers born before, during, or shortly after the First World War—Annie Samuelli, Eugenia Adams-Mureșanu, Sorana Gurian, Mariana Șora, Sanda Stolojan, Adriana Georgescu, Vera Călin, Monica Lovinescu, and Nina Cassian—who were shaped by the vibrant cultural and ideological landscape of the interwar period. Their personal and professional paths are notably diverse, yet all were marked by the collapse of interwar ideals, the trauma of the Second World War, the imposition of the communist regime, and, for many, the transitional years and significant portions of the post-communist era. Most lived long enough to witness aspects of the 2000s, with the exception of Sorana Gurian, whose untimely death due to cancer brought a tragic and early end to her trajectory.

Ciprian Handru authors the dictionary entries on Adriana Georgescu and Annie Samuelli, two writers connected by the shared experience of imprisonment under the early communist regime.

In Adriana Georgescu’s case, Handru outlines a dramatic personal trajectory shaped by political persecution. Beginning as a film critic, later becoming a political reporter at the Ministry of Internal Affairs, and ultimately serving as chief of staff to General Rădescu, Georgescu’s unwavering anti-communist stance led to her arrest. Her memoir, *La Început a fost Sfârșitul: Dictatura Roșie la București* [In the beginning was the end], translated by Dan Golopenția, takes the form of a noir-inflected narrative, with the author herself at its centre. The text vividly portrays the brutality of communist imprisonment, marked by relentless interrogations, dehumanising procedures, and the chilling conditions of the so-called “hospitals of horror.” Handru emphasises the stark and unfiltered quality of Georgescu’s narrative, which frequently employs the present tense, a stylistic choice that conveys the immediacy of lived trauma. This narrative strategy reflects a persistent existential rupture, in which the past is not simply remembered but continuously relived. Georgescu’s memoir is thus permeated by affective memory, transforming her personal ordeal into an enduring and immersive account of systemic violence. (Handru in Ilie et al., 2024, p. 117)

In contrast, Annie Samuelli adopts a more distanced approach in her memoir *Woman Behind Bars in Romania* (later translated into Romanian as *Gratiile Despărțiitoare* by Adina Arsenescu). Although grounded in personal experience, she deliberately avoids presenting the text as autobiographical, instead framing it as a universal and human narrative. According to

---

<sup>6</sup> Original text: „poezii, romane, piese de teatru, (auto)biografia (memorii, evocări, corespondență) și textele oratorice, prelegerile susținute în forurile cele mai înalte ale instituțiilor vremii”

<sup>7</sup> Original text: „exilul a reprezentat un locus al asimilării unei culturi și al rememorării unei alteia”

<sup>8</sup> Original text: „Miza identitară a volumelor Principesei Ileana este dublată, astfel, de o miză politică și socială importantă”

Handru, she transcends the boundaries of an individual narrative, assuming the collective voice of all the women who were her fellow inmates<sup>9</sup> (Handru in Ilie et al., 2024, p. 443). Her writing style, blending recollection with deliberate forgetting, reflects an identity rooted in solidarity rather than self-representation. In this context, Samuelli explores themes of otherness and shared historical experience through a narrative voice that is both empathetic and novelistic. As Handru notes, “one might say it is an exit from oneself to give voice to communal figures. Annie Samuelli writes compellingly about otherness, about the other, about general history, in a novelistic, empathetic, and natural style.”<sup>10</sup> (Handru in Ilie et al., 2024, p. 443).

Alexandra Ruscanu focuses on two authors who settled in the United States: Eugenia Adams-Mureșanu, who also endured two brief periods of political imprisonment, and Nina Cassian. Although often remembered as the muse of Lucian Blaga, Eugenia Adams-Mureșanu is redefined here as the Poet of prisons and psalms,<sup>11</sup> according to Mircea Popa’s evocative phrasing. Her writing is distinguished by a style deeply infused with emotion, through which she constructs a lyrical space reflecting the fragility of the human spirit, one that seeks redemption primarily through faith and sensitivity (Ruscanu in Ilie et al., 2024, pp. 22–23).

Nina Cassian, by contrast, is marked by a life of bold contrasts, including her involvement with the illegalist UTC during adolescence, her shifting ideological positions, and a poetic path that spans from avant-garde experimentation to proletcult conformity. In exile, she composes the monumental journal *Memoria ca Zestre* (Memory as legacy—our translation, as the three autobiographical volumes remain untranslated), alongside poetry written in both Romanian and English.

Ruscanu’s analysis engages deeply with both the journal and the poetry, concluding that more than the diarist’s tumultuous past, her present is, indeed, defined by traumas whose reflection on the page conveys an overwhelming sense of suffering<sup>12</sup> (Ruscanu in Ilie et al., 2024, p. 74).

The American exile of academic and translator Vera Călin is addressed in an article by the volume’s coordinator, Emanuela Ilie, who offers a close reading of Călin’s memoirs through a distinctly reflective and genre-aware lens. Emanuela Ilie begins from the premise that:

As the autobiographical form is the least foreign to her creative being, the author chooses—after a long, though entirely natural, creative silence—to combine it with essayistic writing shaped by sociological, ideological, and mentalité-driven perspectives.<sup>13</sup> (Ilie in Ilie et al., 2024, p. 85)

This blending results in two hybrid works: *Târziu. Însemnări californiene 1986–1996* (Late: Californian Notes 1986–1996) and *Post-scriptum. Însemnări 1997–2002* (Post-scriptum: Notes 1997–2002). These volumes, read through an identity-focused lens, present a lucid, introspective account of exile as a form of painful internal displacement, in line with the tradition of confessional writing.

---

<sup>9</sup> Original text: „Prin aceasta depășește granițele unei narațiuni individuale, asumând vocea colectivă a tuturor femeilor care i-au fost colege în detenție”.

<sup>10</sup> Original text: „Am putea spune că e o ieșire din sine pentru a oferi voce figurilor comunitare. Annie Samuelli scrie seducător despre alteritate, despre celălalt, despre istoria generală, într-un stil romanesc, empatic și natural.”

<sup>11</sup> Original text: „Poetă a închisorilor și psalmilor”

<sup>12</sup> Original text: „Mai mult decât trecutul tumultuos al diaristei, prezentul ei stă, într-adevăr, sub semnul unor traume a căror oglindire în pagină denotă o suferință impresionantă”

<sup>13</sup> Original text: „Cum cea mai puțin străină de ființa sa creatoare este formula scripturală autobiografică, scriitoarea alege – după o îndelungată (altminteri, cu totul firească) tăcere creatoare – să o mixeze cu eseistica de vector sociologic, ideologic și mentalitar.



In a different cultural space, that of France, Sorana Gurian's brief exile is discussed in a second article by Emanuela Ilie, following a transitional period spent in Italy and Israel. The analysis sheds light on the ambiguities that have long surrounded Gurian's complex biography and multilingual literary legacy. Her reputation was persistently shadowed by serious accusations, including criminal charges and alleged links to multiple intelligence agencies. In 1943, she was reportedly sought for involvement in the falsification of work permits, and at various points was suspected of acting as an agent for the Gestapo, as well as for British and French intelligence services. Although none of these allegations were officially substantiated, the suspicion of espionage continued to follow her, casting a long shadow over both her life and work (Ilie in Ilie et al., 2024, p. 146).

Despite the uneven quality of her multilingual oeuvre, Gurian's final work, *Récit d'un combat*, translated into Romanian as *Povestea unei Lupte* [The story of a struggle], stands out as a profound meditation on illness. For Gurian, who was burdened from a young age by intense physical and emotional suffering, writing emerges not merely as therapy, but as a deeply aesthetic and ethical act. As Ilie states, it is "more than a mere palliative dictated by a dreadful biological condition [...] the act of confession through writing holds for Sorana Gurian meanings that are not only aesthetic but also ethical"<sup>14</sup> (Ilie in Ilie et al., 2024, p. 164).

Continuing her examination of illness memoirs, Emanuela Ilie turns to Florica Bațu-Ichim, a prolific writer whose career bridges social activism, journalism, and literature. Her volume *La Porțile Disperării, Începutul Speranței* [At the gates of despair, the beginning of hope] becomes the focus of Ilie's analysis, particularly for its intersection of motherhood and illness. As she observes, it is a text in which the dimension of motherhood prevails, allowing the spectre of malignancy and absolute darkness to momentarily transform into epiphanic brilliance<sup>15</sup> (Ilie in Ilie et al., 2024, p. 32).

Mariana Șora, Sanda Stolojan, and Monica Lovinescu also belong to the generation shaped by the cultural and ideological dynamics of the interwar period.

Often reductively defined through her relationship with Mihai Șora, Mariana Șora is described by Maria-Corina Dimitriu as possessing an exemplary moral and intellectual profile and a body of work that, although limited, endures through its literary quality and particularly substantial documentary component<sup>16</sup> (Ilie et al., 2024, p. 476). Dimitriu highlights Șora's life as one marked by successive exiles and literary production—memoirs and diaries—that have not yet received sustained monographic analysis. The inclusion of an article dedicated to her in this dictionary is therefore particularly welcome.

Sanda Stolojan, a descendant of a family of writers and diplomats, emerges as one of the most prominent voices of the Parisian exile. Deeply affected by the experience of expatriation, she cultivated a prolific career encompassing journalism, political activism, literature—both translation and memoir—and diplomacy, notably serving as the official interpreter for French delegations visiting communist Romania. In her analysis, Luiza Negură underscores the documentary significance of Stolojan's memoirs, noting:

---

<sup>14</sup> Original text: „Mai mult decât un simplu paliativ, impus de un context biologic îngrozitor, [...] confesiunea mediată scriptural are pentru Sorana Gurian sensuri nu numai estetice, ci și etice.”

<sup>15</sup> Original text: „în care prevalează dimensiunea maternității, grație căreia spectrul malignității și al întunericiiului absolut se poate întoarce, măcar temporar, în strălucire epifanică”

<sup>16</sup> Original text: „cu un profil moral și intelectual exemplar și cu o operă care, deși restrânsă, rezistă trecerii timpului prin calitatea literară și prin componenta documentară deosebit de consistentă”

Sanda Stolojan's vivid, penetrating gaze is paired with the clarity of her judgments and a cultivated refinement. A notable feature of her diaristic discourse is the creation of a gallery of emblematic cultural figures.<sup>17</sup> (Negură in Ilie et al., 2024, p. 458)

Through her memoirs, Stolojan not only recounts her own intellectual and personal evolution, but also offers insight into the wider cultural and historical dynamics of the Romanian exile in Paris. Her reflections evoke a constellation of influential figures: Cioran, Eliade, and Ionesco, alongside the committed cultural and civic efforts of Monica Lovinescu and Virgil Ierunca. She also bears witness to a range of initiatives aimed at preserving Romanian cultural identity abroad, including L.M. Arcade's literary circle, Paul Barbăneagră's intellectual salon, and the establishment of the journal *Les Cahiers de l'Est*.

The article on Monica Lovinescu, penned by Georgeta Orian, presents a detailed biographical reconstruction, tracing the early literary impulses of a child who would later become one of the most prominent voices of the Romanian exile. It provides a meticulous analysis of her oeuvre, covering her translation work under various pseudonyms, dystopian fiction, memoirs, diaries, journalistic writings—both in print and via radio—and her editorial activity with the *Agende lovinesciene*. This study emphasises Lovinescu's dual role as both a literary critic and a dissident.

The analysis also addresses the posthumous recovery of Lovinescu's work and legacy, considering public, institutional, and editorial efforts, as well as the preserved correspondence between Ecaterina Bălăcioiu-Lovinescu and her daughter in Paris. This broader contextualisation aims to portray the many facets of a complex and often burdened personality, reflecting on the issue of an identity built in stages, under a *name* sometimes difficult to bear and one that demanded to be honoured<sup>18</sup> (Orian in Ilie et al., 2024, p. 214).

More explicitly than in many other cases, Lovinescu's oeuvre is shown to be fundamentally shaped by exile: in the sense of a resilient nucleus that generates subsequent phases," it is "rooted in exile<sup>19</sup> (Orian in Ilie et al., 2024, p. 215).

Furthermore, the article highlights her belonging to the generation of political exile—a group defined not only by displacement, but by a broader mission:

In her case, it is evident that she belongs to the generation of 'political exile,' which assumed, in multifaceted ways, a mission beyond personal survival or individual literary or scientific achievements [...] for Monica Lovinescu, the term 'exile' remains the most fitting, the one that best captures, both semantically and existentially, her entire Story.<sup>20</sup> (Orian in Ilie et al., 2024, p. 220).

Moreover, Orian concludes that Lovinescu's memoirs and diaries reconstruct not only a life, but multiple historical periods: two, or rather three, eras (the Romanian interwar period, the postwar totalitarian period—both within the country and abroad—and the early phase of

---

<sup>17</sup> Original text: „Privirea vie, pătrunzătoare a Sandei Stolojan este dublată de luciditatea judecăților sale și de un rafinament cultivat. O primă direcție care impresionează în discursul diaristic este realizarea unei galerii de figuri emblematice ale culturii.”

<sup>18</sup> Original text: „întrezărindu-se și problema unei identități construite în etape, sub un *nume* uneori greu de purtat și care s-a cerut onorat.”

<sup>19</sup> Original text: „Opera Monicăi Lovinescu – în sensul de nucleu dur, generator de faze ulterioare – este cea din/de exil.”

<sup>20</sup> Original text: iar „În ceea ce o privește, e limpede că face parte din generația 'exilului politic', care și-a asumat, pluriform, o misiune, dincolo de propria supraviețuire și de propriile realizări literare sau științifice [...] în cazul Monicăi Lovinescu termenul 'exil' rămâne cel mai potrivit, cel care acoperă cel mai bine, semantic și existențial, întreaga ei Poveste.”

the post-December 1989 period), along with the nodal points, thresholds, and transitions (which are of particular interest)<sup>21</sup> (Orian in Ilie et al., 2024, p. 232).

Georgeta Orian further highlights the way in which Lovinescu reconstructs her memory in diaristic form, not according to a strict chronology, but around recurring ‘themes and obsessions’, employing expansive ‘analepses and prolepses’ (Orian in Ilie et al., 2024, p. 235). Despite this non-linear structure, she retains a strong sense of self throughout her writing—keeping a constant reflective eye on her inner child, adolescent self, and the evolving ego shaped by different times and places. Journalling, in this context, becomes not only a means of figurative return—a way of coming home through memory—but also a deliberate act of revision: a way of reassembling and reinterpreting personal history from within exile.

Among the writers born during the interwar period but whose education and literary formation took place post-war are Aurora Cornu and Sanda Nițescu. Their journeys reflect a distinct phase within the Romanian exile experience, and both women present compelling biographical and creative paths.

Aurora Cornu, as discussed by Luiza Negură, began her literary career in Romania during a period marked by youthful Marxist-Leninist enthusiasm and a well-known biographical connection to Marin Preda. She later chose exile in Paris, where she pursued a dynamic career in cinema, alongside her literary work which primarily consists of poetry, and journalistic activity.

Another significant figure is Sanda Nițescu, analysed by Silviu Gongonea, who highlights her ability to adapt and gain recognition within an adopted cultural space:

Sanda Nițescu’s merit lies in her ability to adapt and establish herself through her work within a new, adopted culture. Part of her oeuvre was written directly in Baudelaire’s language, promoting the image of her homeland beyond its borders, which fully justifies considering her one of the quintessential representatives of Romanian cultural exile. Sanda Nițescu belongs, by adoption, to French culture, yet she transplants into it a way of living and understanding art that originates in her native culture.<sup>22</sup> (Gongonea in Ilie et al., 2024, p. 380)

An internationally recognised visual artist, Sanda Nițescu is also the author of distinctive memoir volumes, which blend gastronomic and artistic reflection and frequently reflect her affinity for the bohemian cultural world of the Parisian café. Silviu Gongonea approaches these texts with evident readerly enjoyment, highlighting both their narrative charm and the aesthetic originality that defines her autobiographical voice.

As the volume’s most prolific contributor, authoring six articles, the literary critic Emanuela Ilie turns her attention to another generation of Romanian exile—women writers born after the Second World War. She provides critical readings of three prominent figures from this generation: Sanda Golopenția, Gabriela Melinescu, and Alina Diaconu.

Alina Diaconu, who left Romania at the age of fourteen after spending her early years in the repressive climate of the 1950s, settled in Argentina, where she developed a prolific literary career in Spanish. Her work encompasses novels, poetry, aphorisms, short stories,

---

<sup>21</sup> Original text: „Lectura împreună a jurnalelor și a memorialisticii Monicăi Lovinescu recompune două, de fapt trei, epoci (interbelicul românesc, postbelicul totalitar – în țară și în afara ei, apoi perioada postdecembristă în prima ei fază), precum și punctele nodale, de prag, de trecere, acestea fiind de un interes aparte.”

<sup>22</sup> Original text: „Meritul Sandei Nițescu este acela de a fi se adaptat și impus prin munca ei într-o cultură nouă, de adopție, o parte din opera sa fiind scrisă direct în limba lui Baudelaire, promovând imaginea țării peste granițe, ceea ce ne îndreptățește să o considerăm fără rezerve unul dintre reprezentanții exponențiali ai exilului cultural românesc. Sanda Nițescu aparține, prin adopție, culturii franceze, însă ea transplantează în cadrul acesteia un tip de trăire și înțelegere a artei care își au sursa în cultura natală.”



essays, interviews, and journalism, although only a fraction has been translated into Romanian. The analysis centred on her is particularly significant, given her relative absence from mainstream Romanian literary histories. Ilie highlights a central aspect of Diaconu's creative identity:

Her existence, fundamentally defined by three centres that shape her emotional geography (Romania, France, and Argentina), is candidly acknowledged by the novelist as being driven by a major obsession with the idea of travel and places, while being motivated by the necessity to oppose the forms of dictatorship she has encountered.<sup>23</sup> (Ilie in Ilie et al., 2024, p. 109)

Moreover, her writing was shaped by the influence of other exiled Romanian authors, notably Eugène Ionesco and Emil Cioran, whose works resonated with her own experience of displacement and cultural negotiation.

Gabriela Melinescu, who later settled in Sweden following an early poetic career in Romania, including her well-documented relationship with Nichita Stănescu, left behind a vast and multifaceted body of work. Her contributions span poetry, fiction, memoirs, translations, and visual art, including drawings, engravings, and icon paintings. Emanuela Ilie's analysis provides a nuanced reading of this complex oeuvre, with particular attention to the recurring identity-related themes and the author's navigation across multiple languages. Writing in Romanian, Swedish, and French, Melinescu exemplifies a translanguing and transcultural literary identity.

Emanuela Ilie argues that Melinescu remains committed to the transformative potential of literature, even in its most introspective forms:

Gabriela Melinescu stubbornly continues to believe in the dual thaumaturgic and epiphanic potential of writing, even in its diaristic form [...] the direct writing of the self can serve as an essential means of accessing that transcendent(al) otherness which arises in the familiar territory of intersections between languages, cultures, and identities.<sup>24</sup> (Ilie in Ilie et al., 2024, p. 276)

Although her work spans Swedish, Romanian, and French, many of her later writings were originally published in Swedish and were translated into Romanian, particularly after 1989, contributing to the re-establishment of her place within Romanian literary consciousness. Melinescu consistently demonstrated a remarkable linguistic plurivalence, which earned her critical recognition and awards in Sweden and beyond. Gabriela Melinescu passed away recently, leaving behind a body of work that stands at the intersection of languages, identities, and artistic forms. This embodies a legacy that resonates with other figures in the volume, including Sanda Golopenția, whose contributions Ilie also examines in depth.

Sanda Golopenția, who left Romania in 1980 to join her husband, ethnologist Constantin Eretescu, in the United States, has experienced a notable revival of her literary and intellectual profile since the early 2000s. Her wide-ranging body of work reflects two central dimensions: on the one hand, a scientific corpus that includes significant contributions to

---

<sup>23</sup> Original text: „Cum existența îi este fundamental definită prin raportare la trei centre care îi alcătuiesc *geografia emoțională* (România, Franța și Argentina), romanciera ne recunoaște, tranșant, că literatura pe care o scrie are ca obsesie majoră *ideea călătoriei și a locurilor*, dar este motivată de necesitatea de a se opune formelor de dictatură cunoscute.”

<sup>24</sup> Original text: „Gabriela Melinescu se încăpățânează totuși să creadă în potențialul deopotrivă taumaturgic și epifanic al scrisului, fie el și diaristic [...] scriitura directă a sinelui poate funcționa ca formă esențială de acces la acea alteritate transcendent(al)ă ce ia naștere în cunoscutul teritoriu de interferență între limbi, culturi și identități.”

pragmatics, transformational grammar, sociolinguistics, poetics, cultural anthropology, and ethnomusicology; on the other, an expansive and deeply personal practice of memoir writing.

Alongside her own publications, Golopenția has also undertaken major editorial efforts to recover and disseminate the work of her parents, the ethnologist Ștefania Cristescu-Golopenția and the sociologist Anton Golopenția, both of whom were influential intellectual figures in 20th-century Romania.

From the perspective of Romanian literary history, Ilie argues that Golopenția's most significant literary contributions lie in her memoiristic writings, composed after her relocation to the United States. These texts comprise a rich array of forms: short stories with confessional undertones, diary entries, travel notes, anamnestic fragments prompted by cultural encounters, as well as reviews of literature, film, music, and art. As Ilie notes, in total, over 2,000 pages impress with their ambition (both existentially and textually), intellectual density, and elegance of expression.<sup>25</sup> (Ilie in Ilie et al., 2024, p. 133)

Ilie highlights that these reflections are remarkably devoid of bitterness or resentment, a tone rarely found in exile literature. Instead, Golopenția constructs a narrative that is cohesive and emotionally balanced, shaped by ethical commitment, intellectual rigour, and critical inquiry. Her memoirs, Ilie observes, are neither nostalgic nor accusatory, but honour the complexity, resilience, and integrity of a life lived between cultures (Ilie in Ilie et al., 2024, p. 144).

In her reflections on displacement, Golopenția makes a clear and thoughtful distinction between exile and emigration, viewing them not as variations of the same experience, but as fundamentally different in cause and meaning. Exile, in her understanding, involves a rupture brought about by external forces, whether political, ideological, or historical, while emigration is typically a voluntary act, often grounded in personal or economic motivations. Despite living and writing abroad, she remained firmly anchored in the Romanian cultural sphere, continuing to write in her native language. For Golopenția, writing in Romanian was not only a form of self-preservation, but a mode of belonging: she saw her intellectual identity as deeply rooted in Romanian culture and described the Romanian language and writing itself as integral to her very existence. As Emanuela Ilie carefully highlights, Golopenția analyses the condition of exile critically, yet without harshness, drawing a nuanced distinction between the exiled and the emigrant. Moreover, she underlines the sustaining power of writing in Romanian, not only as a personal means of survival, but as a shared form of cultural resilience among Romanian writers in exile.

The American cultural space also serves as the backdrop for the exile of two lesser-known Romanian writers whose works remain relatively unfamiliar to readers in Romania. The first is the poet Alex. Amalia Călin, whose work is examined by Maria-Corina Dimitriu. Her analysis begins from the premise that the paradoxical novelty of Amalia Călin's poetry, within the context of 1990s and 2000s experiments, lies in its reconnection with a traditionalist and Orthodox strand of Romanian poetry, abandoned during the interwar period and almost insignificantly reactivated during the communist era<sup>26</sup> (Dimitriu in Ilie et al., 2024, p. 76). As Dimitriu states, for Alex. Amalia Călin, this reconnection is not merely aesthetic but deeply spiritual, anchored in an idealised past and sustained by a strong belief in divine love. Her poetry stands as a testament to the inner drama of exile: the experience of disconnection from one's origins and the longing to restore a lost sense of belonging. In this light, the revival of a

---

<sup>25</sup> Original text: „În total, peste 2000 de pagini, care impresionează ca proiect (deopotrivă în cheie existențială și scripturală), densitate ideatică și eleganță discursivă.”

<sup>26</sup> Original text: „Noutatea paradoxală a poeziei Amaliei Călin în contextul experimentelor nouăzeciste și douămiste vine din re conectarea cu o filieră tradiționalistă și ortodoxistă a poeziei românești, abandonată în interbelic și reactivată aproape nesemnificativ pe durata perioadei comuniste.”

marginalised religious tradition becomes a quiet act of resilience, offering continuity where displacement has fractured identity.

The second writer, whose exile occurred in the American cultural space, is Domnica Rădulescu, a novelist and academic. Her work is analysed by Alexandra Ruscanu, who emphasises how Rădulescu's position as a university professor in theatre and gender studies informs both the thematic and structural dimensions of her literary texts. As Ruscanu demonstrates, her novels focus on the entire category of women living under oppressive regimes. Following the *bildungsroman* model, they are subjected to various trials of survival [...] leading to the formation of particularly strong identities, whether feminine, artistic, or social<sup>27</sup> (Ruscanu in Ilie et al., 2024, p. 441). A strong autobiographical current runs through these narratives; her protagonists are at times inspired by parental figures, but more frequently shaped by gendered forms of marginalisation, reflecting the broader struggle of women navigating exile. For Rădulescu, exile is not only a political and cultural rupture, but also a gendered experience, one in which identity must be continuously redefined between memory, dislocation, and reinvention. Her personal encounters with marginality sharpen her insight into the dual burdens carried by women in exile. In this sense, her work contributes to a feminist literary cartography of exile, where personal history, gendered trauma, and social critique converge.

The final two studies in the volume are authored by the literary critic Marius Miheţ and focus on Herta Müller and Aglaja Veteranyi; an association the author describes as far from coincidental, since constructed between paradoxical walls, Herta and Aglaja remain *twins with distinct voices*<sup>28</sup> (Miheţ in Ilie et al., 2024, p. 544). These two figures, emblematic of exile's linguistic rupture and existential dislocation, are examined through both their biographical journeys and their stylistic particularities.

Miheţ's study of Herta Müller begins with a meticulous tracing of her life and dissent, especially in relation to her status as an ethnic German from the Banat region and her departure from Romania in 1987. Alongside detailed textual analysis, the critic directly addresses the discomfort surrounding Müller's reception in Romanian literary culture. He remarks that the absence of any new Romanian translations of her work for nearly a decade signals not only a lack of public engagement, but also a failure of editorial will to meet the author's high ethical and linguistic standards. He notes, too, the almost complete silence around the celebration of her seventieth birthday within Romanian intellectual circles. Uncompromising, incisive, and incorrigible, Herta Müller rejects any editorial, translational, or human impurity as a sign of ethical disapproval toward the country she conditionally loves<sup>29</sup> (Miheţ in Ilie et al., 2024, p. 296).

Miheţ also critiques the way Romanian culture has historically positioned Müller and her contemporaries, including Richard Wagner, Rolf Bossert, Johann Lippert, and Dieter Schlesak, as part of a marginalised category of exile literature, rather than acknowledging them as contributors to Romania's German-language literary heritage. Before Müller's Nobel Prize win in 2009, her work was largely overlooked, and when addressed, often reduced to sentimental or superficial interpretations. Even following her international recognition, the critical discourse, as Miheţ observes, remained largely repetitive, lacking deeper conceptual innovation. Her prose, with its language that seems to ignite at the very root of every word<sup>30</sup>

---

<sup>27</sup> Original text: „întreaga categorie a femeilor aflate în condițiile unui regim opresiv. Pe tiparul de *bildungsroman*, sunt supuse la diferite probe de supraviețuire [...] formarea unei identități (feminine, artistice ori sociale) deosebit de puternice.”

<sup>28</sup> Original text: „Construite între ziduri paradoxale, Herta și Aglaja au rămas *gemene cu voci distincte*.”

<sup>29</sup> Original text: „Incomodă, incisivă și incorigibilă, Herta Müller respinge orice impuritate editorială, traductologică sau umană ca semn al nedeprecierii etice față cu țara pe care o iubește condiționat.”

<sup>30</sup> Original text: „limbajului care arde parcă la rădăcina fiecărui cuvânt.”

(Miheț in Ilie et al., 2024, p. 308), continues to resist simplification and remains accessible primarily to a small, highly specialised readership. The challenges of reading Müller lie not only in her political or thematic content, but in the radical poetics of exile she performs—a linguistic fragmentation that mirrors cultural and psychological dislocation.

The second study by Marius Miheț, focusing on Aglaja Veteranyi, explores a distinct yet comparably intense life and creative path. Her departure from Romania at the age of five—the moment of separation haunts her entire life, causing linguistic and identity traumas—marks the beginning of a life shaped by the itinerant, borderless world of the circus, her family's profession. Recognition of her literary significance in Romania came only posthumously, following a delayed yet growing interest in her experimental work. As Miheț recounts,

starting in 2001, her depression deepens and seems unstoppable. Her crises intensify. In early summer, she finds the strength to return to Romania. She visits Maramureș. The 'Merry Cemetery' irresistibly draws her. Just as the Romanian edition of her novel is about to be published, in February 2002, the writer takes her own life in Lake Zürich.<sup>31</sup> (Miheț in Ilie et al., 2024, p. 534).

Alongside his analysis of her prose and poetry, Miheț also explores the stage adaptations of Veteranyi's work, particularly her acclaimed novel *Warum das Kind in der Polenta kocht* / *Why the Child Is Cooking in the Polenta* / *De ce Fierbe Copilul în Mămăligă*. He highlights her uniqueness as an artist whose linguistic plurality and performative experience defined her creative output. The strangeness of Aglaja Veteranyi was also the hallmark of her genius,<sup>32</sup> he writes, noting her fluency in Romanian and Spanish, her later acquisition of Swiss German, and her dual identity as both performer and educator (Miheț in Ilie et al., 2024, p. 536). Veteranyi's work, rooted in trauma, multilingualism, and theatricality, articulates a poetics of restlessness, a form of exile that transcends geographic displacement and becomes embedded in the very texture of her artistic expression.

The twenty-three studies in literary history and criticism gathered in *Un Dicționar al Exilului Feminin Românesc: Autoare Emblematic, Volume Reprezentative* offer a compelling and often poignant reading experience. They appeal to both literary scholars and general readers interested in the literature of Romanian women in exile. Each entry features a carefully constructed biographical narrative, rigorous close reading, and a selected bibliography—making the dictionary a valuable bibliographic and analytical resource. While the contributors were given flexibility in structure and focus, the selection of the twenty-three authors appears to rest on several implicit criteria: literary merit, biographical relevance to the Romanian exile experience, and cultural visibility—whether already established or in need of recovery. Despite their generational, geographical, and stylistic diversity, these writers are united by the way exile shaped their creative output, identity, and reception. Most share a commitment to autobiographical or testimonial forms—memoirs, diaries, essays—that explore displacement, cultural hybridity, and the struggle to maintain linguistic and personal continuity. As such, the volume constructs a collective narrative of Romanian women's exile that is as much about literary production as it is about survival, remembrance, and transnational belonging.

One of the volume's notable strengths lies in its openness of form. Some studies prioritise literary analysis, while others foreground historical context, exile narratives, or identity formation. Although the volume does not present an explicit theoretical framework,

---

<sup>31</sup> Original text: „Începând cu 2001, depresia ei înaintază și pare de neoprit. Crizele se intensifică. La începutul verii, găsește resurse să revină în România. Vizitează Maramureșul. 'Cimitirul vesel' o atrage irezistibil. Chiar când ediția românească a romanului ei stă să apară, în februarie 2002, scriitoarea se sinucide în lacul Zürich.”

<sup>32</sup> Original text: „Stranietatea Aglajei Veteranyi era totodată marca genialității ei.”

many contributions draw—implicitly or overtly—on feminist criticism, trauma theory, memory studies, and exile theory. These approaches converge in a shared emphasis on affective memory, ethical responsibility, and the re-inscription of marginalised voices into the cultural archive. It is also important to emphasise that, although many of the authors included in this volume remain little known or overlooked within the Romanian literary canon, they were often fully recognised in their adoptive cultural spaces. Their work was valued, translated, awarded, and woven into the literary fabric of their host countries. The act of reclaiming these writers and acknowledging their cultural contributions and forms of resistance represents, not only a scholarly correction, but a necessary gesture of cultural reparation—one that restores their place in Romanian literary history and honours the acts of resilience and dissent that shaped their creative lives. This foundational work also creates space for further scholarship and outreach, particularly in light of the fact that the critical approach adopted here could be extended to include additional authors and perspectives. Such efforts would continue the essential endeavour of reintegrating Romanian women writers in exile into the national literary consciousness, making their works more accessible for future translations, reprints, and critical analysis.

#### References:

- Ilie, E. (Ed.). (2024). *Un dicționar al exilului feminin românesc: Autoare emblematice, volume representative* [A dictionary of Romanian women writers' literary exile: Emblematic authors, representative works]. Bucharest: Eikon Publishing House.
- Popa, M. (2023). La o sută de ani de la naștere: Eugenia Mureșanu-Adam, poetă a închisorilor și a psalmilor. *TABOR. Revistă de cultură și spiritualitate românească*, 17(6), 41–45.